

Development Deferred: Eastern Sudan after the ESPA

By the Small Arms Survey



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List of abbreviations

CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
EF	Eastern Front
ESPA	Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement
ESRDF	Eastern Sudan Reconstruction and Development Fund
ESSCC	Eastern Sudan States' Coordinating Council
FFAMC	Fiscal and Financial Allocations Monitoring Commission
FGC/M	Female genital cutting/mutilation
GDP	Gross domestic product
GoS	Government of Sudan
HJMC	High Joint Military Committee
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
NCP	National Congress Party
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NISS	National Intelligence and Security Service
NRF	National Reserve Fund
PDF	Popular Defence Forces
SAF	Sudan Armed Forces
SDG	Sudanese pound
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
SRF	Sudan Revolutionary Front
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UPFLJ	United People's Front for Liberation and Justice
USD	US dollar

I. Introduction and key findings

On 9 December 2014 a former Eastern Front (EF) combatant set himself on fire at the local government offices in Port Sudan, Eastern Sudan, to protest the government's discriminatory treatment of ex-combatants, in an act reminiscent of Mohammed Bouazizi's self-immolation that ignited and inspired protests and regime change in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa in 2010 and 2011. Three months earlier the same combatant had tried to set himself ablaze together with another ex-combatant after failing to make an appointment to meet with Mohammed Tahir Aila, governor of Sudan's Red Sea state, to protest the government's failure to meet its financial obligations promised as part of the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) arrangements associated with the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA). The Government of Sudan (GoS) and the EF—the latter comprising the Beja Congress, the Rashaida Free Lions, and the Democratic Party of Eastern Sudan—signed the ESPA in 2006, but many aspects of its implementation had been long delayed. These acts of political protest encapsulate the discontent experienced by the people of Eastern Sudan nine years after the signing of the ESPA.

The years 2005 and 2006 saw a series of peace agreements between the GoS, on the one hand, and the various movements that constituted the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), on the other. Most notable was the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which the GoS signed with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) in January 2005 in Naivasha, Kenya. The GoS also signed a peace agreement in Cairo, Egypt, with most of the political forces constituting the NDA in June 2005. At the GoS–NDA negotiations in Cairo the Beja Congress and the Rashaida Free Lions, both of which sought to represent the people of Eastern Sudan, demanded better representation and a separate forum for discussions on the region. Beja Congress supporters organized a demonstration in Port Sudan and raised several demands, including recognition of the organization and a separate negotiating platform for it



outside Sudan. Three days later, on 29 January 2005, the police killed at least 27 protesters in the Deim Arab area of Port Sudan. All but two were Beja Congress supporters.

The Beja Congress and Rashaida Free Lions withdrew from the NDA and formed the EF on 22 October 2004. The Democratic Party of Eastern Sudan was formed after the Beja Congress split, and also joined the EF. The EF signed the ESPA with Khartoum in Asmara, Eritrea, on 14 October 2006, with Eritrean mediation.¹

Divided into six chapters, the ESPA emphasized the social, political, and economic marginalization of the people of Eastern Sudan as the core reason for the conflict in the region. It covered political issues; economic, social, and cultural issues; and security arrangements for EF ex-combatants. It also provided for the holding of a consultative conference for the people of Eastern Sudan in order to publicize and mobilize support for the agreement in the region. In addition, the agreement provided for a national conference to address the administrative structure in Sudan, with the aim of identifying and addressing the inequalities in the employment and participation of the people of the region—and in other parts of Sudan—in civil service and other structures.

Almost a decade after the signing of the ESPA there is a need for an independent review of its implementation that takes into account the viewpoints of all stakeholders involved in or affected by the agreement. This paper investigates and analyses the implementation of the ESPA in an attempt to answer key questions: what role has the GoS played in implementing the agreement? What have been the roles of the movements comprising the EF? What impact has the ESPA had on the people of Eastern Sudan? What are the current challenges to and constraints on human security in the region? And what are the prospects for development for the region? The current study also applies a gendered approach to clarify how the conflict in Eastern Sudan and the peace agreement may have impacted the lives of men and women differently.

The paper is based on desk research and on field research in Sudan in June and July 2014. Fieldwork included interviews with diverse stakeholders, including Sudanese government officials, members and leaders of the movements that comprised the EF, and other political and civil society activists. Interviews

took place in Khartoum, Kassala, Gedaref, and Port Sudan. A number of interviews took place in Asmara, Eritrea, in June 2014 and via Skype.

Among the paper's key findings:

- While GoS officials consider the ESPA a success story, political and civil society activists maintain that the ESPA document fell short of reflecting the aspirations of the people of Eastern Sudan, who were never consulted on the content of the agreement. The agreement was not widely popularized, especially at the community level.
- The ESPA has not eliminated the root causes of conflict in the region, including political, economic, and social marginalization, as many in the region expected or hoped it would. On the contrary, it only strengthened the GoS's grip on the region, which is vital for oil exports and a source of mineral resources, especially gold. Communities in the region, especially women, continue to be marginalized.
- A lack of commitment from the government, as well as weak EF leadership and the fact that the EF was formed in haste, have all contributed to the agreement's poor implementation.
- Ethnic polarization in the region and tension stemming from the origins of the formation of the EF along Beja, Rashaida, and Beni Amer lines has had serious repercussions for peaceful coexistence among the diverse ethnic groups living there.
- In contrast to other 'post-conflict' areas of Sudan and South Sudan, many of the government-aligned militias and former rebel groups in Eastern Sudan have been demobilized or incorporated into formal and semi-formal security structures, such as the army or border guards. At the same time, the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) has successfully managed and developed its constituencies, coopting former EF leaders in the process.
- Many EF ex-combatants initially not integrated into the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and other forces have not yet been demobilized or reintegrated, nine years after the ESPA was signed. This has created discontent among many former combatants, some of whom have been doomed to a life of economic and social marginalization. Ex-combatants, especially those who have not been disarmed, can easily be remobilized.

- Since the signing of the ESPA the GoS has used the security forces to repress popular protests against economic and political marginalization, but has not taken steps to address pressing injustices such as human trafficking, which is flourishing in the borderlands with Eritrea. The region is a smuggling hub and transit area for both humans and weapons.
- The ESPA's wealth-sharing arrangements have been confined to the Eastern Sudan Reconstruction and Development Fund (ESRDF). Of an initial commitment of USD 600 million, which was to be distributed over five years, the government has disbursed about USD 125 million. The ESRDF has supported the building of roads, schools, clinics, and other infrastructure, but some of the buildings are currently used for storage. The ESRDF also faces charges of corruption and the mismanagement of resources.
- The ESPA has not led to significant investment in equitable development. Instead, the region continues on a highly inequitable path to development, which is led by commercial agriculture and mining. The growing economy has left many workers and ordinary people behind and pushed them into protests against declining living standards. Maternal mortality, child mortality, and gender inequality continue to prevail. Some people in the region are calling for secession. 🇸🇩

II. Background

The meaning of marginalization

'Marginalization' is a term familiar to political actors across the diverse and disadvantaged peripheries of 20th–21st-century Sudan: Eastern Sudan, Darfur, Blue Nile, South Kordofan, and Southern Sudan. It refers to the concentration of wealth and power in the heartland of the state, Khartoum, and the northern Nile Valley, which drained the peripheries of resources, workers, and opportunities. It also refers to the attempt to impose the language and culture of the elite of the heartland on the rich mix of languages and cultures in the peripheries. But marginalization has played out differently in different areas. In Darfur, South Kordofan, and Southern Sudan marginalization was a result of policies of deliberate neglect that followed the violence of colonial conquest. Infrastructure in these areas is very underdeveloped: even today, neither South Sudan nor Darfur is linked by tarred road to Khartoum. Conversely, Eastern Sudan's limited networks of roads, railroads, ports, and pipelines link it with Khartoum's markets. The area's grain surpluses feed much of Sudan, and its farms, mines, and cities draw immigrants from across the country and the Horn of Africa. But economic development in Eastern Sudan happened alongside, or perhaps even through, processes of conflict and marginalization.

A paradox of Sudan's recent history is that the country has witnessed economic growth during war, at least in terms of higher gross domestic product (GDP). According to the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the pace of growth in Sudan accelerated during the long civil war, with the agricultural and industrial sectors showing the most noticeable change (see Table 1).

The oil industry, which emerged during the conflict period, accounted for much of the growth, but agricultural production also grew significantly and at least some of the accelerated growth in this sector probably happened in Eastern Sudan. According to official statistics, the region, with about 11.6 per cent of Sudan's population, produced 27 per cent of the country's total sorghum

Table 1 **Sudan's GDP and sectoral growth during peace and war, 1972–2008 (%)**

Period	GDP growth	Sectoral growth		
		Agriculture	Industry	Services
Pre-conflict (1972–82)	3.9	1.7	1.3	2.7
Conflict (1983–2004)	5.8	3.5	12.7	3.3
Post-CPA (2005–08)	8.9	7.0	8.6	9.6

Source: UNDP (2012, Table 24)

crop in 2008–09. Three-quarters of this production was in the mechanized farms of Gedaref and Kassala: Gedaref state alone, with 3.4 per cent of Sudan's population, produced almost 20 per cent of its sorghum in the same financial year (CBS, 2009, pp. 93–95).

Since 2009 state-level production statistics have not been accessible in Sudan, but the records of the national *zakat* (alms mandated by the Quran and collected officially) give some idea of the taxable wealth of each state. For example, 44.8 per cent of *zakat* comes from in-kind crop contributions, which include cereals, pulses, seeds, vegetables, and fruits, but not cash crops like cotton. In 2012 Eastern Sudan contributed more than one-third of the crop and fruit contributions to the national *zakat* fund and almost a fifth of the livestock contributions, with Gedaref far in the lead (Al-Amana al-'Ama li-Diwan al-Zakat, 2012, p. 28) (see Table 2).

Eastern Sudan's economy attracts labour migrants, but statistics suggest that the region's inhabitants face poverty and famines. A 2009 national baseline

Table 2 **Eastern Sudanese states' contributions to *zakat* on crops, 2012**

	Amount (SDG)	% of total national contribution	Ranking out of 17 states
Gedaref	105,293,617 (USD 10,529)	29.1	1
Kassala	17,320,248 (USD 17,321)	4.8	8
Red Sea	357,658 (USD 35,765)	0.1	17

Source: Al-Amana al-'Ama li-Diwan al-Zakat (2012, p. 15)

Table 3 Sudan's human development indicators by region, 2008

Region	Adult literacy (%)	Primary education enrolment (%)	Secondary education enrolment (%)	Life expectancy at birth (years)	PPP ^a per capita income (USD)
Northern	76.0	67.2	38.2	61.5	2,628
Eastern	74.0	56.5	33.2	57.1	1,748
Khartoum	85.6	89.3	73.3	65.9	3,508
Central	70.0	74.9	63.7	60.5	2,428
Kordofan	63.0	60.3	39.4	58.5	2,028
Darfur	44.0	65.5	44.7	56.3	1,588

^a Purchasing power parity.

Source: UNDP (2012, p. 114)

household survey found that Red Sea state had the highest level of under-nourishment of any of the northern states, at 44 per cent. Almost one-third of the population of Kassala, which is home to an estimated 3–4 million of Sudan's poorest people according to UNDP (2013, p. 14), were undernourished, as were over a fifth of the population of Gedaref, the nation's granary. People affected by hunger were missing out on about 300 calories a day (SSCCSE, 2010, pp. 27, 31). Literacy rates were among the lowest in the country and school dropout rates among the highest. Girls are less likely than boys to be enrolled in school, and one important provider of Islamic education discourages girls' education (see Table 3).

Eastern Sudan has some of the worst health indicators in the country, according to surveys conducted in the past decade. The region has limited health infrastructure, and local customs in parts of Eastern Sudan also doubt the efficiency of and discourage the use of modern medicine.² The change from tax-funded to insurance-funded health systems over the past two decades has also left many sectors of the population uninsured. In 2009 less than 6 per cent of farmers and less than 3 per cent of pastoralists in Eastern Sudan had health insurance (CBS, 2009, pp. 271, 273). Child mortality rates were also high in the region compared to other states in Northern Sudan (Abu Al-Yamen et al., n.d., pp. 118, 126; UNDP, 2012, p. 53) (see Table 4).

Table 4 **Under-five mortality per 1,000 live births, 1993, 2000, and 2006**

Area	1993	2000	2006
Red Sea	175	165	126
Kassala	147	148	81
Gedaref	190	117	137
Northern states	157	104	102

Source: Abu Al-Yamen et al. (n.d., pp. 118, 126); Decaillet, Mullen, and Guen (2003, p. 3); UNDP (2012, p. 46)

Several surveys suggested that maternal mortality rates were exceptionally high in Kassala state: the 2006 Sudan Household Survey found that 1.4 per cent of mothers died during pregnancy or within six weeks of childbirth—a ratio better than that of Darfur or South Sudan, but worse than almost every other country in the world (GNU/GoSS, 2007, p. 167).³

How is it that a region producing a huge grain surplus could have so much hunger and so much child mortality? In part, hunger and high child mortality rates are a result of the region’s diverse landscapes and ecologies—deserts in the north and rain-fed farmland in the south. Also, these poverty rates reflect different patterns of development, which have pushed pastoralists into cities and made some groups landless and others major landowners. These patterns of development have contributed to the stratification of local populations, creating richer and poorer groups (Miller, 2005, p. 35).

The landscape

In the 1980s, when the government at the time followed a policy of aggregating the administrative units of Northern Sudan into six large regions, the three states of Gedaref, Kassala, and Red Sea made up the eastern region—an area of some 300,000 km², which is slightly larger than Norway (Badal, 1986). The area is roughly bounded by the Red Sea to the east, the Ethiopian hills to the south-east, and the Nile and its tributaries the Atbara and Rahad to the west. But for most of Sudan’s history this vast, heterogeneous region has been divided into smaller units that correspond roughly to the three states of today.

Map 2 Agricultural schemes in Eastern Sudan



The three states are different in character. Red Sea has over 800 km of coastline and a narrow coastal strip that runs along the line of the mineral-rich Red Sea hills. Most of Red Sea state is desert or semi-arid. Annual rainfall in the northernmost district of Halaib is around 25 mm (Abbas and Tilley, 1991, p. 78). But in the south seasonal Ethiopian highland torrents run into the fertile Tokar delta along the Red Sea. Water from the Ethiopian highlands shapes patterns of settlement to the south. The seasonal Gash River empties into an inland delta around Kassala town. South of the Gash lies the Setait River, which joins the Atbara River, a Nile tributary, near the border between Gedaref and Kassala states. The Rahad River, a Blue Nile tributary, forms the south-western border of Gedaref state and Eastern Sudan. The Butana clay plain lies between the Atbara and Nile rivers. This area supports intensive farming: rainfall is up to 800 mm a year at its southernmost point, which lies on a line about 50 km north of Renk, South Sudan's northernmost town (Mackinnon, 1948, pp. 699–733; Sorbo, 1991, p. 222).

Eastern Sudan's coastline, deserts, deltas, and clay plains were integrated into wider African and Middle Eastern economies in ancient times: the region traded in gold and grain with pharaohs and caliphs (Ehret, 2002, p. 209; Paul, 1954, pp. 27, 103). Since the 19th century states headquartered at Khartoum have continuously reorganized its agriculture. Commercial cotton schemes were first set up in the 1860s in the Gash and Tokar deltas, and the region's grain fed colonial soldiers (Serels, 2012; Talhami, 1975, p. 127). Successive Khartoum governments built railways, ports, and roads; dug gold mines; dammed rivers; transferred populations; transformed land tenure arrangements; commercialized agriculture; and in the process turned periodic droughts into more extreme famines (Miller, 2005; Serels, 2012).

The people

According to the 2008 census the population of the three states making up Eastern Sudan was just over 4.5 million, i.e. about 14.7 per cent of the population of modern Sudan (Ireton, 2005; Yousif, Higabi, and Ahamad, n.d., p. 188) (see Table 5).

The people of Eastern Sudan can be grouped according to livelihoods, ethnicity, and gender, among other ways. In 2009 about two-thirds of the region's

Table 5 Sudan's population, 2008

Area	Population
Red Sea	1,396,110
Kassala	1,789,806
Gedaref	1,348,378
Eastern Sudan	4,534,294
Northern states	30,894,000
Sudan (total)	39,154,490

Source: CBS (2009)

These groups often become manual workers, petty traders, or security guards. People speak a variety of languages—a large proportion of the population of Kassala state speak the Beja language Tu-Bedawyi as a mother tongue. Arabic is the language of education, and lack of facility in Arabic is one factor contributing to relatively low levels of educational attainment. In 2009 gross enrolment in basic education in Kassala state was 45 per cent, ten percentage points lower than the rate found in a study five years previously (UNDP, 2012, p. 37).

Eastern Sudan's many languages are indications of the region's ethnic diversity. Alongside Tu-Bedawyi there are significant populations of speakers of Eritrean, Darfuri, Nubian, and West African languages. Ethnic background often influences livelihood patterns, and an understanding of the links between ethnicity and social and economic change is important for an understanding of conflict in the region.

Beja people are among the most long-standing inhabitants of the area, with a long pre-colonial history of peaceful interaction and trade with peoples of the northern Nile Valley. Their Tu-Bedawyi language has similarities with Somali and Oromo; all are classified as Cushitic languages that have been spoken in the Horn of Africa for millennia (Ehret, 2002, pp. 79, 308). For thousands of years migrants from Arabia and groups from the Ethiopian highlands have been assimilated into Beja societies and adopted their language (Paul, 1954). Traditionally, Beja culture is organized around *diwabs*, i.e. small herding groups organized by kinship. *Diwabs* have traditional entitlements and emotional

population were rural and about 10 per cent were pastoralists (CBS, 2009, pp. 48–51). The proportion of pastoralists is declining. Droughts and economic change are rapidly reshaping livelihoods, and some groups have adapted inventively, becoming involved in international trade or linking rural production with urban markets. Other groups have moved to towns to cope with rural adversity.

affinities to specific territories, but they can share land with other groups in return for symbolic acknowledgement of that traditional entitlement. Beja society recognizes larger groupings, too—three of the largest are the Hadendowa (mostly associated with Kassala and southern Red Sea state), the Bishariyin (north and north-west of Red Sea state), and the Amar'ar (the coastal plains north of Port Sudan). A fourth, larger group, the Beni Amer, are present on both sides of the Eritrean border. Beni Amer society historically reflected the social stratifications of the Eritrean highlands, in contrast to the more egalitarian systems to the north. Many Beni Amer people speak Tigre, which is a Semitic language (Jacobsen, 1998, p. 23; Morton, 1989, p. 66).

Before the colonial period most Beja people practised agro-pastoralism—camels in the north, cattle in the south, sheep, and goats, plus grain, much of it grown in the Gash and Tokar deltas (Miller, 2005, pp. 27, 39). From antiquity Beja areas participated in international trade in grain and minerals and the riches of the African interior (Paul, 1954, pp. 27 ff.). In the 19th and 20th centuries states headquartered at Khartoum took over this trade and promoted cotton in grain areas, often taking advantage of the effects of periodic famines to reorganize Beja livelihoods (Niblock, 1987, p. 148; Serels, 2012). By the end of the 20th century nearly all the arable land in Kassala and Gedaref was in state- or market-controlled mechanized farming schemes, established along the area's rivers and in the rain lands of the Butana (Miller, 2005, p. 24).

Some Beja groups settled in towns and others acquired tenancies on these schemes—most tenants are still Beja (Miller, 2005, p. 37; Paul, 1954, p. 126). The schemes turned rangeland into farms, often with the explicit aim of sedentizing pastoralists. Pastoralism has been reshaped by the alienation of land, but has not disappeared. The 1983–85 drought killed nearly all of the area's livestock, but herds have since recovered (Miller, 2005, p. 27).

For many Beja people, keeping animals appears to have become part of a set of survival strategies that allow them to cope with Eastern Sudan's bewildering path to economic growth. In what was then Red Sea district, for example, many who lost animals in the 1983–85 famine became stevedores at Port Sudan, often accessing work through the *diwab* system. In 2003 thousands of stevedores were laid off after the port was automated. Many former stevedores kept or traded livestock, and even those who did not described themselves as

pastoralists (Abdel Ati et al., 2011, p. 12). Some sacked workers may have moved into informal gold mining, which employed an estimated 40,000 people in Red Sea state and neighbouring River Nile state in 2010 (Calkins and Ille, 2014, p. 66).

Central governments sought to manage these social changes by appointing tax-collecting 'tribal' or neo-traditional leaders over Beja groups and sub-groups. Several Beja notables were given the title *nazir*, or paramount chief, which implies land rights. But these notables achieved government recognition just when traditional control of land was eroding and the Beja people were being pushed towards harsh new labour markets in towns and ports. Ethnic affiliations were strengthened rather than weakened in the process, because governments in Khartoum improvised tribalized systems of peripheral governance that turned neo-traditional leaders from land custodians and tax collectors into brokers of government services for members of their ethnic groups. This brokerage, or rationing of services, was a means for the government to manage disinvestment from services in its peripheries and to obscure the stark economic divisions emerging in Eastern Sudan (Abdel Ati, 2013, p. 21).

Khartoum still uses land rights to intervene in relations between ethnic communities. Rashaida people came from the Arabian Peninsula to settle around Tokar in southern Red Sea state during the 19th century and spread out across the Eritrean–Sudanese borderlands. Unlike some previous arrivals, they did not assimilate into Beja society, and relationships were sometimes antagonistic. As landless newcomers, Rashaida people did not have a *nazir*, and negotiations for state recognition of their land rights still routinely occupy Rashaida politics (Young, 2008). But Rashaida pastoralists have responded to their exclusion from the shrinking domain of traditional land rights by making the most of the new global economy. They took jobs as migrant workers in Saudi Arabia and invested the capital they accumulated in the Red Sea camel trade and technology, such as trucks and satellite phones, that allowed them to modernize their pastoral economy (Bushra, 2005, p. 298). Access to finance is now more important than traditional land rights, particularly since the privatization of agricultural schemes. Finance is controlled through banks whose interests are interlinked with the government's. For the past two decades Islamic banks have been reshaping Eastern Sudan's agricultural economy and people with links to the Islamist movement are their principal beneficiaries (Ahmed, 2005).

The Beja and Rashaida have come to prominence because their names are linked to two armed groups who organized in Eastern Sudan between 1993 and 2006. But they probably do not make up a majority of the population, if demographic accounts of ethnicity are to be taken as a rough guide. The 1993 census, the last to address ethnicity, found that Beja people made up about 45 per cent of the population of Kassala state and 6.3 per cent of Gedaref state. Eastern Sudan has other significant populations:

- Arabic-speaking groups from the Butana area, with pastoralist backgrounds that are being reshaped by drought and the commercialization of the agricultural economy, such as the Shukriya group (Sorbo, 1985, p. 100);
- Arabic-speaking groups viewed as immigrants because they moved from other areas of Sudan in the 19th and 20th centuries. Economic change is reshaping their pastoralist traditions; Lahawiyin camel pastoralists are one such group (Ahmed-Khalid-Abdalla, 2010, pp. 149 ff.);
- Arabic-speaking groups from the northern Nile Valley. Many of these people play an important role in bureaucracy and commerce, and the richest of them continue to be beneficiaries of Eastern Sudan's agricultural transformation, although some middle-ranking groups may have lost out because of the increased concentration of wealth (Abdel Ati, 2013, p. 11; Miller, 2005, p. 31);
- Nubian people from the Aswan Dam area, who were forcibly resettled on an irrigated agricultural scheme in New Halfa, Kassala state, in the 1960s (Thimm, 1979);
- Darfurian people who moved to the area in response to the demand for wage labour after the expansion of commercial agriculture in the 1940s. They represent a constituency for Darfurian and eastern opposition movements (Abdel Ati et al., 2011, p. 15; Miller, 2005, p. 31);
- Hausa- and Fulani-speaking people from West Africa who moved to Eastern Sudan's labour markets and have used the opportunities in the area to acquire education;
- Ethiopian and Eritrean people who moved to the area as war refugees during the 1960s. Earlier arrivals were from groups with close links to Sudan, such as the Beni Amer; later arrivals fled war and repression in the new state of Eritrea. Many early arrivals were absorbed into the agricultural labour force (Kibreab, 1996; US State Department, 2006); and
- people displaced from wars in South Sudan, Kordofan, Blue Nile, and Darfur.

Ethnicity or language often defined these groups, which are often clustered around particular towns, economic sectors, or institutions. They experience Eastern Sudan's rapid and unequal paths to development differently. None of these groups has a unified political structure and members of each group have fought on different sides of Sudan's civil wars. But differences in ethnicity and origin are used to structure the labour force and to build political constituencies or armed movements. In this way, ethnicity shapes conflict.

Uneven development and different kinds of discontent in the region meant that relatively few people joined the insurgency in Eastern Sudan that broke out in the 1990s. Participation from Gedaref state may have been particularly low (although this cannot be quantified)—the state has more grain, more money, less hunger, a diverse population, and fewer Beja and Rashaida people, the two ethnic names that armed opposition groups adopted.

The Beja Congress has been a major opposition movement in Kassala and Red Sea states. The movement's first texts, such as M. D. Isma'il's *Kifah al-Beja* (1953), drew attention to the way in which commercial farming and mining had disrupted Beja livelihoods. The Beja Congress has long equivocated between ethnicity and regionalism as a basis for its political organization. In part, this reflected the complex local responses to the disruption of livelihoods by the interlinked processes of development and marginalization. Some people in the area have organized against economic changes that left them at a disadvantage, taking part in labour strikes and housing or cost-of-living protests. Strikes have taken place in the union stronghold of Port Sudan and also in agricultural schemes and small towns across the state (al-Daquiri, 2014; Al-Taghyeer, 2013). But many others have fallen back on the resources of their kinship and ethnic networks to cope with changes rather than organizing around land rights or the rights of farm, port, or mine workers. In any case, Khartoum governments and financial interests have security forces, supporters, and an infrastructure that allows them to respond effectively to organized resistance to change.

The armed conflict

Beja intellectuals were among the first to express regional discontent after Sudan's independence in 1956. From its foundation in 1958 the Beja Congress called for

a federal system and sought to interlink the disaffections of Eastern Sudan with those of the country's other peripheries, particularly Darfur, the Nuba Mountains, and Southern Sudan (Morton, 1989). They achieved modest success in elections during parliamentary regimes in the 1960s and 1980s. But marginalization did not lead to insurrection, not even after the droughts of 1983–85, when nearly all the animals died and Beja people moved to the Port Sudan road to beg; nor even after 'structural adjustment' programmes had aggravated chronic food insecurity; nor even after 1989, when a military coup led by current president Omar al-Bashir banned all political parties; nor even in 1991, when Bashir reportedly told Beja representatives and other opposition groups in a speech in Port Sudan that if they wanted to end their marginalization, they would have to take up arms against the government (ICG, 2006, p. 5; Morton, 1989, p. 69). Plans for armed struggle were initiated in Red Sea state in 1992, and the first Beja military operation in Sudan—an unsuccessful 1993 attempt to blow up Sinkat bridge in Red Sea state—was organized (Abdel Ati, 2013, p. 11).

Beja political projects were formulated in Port Sudan, a centre of Beja education and activism, but armed struggle happened in the countryside and borderlands. Revolutionary elements in the Beja Congress moved to Eritrea in 1994 to begin preparations for an armed struggle from the borders. Other members remained in Sudan and organized the Beja Congress-Inside, as the internal wing of the movement was called. Armed struggle began in 1996, one year after a meeting in the Eritrean capital Asmara, when the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), a coalition of banned opposition parties⁴ that included the Beja Congress, established formal cooperation with the SPLM/A, which had begun its rebellion in Southern Sudan in 1983, and the predominantly Northern Sudan National Alliance/Alliance Forces. The move to Eritrea shaped the social composition of Beja Congress forces. Many of its fighters were drawn from Hadendowa sections that lived along the border and participated in cross-border trade, including the Jamilab section of Hameshkoreib. The area had become a centre for Islamic education under a charismatic shaykh called Suleiman Ali Betai, and also a route for Kassala farmers to access Eritrean ports. Betai's sons led their followers and students into the NDA's armed camps in Eritrea. Backed by the firepower of the SPLM/A and the Eritrean army, NDA fighters captured about a 100 square kilometres of South Tokar on the

Eritrean border with Red Sea state and the district of Hameshkoreib on the border with Kassala state. The NDA periodically captured these territories, holding Hameshkoreib for four years from 2002. It also threatened strategic infrastructure, e.g. the Port Sudan road and oil pipeline.

The Beja Congress contributed only a few thousand soldiers to the NDA, and depended heavily on Eritrean and SPLM/A support. Even with that support the movement was not able to hold border enclaves for very long and could not hold towns (ICG, 2006, pp. 5 ff.; Young, 2007, p. 22). Defections sapped its strength. The 1999 defection of Betai and his forces, a group most closely associated with the main area of Beja Congress control in Sudan, showed the difficulties that the movement faced in organizing regional resistance around a relatively narrow sectional base. Betai's followers remained under arms after he defected through the government's policy of arming local militias in areas where its forces were stretched (ICG, 2006, p. 13; Khalid, 2010, pp. 393 ff.).

Eastern Sudan's insurgency had similarities with other peripheral insurgencies in Sudan. Like Southern Sudan, Darfur, the Nuba Mountains, Blue Nile, and the Nubian north, Eastern Sudan's social development was lagging. In the 1980s structural adjustment policies greatly aggravated peripheral crises; these policies were based on rapid state disinvestment in rural Sudan. Like those other peripheries, the east's ancient cultures were at odds with the versions of Islam and Arabism at the centre of the state. Like the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile, the shifting imperatives of commercial agriculture had thoroughly undermined the region's agro-pastoral economy. In the 1990s, as the war in Southern Sudan intensified, forced military conscription affected Eastern Sudan. At the same time the Khartoum government moved to conciliate its creditors with harsh rounds of austerity and the privatization of public assets—policies that entrenched the economic power of regime clients and pushed workers into unemployment. In other parts of Sudan these same pressures pushed people into open revolt. But Eastern Sudan never managed a sustained military challenge to the power of the state and its commercial allies. Even though the Khartoum government formed local militias, such as Betai's in Hameshkoreib, it never subjected Eastern Sudan to the total war of counterinsurgency, which has radically undermined security in most of Sudan's peripheries (Baas, 2012, p. 88).

One possible reason for the relatively limited scope of violence in Eastern Sudan was Khartoum's determination to suppress insurgency in the region. In most of peripheral Sudan, Khartoum governments withdrew from the countryside to beleaguered garrison towns that at times were temporarily conceded to rebels. This was impossible in Eastern Sudan, where towns were centres of production, and strategic infrastructure—oil pipelines, railways, and roads—ran through the countryside. Another reason is that the eastern insurgency arose outside Sudan. When the decision to start an armed struggle was announced, it came from the external or exiled wing of the Beja Congress, with support from the Eritrean government (cf. Mohammed, n.d.). The internal wing continued to engage in non-violent politics in Sudan.

The present study has so far emphasized the way that long-term economic processes have created differentiations between winners and losers in Eastern Sudan. These differences also played out in different strategies of resistance. The names of both of the main eastern armed movements referenced ethnicity—Beja and Rashaida. This was relatively unusual in Sudan in the 1990s and 2000s: most Sudanese armed movements referenced abstractions ('Liberation', 'Justice', 'Equality', 'the People'). Although the Beja Congress clearly identified itself as a movement seeking to transform the whole of Sudan and not just to advance narrow local interests, the movement's name may have been an indication that rural insurgency was most likely to appeal to ethnic groups facing specific pressures, such as pastoralist groups with a high degree of mobility with access to the Eritrean borderlands. But strategies of resistance were not articulated along ethnic lines. For example, many Beja people were tenants on the Gash agricultural scheme near Kassala town. People from pastoralist backgrounds with scheme tenancies, such as the Gash Delta Farmers' Union, had different opportunities for political representation: organizations (Miller, 2005, p. 114). They also had opportunities for economic diversification that people in less favoured areas did not share (Miller, 2005, p. 37). But they also faced local challenges, such as a sharp decline in cultivable area accompanied by an increase in population (IFAD, 2004, p. 1). These declines were linked to a transfer of responsibility for agricultural development financing from the state to Islamic banks. People who could navigate these complex pressures did not need to turn to rural insurgency—some of them were winners from the system.

Eastern Sudan's 'outside-in' rebellion is exceptional—Sudan's other conflicts are all configured around territories held by armed opposition movements. But Eastern Sudan's conflict nonetheless illustrates an important characteristic in common with every other conflict in the country: the echo of regional and global conflicts. Eastern Sudan was an echo chamber for wider conflicts in the Horn of Africa and further afield. The region's political movements were often able to take advantage of deteriorating relations between Sudan and its neighbours to set up a presence in the country's borderlands.

International dimensions of Eastern Sudan's conflict

Twentieth-century Sudan's vast territory was a nexus for several regional conflict zones: the Horn of Africa, the African Great Lakes, the Sahel, and the Middle East. It has played significant roles in the cold war and the so-called 'war against terror'. All of these conflicts have reverberated in Eastern Sudan in the space of a couple of decades.

The regional context shaped Eastern Sudan's armed conflict from the start (Mohammed, n.d.). As the cold war neared its end a new regime took power through a coup in Khartoum in 1989. It was led by a coalition of Islamists and their sympathizers in the army and the financial and commercial sectors of the economy. For its first few years in power the new regime sought to export its militant version of Islam to neighbouring countries. Neighbouring Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Uganda emerged from the cold war with new revolutionary regimes that had won power after long territorial struggles. They saw Khartoum's expansionism as a threat, particularly after gunmen allegedly linked to Khartoum attempted to assassinate the Egyptian president in Addis Ababa in 1995. In the mid-1990s Eritrea and Ethiopia opened bases in their territories for Khartoum's adversaries in the SPLM/A, the Beja Congress, and other movements organized under the umbrella of the NDA. The SPLM/A moved an entire brigade to the borders of Eastern Sudan after 1995 (de Waal, 2004, pp. 182 ff.).

Conflicts in the Middle East also echoed in the region. Osama bin Laden moved to Sudan in 1991 and, with government support, invested in Eastern Sudan's agriculture and infrastructure (US State Department, 1996). At the time Sudan's relationship with Gulf countries was under severe strain because Khartoum

supported Iraq's 1990–91 occupation of Kuwait. The Gulf was an important export destination for Rashaida traders whose Arab origins gave them privileged access to Gulf markets. Rashaida pastoralists were able to use this access as a means of rebuilding their economy after the droughts of the 1980s, orienting their pastoral economy towards international markets.

During the 1990–91 Gulf war several hundred migrant Rashaida workers fought on the Kuwaiti side, and in return the Kuwaiti government gave Rashaida people 400 off-road vehicles that were moved to Sudan and used in cross-border trade between Eastern Sudan and Eritrea. Khartoum confiscated these vehicles during anti-smuggling campaigns; partly in response, some Rashaida leaders established the Rashaida Free Lions and joined the NDA in 1999 (Bushra, 2005, p. 299; Calkins, 2014, p. 194; Young, 2007, p. 21).

After 2002 the Eritrean-based opposition groups began to look at the possibilities of widening their struggle across Sudan. From 2003 the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) established a presence in Eastern Sudan. JEM is a Darfurian opposition movement with national aspirations that at the time was based on the Chadian–Sudanese border. It signed an agreement with the Rashaida Free Lions in 2004 (Free Lions Movement and JEM, 2004). 🗨️

III. Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement of 2006

Negotiating and signing the ESPA

With backing from the United States, the ‘front-line states’ of Ethiopia and Eritrea—and to a lesser extent Uganda—helped turn Eastern Sudan’s discontents into armed rebellion after 1995, as the armed wing of the Beja Congress joined the NDA, which sought to establish a military presence along the Sudanese–Eritrean border. In 1998, when Eritrea and Ethiopia fought a border war, support for the Sudanese opposition in Ethiopia and then Eritrea stumbled. The momentum behind the armed conflict in Eastern Sudan slowed, but did not stop. Ethiopia began a slow rapprochement with Khartoum while Eritrean support for the NDA continued. In Southern Sudan fighting between and within ethnic communities had stalemated progress against the Khartoum government, and for the SPLM/A diplomacy and politics began to overshadow its national strategy. In the end the ‘war against terror’ and the related oil boom that began after 2001 set the tempo for peace. Sudan was afraid that it might become a target for US attack, and with East Asian investment it had begun exporting oil.

The Khartoum government and the SPLM/A had been conducting inconclusive peace talks since the early years of the civil war. After 2001 international pressure and domestic opportunities pushed both parties to the negotiation table. But the government refused to negotiate with the NDA, insisting on dealing only with the SPLM/A. In January 2005 it signed the CPA with the SPLM/A; this agreement did not explicitly address the conflict in Eastern Sudan. Nor did the agreement the government signed with the NDA six months later. The Beja Congress and the Rashaida Free Lions presented a memorandum to the NDA demanding a separate platform for negotiations on Eastern Sudan. The head of the NDA was Muhammad ‘Uthman al-Mirghani, the leader of the Khatmiya Sufi order and head of the Democratic Unionist Party, which historically had a strong presence in Eastern Sudan. In response to the memorandum al-Mirghani

communicated to the representatives of the Beja Congress indirectly that 'Eastern Sudan all belonged to the Khatmiya sect'.⁵ This rebuff led Eastern Sudanese movements to the decision to negotiate with the government in a separate forum.⁶

Other factors influenced the decision. Eritrea, which had hosted opposition movements in its territory for more than a decade, decided to re-engage with Khartoum. The internal wing of the Beja Congress led a demonstration in Port Sudan on 26 January 2005 that called for the organization to be recognized as the sole representative of Eastern Sudan in any negotiations. Government security forces killed demonstrators, most of whom were Beja, during a further protest on 29 January, and this violent repression galvanized opinion in the Beja Congress. Calling for a fair share of the country's new oil wealth, the EF (see below) threatened to cut off the pipeline carrying oil from the oilfields of the south to the Red Sea coast. The government had to commit additional troops to the east and to arrange conciliatory meetings with traditional Beja leaders after the killings, and it moved towards a separate peace deal for Eastern Sudan, with the aim of normalizing relations with Eritrea.⁷

In February 2005 the Beja Congress and the Rashaida Free Lions formed the EF with support from Eritrea and Darfurian opposition movements. Musa Mohamed Ahmed, representing the external wing of the Beja Congress, became the president of the EF and Amna Derar from the Beja Congress-Inside (i.e. the internal wing) became the vice president. Mabrook Mubarak Salim, head of the Rashaida Free Lions, became the secretary general and the Eritrean government acted as a mediator.

In April 2006 the SPLA withdrew from Hameshkoreib and SAF immediately reoccupied the territory. The EF and JEM were the only remaining opposition forces on the border. Tensions in the EF and the Beja Congress soon emerged. The internal wing of the Beja Congress had a broader social base than the external wing, which had relatively little representation from Beni Amer groups. The Rashaida and Beja peoples had a long history of peaceful coexistence (Salim, 1996, pp. 191–92),⁸ but tensions over first comer/newcomer land rights burdened their relationship. According to Salim (1996, p. 191), successive governments in Khartoum aggravated these problems by presenting the Beja as racists and the Rashaida as being after the Beja's land, while neither tribe had access to 'first class lands' in or outside the region. Khartoum skilfully

aggravated these tensions in order to weaken its EF negotiating partner (Assal and Ali, 2007). But it scarcely needed to, given the lack of strong leadership and unity in the EF, and the weak capacity of the parties that constituted the organization.

Terms of the ESPA

As already noted, the ESPA contained six chapters and six appendices. The agreement covered political and governance issues; economic, social, and cultural issues; and security arrangements. It also provided for a consultative conference on the ESPA. The agreement broadly followed the structure of the 2005 CPA between the GoS and the SPLM/A and the May 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement. In terms of gender issues, it affirmed the importance of women's participation on an equal and equitable basis at all levels. It also mandated that all development programmes should respond to the specific needs of women (see Section VII, below).

The chapter on security arrangements required the complete disbandment of armed opposition forces within four months of signing the agreement. It required no reduction in force strength on the government's side, although Article 88 committed both parties to ensuring that 'no militia forces or any other armed groups exist in Eastern Sudan apart from the SAF'. However, there were no measures for disbanding local militias or border guards under the authority of tribal *nazirs*—an oversight that ensured that border areas would remain heavily armed. This, by some accounts, has contributed to widespread smuggling and human trafficking in the region.

The chapter on political arrangements set up a 15-member Coordination Council for the three eastern states comprising 12 senior state officials (all of whom were NCP members at the time) and three EF representatives. While the agreement required the allocation of government posts to the EF, at least 100 of the 120 posts have been at sub-state, local government level.

The chapter on economic, social, and cultural issues accepted, with some imprecision, the principles of the equitable distribution of wealth and respect for linguistic and cultural diversity. It also expressed respect for customary land rights. The agreement was more precise with respect to the ESRDF, which it

established and which required the transfer of USD 600 million to Eastern Sudan over a period of five years. This money was in addition to new, transparent arrangements for both pooling and sharing national revenue through a CPA-established body, the Fiscal and Financial Allocations Monitoring Commission (FFAMC). This body sought to reverse the disinvestment from Sudan's peripheries that followed the financial crises of the 1980s and 1990s. In terms of gender-related issues, the appendix dealing with the ESRDF emphasized the role of government and non-governmental organizations in raising awareness of reproductive health and mothers' health. It specified the importance of girls' education and of educating women in rural areas so they can 'fulfill their future roles' (Joint Implementation Committee, 2010, p. 72) (see section XII).

The government also formed the ten-member Joint Committee for the Implementation of the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement between the Government of Sudan and the Eastern Front (Joint Implementation Committee), with the Sudanese first vice president as chair, Musa Mohamed Ahmed as vice chair, and equal representation from the NCP and EF.

The Joint Implementation Committee was charged with organizing a consultative conference within 30 days of the signing of the ESPA and inviting participants representing political parties, civil society organizations, commercial associations, professionals, businesses, and Sudanese migrants. The ESPA mandated the representation of women and youths in the conference. But the conference, which was supposed to gather support for the ESPA and to solicit the views of stakeholders on its terms, never materialized. Some of the interviewees for this research said that the GoS deliberately obstructed the organizing of the conference, because it did not want to open up the ESPA for discussion or generate pressure for its implementation. Some of the interviewees believed it was too late to hold the conference at this stage. Others emphasized the importance of holding the conference, with the aims of taking stock of progress in implementing the ESPA; soliciting the views of people at the grassroots level (including on the issues of democratization, the equal distribution of wealth and power, and the way forward); working on reconciliation among ethnic groups; and addressing grievances, including the families of those killed in the demonstration in January 2005 and ex-combatants who have not received their DDR packages. Table 6 indicates the main provisions of the ESPA and progress on their implementation as of January 2015. 📄

Table 6 Main ESPA provisions and progress on implementation as of January 2015

Main provisions	Progress on implementation
Chapter 1: Political issues	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The establishment of the Eastern Sudan States' Coordinating Council (ESSCC), made up of state governors, state assembly speakers, EF, and other party representatives (para. 11) • Nationwide conference on Sudan's administrative structures by 2007 (para. 12) • National, state, and local government posts for EF (paras. 20–27, 35–43) • Affirmative action for government recruitment of Eastern Sudanese and female political participation (paras. 7, 14–19, 23, 24, 28–30) • Promotion of primary and secondary education and of Eastern Sudanese languages (paras. 31–34) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESSCC not established • Nationwide conference not held • Senior posts filled; some other posts filled • Quota system in 2010 national elections increased women's participation • Improved primary enrolment and completion rates between 2006 and 2010
Chapter 2: Economic, social, and cultural issues	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pooling of all national resources in the National Revenue Fund (NRF) and equitable distribution of national resources through the FFAMC (paras. 56–63) • Citizen consultation on natural resource development; restoration of rights to land that has been arbitrarily or unlawfully taken over (paras. 64–73) • ESRDF to be established with USD 600 million in financial resources allocated over five years (paras. 77–83) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRF and FFAMC established by the 2005 CPA, but transparency continues to be a problem • No evidence that this has occurred • ESRDF funding significantly below allocation
Chapter 3: Comprehensive ceasefire and final security arrangements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibition of militias and armed groups other than SAF in Eastern Sudan (para. 88) • Permanent ceasefire (paras. 90–93) • High Joint Military Committee (HJMC) to implement ceasefire (paras. 94–100) • Integration of EF forces; demobilization of non-integrated former EF forces; encouraging conscription in Eastern Sudan (paras. 101–30) • Lifting of state of emergency (paras. 131–33) • Implementation of 2005 Tripoli Agreement on the return of confiscated assets to Rashaida Free Lions (para. 134) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some militias still operational in Eastern Sudan as border guards • Effective ceasefire in place • HJMC established • Demobilization processes begun, but with shortcomings that include corruption and lack of proper implementation • State of emergency lifted • No evidence that this has occurred
Chapter 4: Consultative conference	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultative conference to be convened within 30 days to publicize and mobilize support for the agreement (paras. 137–44) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not established
Chapter 5: Implementation modalities and timeline	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Implementation Committee to monitor implementation of the agreement (para. 146) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established
Chapter 6: General provisions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tripartite committee comprising Sudan, Eritrea, and EF to resolve disputes (para. 149) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eritrea resolved disputes over post allocation

IV. Delayed results: implementing the ESPA

This section discusses the implementation of the political, socioeconomic, and cultural provisions and security arrangements of the ESPA. The sub-sections discuss achievements, shortcomings, and failures in implementing the agreement, and identify the reasons for failure. The sub-sections also highlight resistance and protests resulting from poor implementation.

Political issues: governance and power

The ESPA's political provisions involved the allocation of government posts to representatives of the parties that comprised the EF, as well as wider representation that reflects the ethnic diversity of Eastern Sudan. In this sense, the agreement sought to make minimum changes that involved adding representatives from Eastern Sudan without changing the political structures that contributed to the region's marginalization. The ESPA fell short of meeting commitments to wider participation at the local level, while EF leaders appointed to high government positions have been gradually alienated from their constituencies in Eastern Sudan.⁹

Following the signing of the ESPA, the president of Sudan appointed the tripartite leadership of the EF to leadership positions. Musa Mohamed Ahmed (a Beja), head of the Beja Congress, became an assistant to the president. Amna Derar (a Beni Amer), who established the Democratic Party of Eastern Sudan following a split in the Beja Congress during the negotiations for the ESPA, became an adviser to the president, and Mabrook Mubarak Salim (a Rashaida), the founder of the Rashaida Free Lions and formerly in the leadership of the Democratic Unionist Party, became a state minister. The government also allocated the 60 positions stipulated in the agreement to the EF along political and ethnic lines. Eighteen positions went to the Beja Congress, 16 went to the Democratic Party of Eastern Sudan, and 14 went to the Rashaida Free Lions. In addition the GoS allocated 12 positions to 'other nationalities in Eastern Sudan'. Several interviewees in Khartoum and Kassala said that because of historical marginaliza-

tion in Eastern Sudan, it was difficult to locate qualified Beja, for example, to fill the positions allocated. Others said some qualified people were excluded for ‘speaking out’ against the leadership of the Beja Congress.¹⁰

Not only have EF leaders who held high government positions become increasingly alienated from their constituencies, but the 2010 elections provided for in the CPA, aimed at facilitating democratization in the country, put these leaders in even more precarious positions. Parliamentary and state assembly elections featured a mix of first-past-the-post territorial constituencies, and party and women’s proportional-representation lists. The Beja Congress, the Rashaida Free Lions, and the Democratic Party of Eastern Sudan contested the elections. The Beja Congress had contested national elections in 1965 and won ten seats, in 1968 and won three seats, and in 1986 and won one seat. In 2010 the Beja Congress did not win a single seat in the national legislature, but won one seat in a local assembly in Red Sea state. The NCP won all but two of the territorial constituencies and all but two of the seats on the proportional-representation lists (five territorial constituency results were postponed). While the three parties were not prepared for the elections, some observers said the elections were marred by political repression and human rights abuses across Sudan—in addition to widespread logistical failures and technical irregularities (HRW, 2010).

Musa Mohamed Ahmed supported President Bashir’s campaign for the presidency in both the 2010 and 2015 elections. Amna Derar also supported Bashir’s presidential campaign in 2015. This alienated both leaders even further from their constituencies. The elections 2010 nullified the positions allocated to leaders of the EF, and access to high government posts became subject to bilateral agreements between the leaders of the parties comprising the EF, on the one hand, and the NCP, on the other. Moreover, the number of EF members in the national and state legislative assemblies declined substantially after the 2010 elections. The 2010 elections failed to offer local constituencies in Eastern Sudan greater participation. Other mechanisms and structures for popular consultations and voice provided for in the ESPA, such as the consultative conference, and coordination mechanisms, such as the ESSCC, were never established.

To address the lack of agreement between the GoS and the EF negotiators on Eastern Sudan’s regional autonomy, which the EF proposed and the GoS

rejected, the ESPA provided for the establishment of a coordination council for the states in the region, the ESSCC. The Joint Implementation Committee which, according to the agreement, was responsible for establishing this council, failed to do so.¹¹ Several interviewees from the Beja Congress and the Rashaida Free Lions said that the GoS deliberately did not form the coordination council because it would have provided a platform for coordination for the three states of Eastern Sudan, and that it would have amplified the voices and concerns of Eastern Sudanese political and civil society activists. Some said weak leadership, lack of capacity, and conflict among the EF movements was a key reason for obstructing the implementation of this and other provisions in the agreement.

As discussed above, the ESPA provided for holding a consultative conference following the agreement, with the aim of rallying support for the agreement and soliciting feedback on it.¹² Civil society activists and members of the Beja Congress interviewed for this research said that the conference would have been an opportunity to strengthen the links between the leaders of the EF and their constituencies at the grassroots level. It would also have acquainted people at the grassroots level with the terms of the ESPA.¹³ According to some interviewees, discussion of the ESPA was initially prohibited in some areas, such as Kassala. The agreement was not available even to some of the leaders of the Beja Congress, traditional leaders, or civil society activists.

The limited efforts to publicize the agreement came from local and national civil society organizations. The East's Centre for Culture and Legal Aid, for example, organized workshops in which it circulated the text of the ESPA and solicited feedback on it from community leaders. Another organization, Friends of Peace and Development, organized radio programmes in Arabic and local languages on the content of the ESPA in 2006 and 2007. The Peace Centre at the Ministry of Social Welfare, in collaboration with the UN Women's Development Fund (UNIFEM, now UN Women), also published the ESPA in booklets. Even after the government allowed discussion of the ESPA, it became a minor addition to workshops, 'like a side dish', as a political activist in Kassala state put it.¹⁴ All this contributed to the limited engagement of the people of Eastern Sudan with the details of the agreement.

Lack of awareness about the ESPA document and the failure to hold the consultative conference were not the only reasons for a lack of engagement with the ESPA and what it represented at the grassroots level. High illiteracy—especially

among women—poverty, lack of access to water, food insecurity, and health problems (all of which are issues that are at the centre of the causes of the conflict in Eastern Sudan and central to the agreement), in addition to the repression of political protest, all affected people’s engagement with the ESPA. Centres created to strengthen the capacity of women and youths could have played an important role in supporting conversations around the agreement, but these centres focus on supporting livelihoods for women, while members of the ruling NCP often control youth centres.¹⁵

Importantly, the conference could have served as a platform to discuss and address the killing of at least 27 protesters in Deim Arab, Port Sudan, in January 2005, including in terms of access to justice. Each January the families of the protesters and local and national organizations continue to commemorate the protests and massacre.

The GoS established a fact-finding committee to address the concerns of the families of the protesters who were killed and appointed a judge as chair. Members included police brigadiers and National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) personnel, in addition to an NCP leader. The fact-finding committee toured Deim Arab and the surrounding areas, but asked relatives of those killed whether they could identify the perpetrators and whether they had accepted *diyya* (blood money).¹⁶ The government’s reluctance to publish the results of the investigation was seen as disrespectful of the concerns of the people of Eastern Sudan (Assal, 2013, p. 154).

In addition to taking legal action, the Committee of the Families of the Martyrs has contacted the African Union’s Human Rights Commission. Moreover, it has worked ‘to create public opinion’ that links the events of 29 January 2005 with other grievances that others are facing across Sudan, including those who were killed during the protests in September 2013.¹⁷

The committee links its struggle to others going on elsewhere in Sudan. Those involved in this committee face constant harassment at the hands of national security agencies. One said,

*I was dismissed from my work because of my activism in this committee. Later the government offered me land and offered to reappoint me to my previous job, but I refused . . . We feel the pain of all those affected by injustice in the country. Our activism in this committee raised our awareness of what people in other parts of the country are facing.*¹⁸

The committee has increasingly disassociated its resistance from the Beja Congress. With the exception of its commemoration rally in January 2015, for the past five years the committee has prevented the leadership of the Beja Congress from participating in its annual commemoration of the 29 January 2005 events, because it did not want the Beja Congress to use these events for political gain while not supporting the committee's calls for redress.¹⁹

In all, the constituencies of the parties that comprised the EF did not see much change following the signing of the ESPA. As discussed above, the leaders of these parties who hold high government positions have become alienated from their followers and the parties have fragmented. The Beja Congress split into a number of factions, which include:

- the Beja Congress, led by Musa Mohamed Ahmed, who is isolated. The majority of the membership are Hadendawa. Some of the members argue that Ahmed is no longer representative of the organization;
- the Democratic Party of Eastern Sudan, a smaller party led by Amna Derar;
- the Democratic Forum for Eastern Sudan, led by Amal Ibrahim, a professor at Gedaref University. The party is participating in the NCP's National Dialogue;
- Beja Congress-Corrective, led by Zeinab Kabbashi. This party consists of leaders of the Beja Congress who objected to the ESPA and who were isolated from the organization as a result; and
- the United People's Front for Liberation and Justice (UPFLJ), a broad coalition of political movements formed by the Beja Congress-Corrective and including civil society organizations and student groups that are based both inside and outside Sudan. In October 2013 the UPFLJ joined the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), an alliance among the SPLM-North, several Darfurian movements, and opposition figures from a number of political parties, which launched an insurgency against the government in Khartoum. Zeinab Kabbashi of the Beja Congress-Corrective leads the alliance.

Several members of the Beja Congress interviewed for this research said that there was wide discontent among members of the Beja Congress and the Rashaida Free Lions. Some said that they travelled to Eritrea in 2011 to discuss the possibility of resuming armed resistance, but that the Eritrean government refused to support this option. Several interviewees said that if the Beja

Congress resumed the armed struggle, it would launch its operations from other parts of Sudan, not the east.

In May 2014 Musa Mohamed Ahmed held a meeting with representatives from the SRF—Minni Minnawi and Altoum Hagu. The Beja Congress issued a press release indicating that the meeting aimed at prioritizing a comprehensive and peaceful solution to Sudan's crisis, national dialogue, and the need to address the root causes of the crisis. According to the press release, the Beja Congress and SRF also discussed the need for wider communications, including with other political forces, to achieve peace and social justice in Sudan (see Alrakoba.net, 2015).

The people of Eastern Sudan continue to engage in various forms of resistance, including through protests. In September 2013, for example, political and civil society activists organized demonstrations in Port Sudan and Gedaref and Kassala towns because of the deteriorating economic situation, and following the government's decision to lift state subsidies from basic commodities such as food and fuel. In response the government arrested several civil society leaders and politicians.²⁰

In August 2014 Kassala witnessed protests by young Rashaida who were carrying arms. Protesters blocked the road that links Khartoum and Port Sudan near the Al Hafair and Mankout areas near Kassala town and stopped about 40 buses and cars. They burned tyres and some threw stones at the cars. Protesters who had sought a meeting with the *mu'tamad* (governor of the locality) without success demanded better services, including access to electricity, water, and sanitation. Local Rashaida leaders, security forces, and local administrators intervened and convinced them to leave. The group was then dispersed, following the arrival of the head of the police in the locality (*Al-Mijhar*, 2014; *Al-Sahafa*, 2014).

Some commentators have argued that the main reason for this protest was that Al Hafair is a 'free zone' for smuggling commodities between Eritrea and Sudan. Some Rashaida groups had convinced the Red Sea Company (an Eritrean company) that they were best placed to take charge of transportation between Sudan and Eritrea. Recently Rashaida transportation workers were stopped from working because the company incurred losses when anti-smuggling police uncovered some of the Rashaida's operations. The latter concluded that the anti-smuggling police infiltrated their activities through non-Rashaida residents of Al Hafair, so among their demands was an assurance that the local market

would be restricted to the inhabitants of Rifi Gharb Kassala locality (who are exclusively Rashaida). Commentators said that the protests started after the stabbing of a Hadandawa bread seller because of the high price of bread. Commentators also argue that the protests were a message from Mabrook Mubarak Salim, who had argued in a press conference that Khartoum had marginalized him, to the government that he could mobilize Rashaida constituencies.²¹

Numerous organizations and cultural centres are also working to raise awareness about both national and region-specific issues. The government has targeted some of these organizations. For example, the Alshorouq Cultural Forum in Gedaref vacated its premises on 31 August 2014 because the government had not allowed it to resume its activities. The security forces had shut it down on 11 February 2014 during a discussion of the ESPA. The founders of the forum have been arrested several times (*Al-Taghyyer*, 2014).

Sixty-six per cent of registered voters in Kassala state voted in the April 2015 elections, the highest rate in the country. In Gedaref and Red Sea, less than half of electorate went to the ballot boxes. The NCP maintained its dominance in the national legislature, taking 21 out of the 31 constituencies in Eastern Sudan. The remainder went to independents and factions of the Umma and Democratic Unionist Party, which have dominated parliamentary politics throughout 20th century Sudan. Two regional parties—the Eastern Justice and Democracy Party and the Rashaida Free Lions—won a national seat each. The NCP also swept the 48-seat state legislature, taking 37 seats in Gedaref, 38 in Kassala, and 39 in Red Sea. Regional parties won five seats: the Eastern Democratic Party won a seat in Red Sea and another in Gedaref; the Eastern Justice and Development Party won a seat in Gedaref, and the Rashaida Free Lions won two seats in Kassala. A 2015 constitutional amendment ended the practice of electing state governors, and they are now appointed to their posts by the presidency (NEC, n.d.).

While the ESPA opened up limited space for discussing marginalization and development in Eastern Sudan and while it enabled better participation in political structures for Eastern Sudanese people, implementation in the latter area has been patchy. The three leaders of the former EF are now relatively isolated from the rank and file in their respective movements, especially Musa Mohamed Ahmed. Many of the Beja Congress and Rashaida Free Lions participants in governance structures at the state level feel excluded from decision making and that they are not given any responsibilities. 📌

VI. Economic, social, and cultural issues

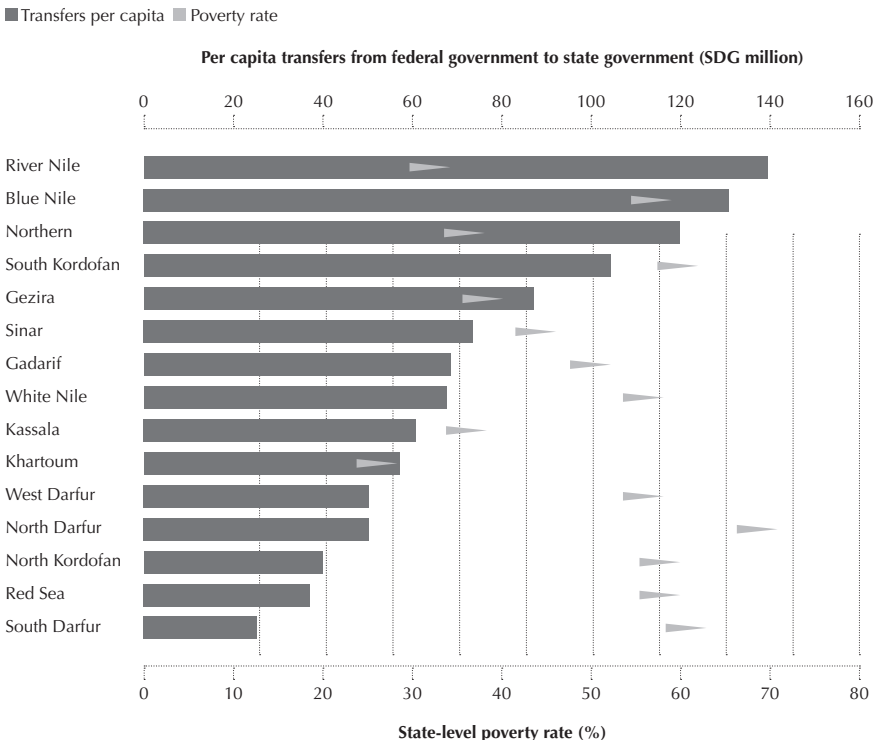
How far has the ESPA addressed the social and economic marginalization that it diagnosed as the cause of Eastern Sudan's conflict? The ESPA devoted a chapter to economic, social, and cultural issues, which included general principles for resolving economic, social, and cultural exclusion; fiscal federalism and intergovernmental relations, including the equitable sharing of resources across Sudan; the right of all parts of Sudan to development; and affirmative action for areas affected by war. The ESPA committed to the development and equal distribution of natural resources in the region, including land tenure and coastal and marine resources. It also mandated economic, social, and cultural policies for the reconstruction and development of Eastern Sudan, including a commitment to ensuring that all development schemes address the specific needs of women and to implementing a development plan for the region.

The ESPA provided for the establishment of the ESRDF. Established by presidential decree in 2007, the fund was intended to serve as the key organ in planning, implementing, and following up on the reconstruction and development for Eastern Sudan, excluding national projects that the government had implemented in the region.

The government committed USD 600 million to the ESRDF. It planned to disburse USD 100 million during the first year of the agreement and USD 125 million in each subsequent year for four years. In addition, the GoS organized a donors' conference for Eastern Sudan, which took place in Kuwait in 2010. During the conference the government committed USD 1.572 billion towards establishing projects in the areas of education, health care, water, electricity, agricultural development, irrigation schemes, and animal husbandry (Ahmed, 2010). During the same conference Kuwait contributed USD 450 million towards building infrastructure in the region, in addition to a grant of USD 50 million towards 'social' or human development schemes (Alsubah, 2010). In total, 42 governments, 30 international and local organizations, and 84 companies from the private sector participated. Participants committed over USD 3 billion for peacebuilding, development, and economic programmes.

While the fund could have played a major role in development and reconstruction in the region, the section of the ESPA dealing with economic, social, and cultural issues reduced the resolution of these issues to the establishment of the ESRDF rather than ‘a comprehensive economic [and social] plan for the region’ (UNDP, 2013, p. 19). What about the ESPA’s other commitment to addressing Eastern Sudan’s underdevelopment, i.e. the transparent pooling and sharing of national revenue? Since Sudan became an oil exporter the government has made investments in the country’s peripheries, and these investments increased after the CPA. These investments partially redressed the policies of severe disinvestment that the government had adopted in the 1990s, at the behest of international financial institutions. In that period, Khartoum gave state governments responsibility for social service delivery while simultaneously slashing their budgets in the name of austerity (IMF, 2012, p. 60) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Per capita central transfers by the state, average for 2000–10 (SDG million)



The reinvestment in Sudan's states was made possible by oil revenues and was required by the CPA. But in these states the new investment was spent unevenly. Most went on wages for government personnel—a group that appears to have been a major beneficiary of social investment generated from oil revenues.²² Government personnel recruitment systems sometimes function as a means for the state to develop client groups in towns and major settlements.

The uneven nature of post-2006 social investment is also visible in health insurance coverage. The government initiated a health insurance system in 1994 to compensate for a dramatic disinvestment in public health resulting from pressure from international creditors and from the costs of fighting the civil war. By 2004 health insurance only covered 13 per cent of the population (WHO, 2006, p. 32). In the years after the signing of the CPA and ESPA the government sought to extend health insurance, but often targeted it at client groups rather than at populations without access to health care. In 2009, 45 per cent, 30 per cent, and 26 per cent, respectively, of the population of Gedaref, Kassala, and Red Sea states were covered by health insurance, but coverage varied dramatically among different social groups (see Table 7).

The government has not made good its ESPA commitments to invest in Eastern Sudan, as the following section describes in some detail. Most of the resources committed went to national projects—even though Article 79 of the agreement explicitly excludes ESRDF funding from being used for national

Table 7 **Health insurance coverage by state and social group, 2009 (%)**

State	Pensioners	University students	Khalwa students ^a	Poor families	Farmers	Martyrs' families ^b	Pastoralists	Lawyers	Public sector
Gedaref	69	100	13	96	1	100	0	87	99
Kassala	72	51	17	36	6	100	3	99	100
Red Sea	67	55	0	88	0	96	0	77	100

^a Students of the Quran at the *khalawi* (religious schools) of Shaykh Suleiman Ali Betai.

^b Families of government soldiers who have been killed. These families are a key government constituency.

Source: CBS (2009, pp. 267–75)

development projects. These national projects generate local investment and jobs, but also displace large populations and reconfigure agriculture around capital-intensive irrigation systems.

The 2010 International Donors and Investors Conference for East Sudan gave a rather vague account of money disbursed by the ESRDF. The fund spent about USD 24 million on 282 small emergency recovery projects in 2008–09. It also contributed USD 100 million towards the construction of a dam near the confluence of the Atbara and Setait rivers, on the border between Gedaref and Kassala states, just up river from the Khashm al-Girba dam that supports the agricultural scheme set up to accommodate Nubian people displaced from the Aswan dam area in the 1960s (Kuwait Fund, 2010, p. 15). The Atbara/Setait dam is one of three big Sudanese dam projects on the Nile, and the Dams Implementation Unit website puts its cost at USD 1.9 billion, more than three times the projected value of the ESRDF. Dams have nonetheless become an attractive form of investment for the cash-strapped governments of the Horn of Africa, perhaps because of their capacity to demonstrate the power of the state and because they allow the state to completely refashion rural communities, building and destroying local alliances in the process.²³

According to the Dams Implementation Unit, which comes under the Presidency, the existing Khashm al-Girba dam is silted (the highland torrents that water Eastern Sudan are very heavy with silt). The new dam will also expand irrigated farming in the Upper Atbara area, help the settlement of nomadic groups (DIU, 2012), and secure drinking water for Kassala and Gedaref states. However, funding this scheme violates the terms of the ESRDF, as discussed above, because it is a national scheme. Moreover, the social consequences of building the dam may not accord with the ESPA's principles for economic development, such as poverty eradication, the equitable distribution of wealth, and 'ensuring the quality of life, dignity and good living conditions of all citizens' (ESPA, 2006, art. 45).

The use of the ESRDF for national projects has attracted criticism from many quarters. The ESRDF's performance has also been criticized for the NCP's monopoly on decision making as to how the fund is used and for its lack of transparency. Several journalists, civil society activists, and politicians from the Beja Congress and Rashaida Free Lions interviewed for this study argued that there

is a lack of transparency and access to information on the government's resources and expenditure in general and on the ESRDF in particular.²⁴ Even leading members of the NCP in Eastern Sudan have criticized the fund.

The ESRDF launched a number of emergency projects in the areas of water, health, education, and road construction. The 282 small projects implemented in 2008–09 were distributed among the different states as follows: 52 projects in Red Sea state; 132 in Kassala state; and 98 in Gedaref state. The ESRDF implemented additional projects using a Chinese grant. These included the construction or refurbishing of youth centres, a children's hospital, and a residence for medical doctors; the construction of water networks; and the digging of wells (Kuwait Fund, 2010, p. 15). The ESRDF is also reportedly implementing other projects with funding from Qatar. These include a road that links Sudan and Eritrea (Kuwait Fund, 2010, p. 16).

Several interviewees insisted that most of the projects that the ESRDF implemented did not reflect the needs of the people of the areas where they were built, but were geared towards building political support (especially for the NCP) in particular areas. Others focused on developing the villages of government officials, such as ministers. For example, the ESRDF built a hospital in Ad-Musa, the village of Kassala state's former minister of the interior and current minister of agriculture, Ibrahim Mahmoud. A visit by researchers to the hospital during working hours in July 2014 revealed that apart from one medical assistant and one nutrition specialist, there were no medical staff at the hospital. Importantly, there were no patients there either.²⁵ Ad-Musa was reportedly the only village that had electricity in the area.

Empty hospital buildings are not limited to Kassala state. In Port Sudan the ESRDF built a large number of healthcare centres, but the state's Ministry of Health did not provide healthcare professionals. As a result, these buildings are mostly used as residences for families who are allowed to live in the centres in return for guarding them.²⁶

Similarly, the ESRDF has built schools in areas where no students are enrolled and where the local community had other key concerns, such as access to clean water.²⁷ One focus group discussion participant asked, 'How do you expect students to learn when they cannot even find drinking water?'²⁸ The building of these schools has often taken place without preparatory work in communities

to sensitize them to the importance and benefits of education in general, and girls' education in particular. For example, the ESRDF built a girls' school in Tikyai, which is part of Talkouk district. However, the people in the area still view education as unnecessary, especially for girls. They believe that it is sufficient for girls to recite the Quran, which enables them to pray, but that education is not a priority.²⁹

Abuobaida Duj, the executive director of the ESRDF, admitted in a press interview that schools were built in areas where people had low interest in education. He said 'there are areas where students are few. For example, a class that has the capacity to accommodate 60 students can have ten.' He said that changing attitudes toward formal education was the responsibility of the state governments and ministries of education, however.

In general, the ESRDF has been accused of underspending on development and reconstruction in Eastern Sudan. As of July 2014 the government had reportedly not allocated more than USD 124 million to the fund (ICG, 2013, p. 1). Government officials argue, however, that the government has contributed additional resources from a Chinese loan and other resources that donors had committed to Eastern Sudan, despite the economic crisis that followed the secession of Southern Sudan and the loss of 75 per cent of the country's oil resources. Conflict in the EF also obstructed follow-up and advocacy to ensure that funds were properly disbursed each year in the years that followed the agreement, they say.³⁰

The fragmentation of the EF was only one reason for its lack of effective follow-up, however. Most of the positions in the ESRDF went to NCP officials, who control decision making. During the ESPA negotiations the EF and NCP agreed that Sudan's NCP minister of finance and the national economy should chair the fund's board in order to facilitate the timely disbursement of funds. Other members of the board included the governors of the three states of Eastern Sudan, the finance ministers of each state, three EF nominees, and two representatives appointed by the president of Sudan. The ESPA (2006, art. 23, para. 82(b)) stipulates that

The ESRDF shall be run by a professional manager appointed by the President of the Republic from a list of nominees presented by the board and a management team under him/her composed of qualified and experienced people.

A leading EF member said that the EF prepared resumés of potential directors. However, it was clear that the government was preparing to appoint NCP member Abuobaida Duj³¹ as director of the fund.³²

Lack of transparency and corruption have been key factors in obstructing the work of the ESRDF. In February 2013 Sudan's auditor general published a report that highlighted inconsistencies in the fund's accounts. EF representatives on the board and in the administration of the ESRDF issued a press release in which they criticized the minister of finance and the executive director of the fund for lack of transparency and accountability, and for excluding EF members from leadership positions in the fund's administration. The release claimed that all EF fund representatives had been 'ghettoized' into one administrative unit and that the director had stripped them of any responsibilities.

The press release also accused the ESRDF's executive director of implementing projects that the fund's board had not approved. It pointed to the auditor general's report, which identified expenditure on items not approved by the board and the reallocation of funds without following the fund's financial procedures. Finally, the press release criticized the fund's lack of transparency in the bidding process to implement its projects (Alrakoba.net, 2013). It accused the ESRDF leadership of violating the country's public procurement law, which requires that major public procurement projects go through a competitive bidding process (Business Anti-Corruption Portal, n.d.). Generally, however, it would have been impossible for the ESPA to address corruption in Eastern Sudan, given that the country ranked 173rd (out of 175 countries) in Transparency International's 2014 Global Perception Index.

In July 2013 Musa Mohamed Ahmed formed a technical committee led by Babiker Albadri, the ESRDF director of projects. ESRDF development director Al-Amin Al-tahir Al-amin was appointed vice chair. The committee identified limitations in the performance of the fund between 2008 and 2013. These included the lack of adherence to the Finance Ministry's procedures when purchasing equipment or contracting vendors. It also identified lack of transparency, mismanagement, and flawed decision-making processes as key challenges. The Beja Congress submitted the report to Sudan's first vice president, Bakri Hassan Salih, and to Mustafa Osman Ismail, who is the NCP member responsible for the ESPA (Committee for Evaluating and Improving the Performance of the ESRDF, n.d.).

Criticism was not limited to the EF's ESRDF representatives: NCP members and officials in Eastern Sudan also critiqued the performance of the fund. During debates on the South Sudan referendum in January 2011, for example, journalist Abdelgadir Bakash, formerly chief editor of the NCP newspaper in Red Sea state, *Baru'ut*, wrote an editorial in which he warned that the people in Eastern Sudan and other marginalized areas of Sudan are likely to favour secession because of marginalization and neglect. He criticized the dismissal of Beja from government positions and the increase in prices, given the economic vulnerability of the people of Eastern Sudan. Bakash was arrested and transferred to Khartoum for questioning by the security services (Abu Amna, 2011).

Recently a number of leading NCP figures, including state ministers, have criticized the performance of the ESRDF. At a meeting of the Council of States in April 2014, for example, the minister of health in Kassala state, Abdella Darf, who is also a leading member of the NCP, said that the ESRDF lacked quality control and commitment to standards. He said that the fund had built 32 health-care centres and hospitals, but these were all not functioning.

In the same meeting, the minister of finance in Red Sea state, Salah Sir El Khatim, confirmed that many ESRDF-constructed projects ended up as vacant buildings. He said the projects often served narrow political objectives, including for EF leaders. Ali Osham, National Assembly member for Hameshkoreib, criticized the fund for building a school for girls in his area where no girls are enrolled.³³

Civil society practitioners in Kassala and Port Sudan said that ESRDF-related work should have focused on empowering communities and convincing them of the importance of accessing healthcare centres. Communities often lack awareness about the importance of using modern healthcare facilities; this includes healthcare services for women. Although the position of women is changing in many parts of Eastern Sudan due to the work of international and local organizations and because of changes associated with armed conflict in parts of the region directly affected by war, there is still, for example, a conviction that only female doctors should treat women.

Interviewees said that the ESPA did not contribute much to educating and building the capacities of communities in the area. One interviewee said,

Lack of investment in human development has undermined the impact [of the ESRDF]. Although there is a budget for human development, these resources are not used to build the knowledge and skills of people in [Red Sea state]. The activities implemented are isolated and usually have no impact. . . . The government side wants to appear to be implementing the [ESPA], but in practice, it renders it void.³⁴

In April 2014 a number of newspapers published interviews with the executive director of the ESRDF, Abuobeida Duj, who responded to mounting criticism of the fund's performance and lack of transparency and accountability. Duj rejected accusations of lack of transparency, which he said was the result of competition among the three states. He maintained that the fund

ensures transparency in its operations. A number of bodies oversee the work of the fund. These include the fund's council, and the Joint Committee for Implementing the ESPA (Abdella, 2014).

Duj also said that the fund was responsible for constructing facilities rather than recruiting health staff or teachers. He said the reason for the lack of resources is Sudan's economic crisis that started after the secession of South Sudan.

According to Duj, in 2013 the Ministry of Finance allocated SDG 200 million (USD 40 million) to the ESRDF, but the Central Bank refused to provide the amount because of a lack of cash. In 2014 the Ministry of Finance allocated the same amount to the fund, but the Central Bank agreed to release these resources only in December 2014. The fund reportedly received outstanding allocations of SDG 230 million (USD 46 million) for the years 2012 and 2013 in December 2014.

Basically, the ESPA did not address the root causes of economic marginalization in Eastern Sudan. Several interviewees for this research said that the people of Eastern Sudan continue to live in poverty despite the gold and other resources in their land, and despite the strategic position of the region as the country's only outlet to the Red Sea. The La Mancha company website says it mined 2 million ounces of gold from 1991 to 2006. Referring to gold mining, a journalist said,

The governor of Red Sea state [Mohamed Tahir Aila, NCP] addressed the state's council, asking that Red Sea state receive 7 per cent (instead of 1 per cent) of the

profits of the Ariab mining company. The problem is that Ariab's gold does not show in the general budget of the Government of Sudan nor the budget of the state. The agreement between the company and the government is not available to the budget and the ESPA is unclear on this issue Ariab is a paradise in the midst of excessive deprivation and wretchedness. It is unfortunate that the people who live in the mining areas do not receive any benefits or services.³⁵

Lack of transparency, corruption, and the mismanagement of resources have hampered the functioning of the ESRDF. The Ministry of Finance, for example, has reportedly misallocated some of the funds that should have funded development projects in Eastern Sudan towards the purchase of 'goods and services' (Onour, 2013). The Ministry of Finance had allocated SDG 616,420 (USD 108,286) towards petrol for cars used for staff transportation, stationery, and meals and 'hospitality' (tea and coffee). There were reportedly no invoices or receipts for this spending. One reporter wrote that the ESRDF

was created to address distorted development in a region where the population suffers poverty and malnutrition, and which has the highest percentage of maternal deaths in the country. Yet we hear that not only did it have unspent funds of SDG 846,000 (USD 148,616) at a time when the government has introduced austerity measures, but the administration found no better way than to reallocate this surplus toward 'goods and services' (Onour, 2013).

As discussed above, poverty, unemployment, socioeconomic disparity, and lack of equitable development in Eastern Sudan were among the key causes of the eruption of conflict in the region. Poverty and marginalization feed both conflict and criminal economic activities, which may destabilize not only Eastern Sudan, but the whole country and the wider Horn of Africa. 🗣️

VII. Women's marginalization and the ESPA

The status of women in Eastern Sudan

Women from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic groups in Eastern Sudan experience marginalization in a way that is often distinct from the experiences of the men in the same socioeconomic or ethnic groups. Several of the pastoralist groups in Eastern Sudan, especially the Beja and Rashaida, practise gender segregation. In areas such as Toqan, on the Sudanese–Eritrean border, men and boys over seven years old often leave the neighbourhoods where they live at the crack of dawn and are not allowed to return until sunset. Women do not decide on their children's education or on whether to use a healthcare facility.

Economic marginalization and food insecurity have pushed people from these groups into towns in and outside Eastern Sudan. This has contributed to changes in some of the customs of these groups. Women take part in agricultural production and the informal economy; they also take up menial, low-paid jobs such as cleaning. Those who have received education work as teachers and healthcare workers. Some women are forced into survival activities like alcohol production and commercial sex, both of which are illegal (Abdel Ati et al., 2011, p. 21). Families are split up as men migrate to look for work, and this leads to significant rises in female-headed households and in divorce and separation rates.

The state intervenes widely in gender relations, but its record is mixed. Female school enrolment has increased significantly during a quarter century of NCP rule, and increased education has allowed women new routes into the formal workforce. But at the same time migration puts households under great pressure. The security services often harass women who work in the informal urban economy, such as tea sellers. The security forces have also used Sudan's public order laws to silence opponents.

The ESPA and women

While the ESPA does not contain a clear analysis of how marginalization specifically affected the people of Eastern Sudan and while it does not include

provisions for integrating gender into the implementation of all its aspects, it does emphasize women's participation at all levels. It calls for awareness raising, especially with regard to women's reproductive and maternal health. The agreement also stipulates that all development programmes should take women's specific needs into account. The appendix devoted to the ESRDF also emphasizes the need to educate women and girls and to recognize women's contributions to the economy.

Nonetheless, it does not provide specific ways to address harmful cultural practices; gender-based violence at the household level; or gender relations that might hamper both women's and men's education, access to health care, and economic and political participation. While some organizations are targeting these issues, the ESRDF has not established synergies to ensure social change and gender equality in Eastern Sudan.

Women's participation in the ESPA process was limited in the negotiations that led to the signing of the agreement, with the exception of Amna Derar, then vice chair of the EF. Two women were invited to participate in the final stages of developing the agreement, but they both thought their participation was 'a waste of time',³⁶ given that the EF and GoS had already agreed on the key tenets of the agreement. Nonetheless, various clauses of the agreement mandate the inclusion of women at all levels. This includes fair representation of women 'in all government institutions at all levels and their equal and effective participation' (ESPA, 2006, art. 17).

As part of the guidelines to ensure the effective participation of the people of Eastern Sudan, the ESPA pledged to undertake 'special measures' to ensure women's participation at all levels of government. Article 9 of the agreement, which allocates eight seats in the National Assembly to representatives of the EF, 'highly recommended' that some of these should be allocated to women (ESPA, 2006, art. 9); however, the Rashaida Free Lions was the only party that put forward a female representative in one of these seats.³⁷ The ESPA did not specify a quota or a percentage for women's participation, nor did it include provisions for addressing the gender-specific impact of marginalization, underdevelopment, conflict, and dominant harmful cultural practices on the women of Eastern Sudan.

Missing pieces

Empowering communities and raising awareness will not be complete without long-term initiatives to empower women and girls in Eastern Sudan. One way would be through addressing gender-based violence, an issue that cuts across political, economic, social, cultural, and security factors. A recent study on domestic violence against women in Eastern Sudan that involved a household survey and interviews with 1,009 women aged 15–49 years who have been married for at least one year indicates that 33.5 per cent of the women experienced physical violence (Ali, Yassin, and Omer, 2014). Seventeen per cent of the women interviewed said they experienced sexual coercion and 47 per cent said they experienced verbal abuse. Twenty-six per cent and 26.8 per cent of the women interviewed also reported divorce and second-marriage threats, respectively (Ali, Yassin, and Omer, 2014). In addition to poor socio-economic conditions, the study reported husbands' consumption of alcohol and low levels of education, as well as polygamous marriages, as key contributing factors to domestic violence against women. Another problem the study highlighted was the cultural acceptance of domestic violence against married women. The study, which seeks to inform policy-making in Eastern Sudan, argues that addressing domestic violence involves better access to education, addressing alcohol abuse, and the introduction of government legislation that criminalizes and penalizes gender-based violence.

The prevalence of political strife and other challenges that face the ESRDF obstruct the ability of the male-dominated staff to benefit from such studies and to use them to inform project planning and implementation. Lack of coordination with non-governmental organizations, UN agencies, and relevant government bodies has limited the ESRDF's ability to build synergies and address gender inequality, poverty, and other forms of oppression and social exclusion in Eastern Sudan.³⁸

Another study in May and June 2012 involved a cross-sectional survey of the prevalence of female genital cutting/mutilation (FGC/M) in Kassala state. The study covered eight schools and 972 randomly selected girls aged 9–16 years. According to the study, the prevalence of FGC/M was 83.3 per cent (Ali et al., 2013, p. 287). The study found that while residence, parents' occupation,

and ethnicity were not factors in determining FGC/M, the mother's and father's education (below secondary level), the presence of a sister who had experienced FGC/M, and the presence of a grandmother were strongly associated with the practice of FGC/M. The study highlighted the lack of a strong government stand against FGC/M and society's acceptance of the practice as necessary and natural as factors contributing to its prevalence and continuity (Ali et al., 2013, p. 288).

FGC/M and other factors impact women's health, including their maternal health. High maternal mortality in Kassala state shows that lack of access to education and the disparity between the urban and rural areas of Eastern Sudan (including in terms of lower access to health care and education in rural areas) are matters of life and death for women. A study conducted over three years in Kassala state sought to uncover the reasons behind high maternal mortality in Kassala compared to other states in Sudan. The study found that the maternal mortality rate among women of reproductive age was 713.6 deaths per 100,000 live births (Mohammed et al., 2011, p. 1). It also found high variation between urban and rural areas. Maternal mortality was higher among couples with low or no literacy. Lack of access to a healthcare facility, delay in seeking medical help despite complications in labour, and lack of transportation were all contributing factors to maternal deaths, according to the study. 📄

VIII. Security arrangements

The ESPA included elaborate security arrangements. Article 24 stipulates that ‘no militia forces or other armed groups would exist in Eastern Sudan apart from SAF’. This provision effectively ended ‘the independent existence of the Eastern Front armed forces, a measure that the Front had previously argued that it would not accept’ (Young, 2007, p. 39). It also marked the end of groups aligned with SAF in the region, such as the Popular Defence Forces (PDF). The ESPA granted the army ‘no less than 33 per cent of their newly integrated SAF units for a minimum duration of two years’ (art. 27). The GoS also assumed responsibility for disarming EF combatants who were not suitable to join government forces and integrating them into civilian life.

Table 8 provides statistics on the number of EF forces integrated into SAF and other forces by 2014, according to a knowledgeable source close to the DDR process.

Most ex-combatants were given lower ranks, given that the majority of EF forces consisted of combatants who had not received conventional military or police training. Many had only primary school education or were illiterate.

Table 8 **EF ex-combatants integrated into GoS forces by 2014**

	Rashaida Free Lions	Beja Congress	Total
Integrated into SAF, the police, and security forces	136	348	484
Holders of positions in government or the National Assembly who were given army ranks	18	31	49
Defectors	6	103	109
Received incentives from the NISS ^a	1,039	515	1,554

^a According to the source, the NISS paid for the disarmament and demobilization of these ex-combatants.

Source: interview with a senior official with extensive knowledge of the DDR process in Eastern Sudan, Khartoum, July 2014

Part of the skilled cadre was not integrated because ethnicity played a part in the selection process.³⁹ Although the government committed in Articles 119–21 of the ESPA to training for EF combatants who joined SAF and other regular forces, it is not clear whether officers received such training. An interviewee said the government will soon dismiss a large number of these officers, given that, according to SAF regulations, officers have to possess certain skills to be promoted. The NISS imposes its own criteria when choosing officers to join it.⁴⁰ Importantly, EF ex-combatants were integrated into a non-transformed army and security apparatus.⁴¹

The ESPA stipulated that EF combatants integrated into SAF should spend at least five years in Eastern Sudan, except if the security and sovereignty of Sudan were threatened (ESPA, 2006, arts. 27, 120). Two years after the agreement many were deployed to areas like Darfur. Some were killed in fighting in Darfur, while others resigned or defected from the army, preferring not to fight their former allies.⁴²

Following the agreement, EF combatants were stationed in three camps at Khashm al-Girba, Kassala town, and Kirsago (near Kassala town). The EF provided a list of 5,417 combatants for DDR (see Table 9); some who were active in Eastern Sudan were not part of this list. These included a group that self-demobilized following disagreement between one of the leaders of the Beja Congress, Sheiba Derar (head of Beja Congress-Original), and Musa Mohamed Ahmed. The former thought the quota system that allocated positions in the ESPA according to ethnicity had marginalized Beja who should have been allocated more resources and political positions because of their ‘contributions to the revolution’.⁴³ Once these ex-soldiers found out that their former peers received DDR packages, they wanted to join the DDR process. The initial list also included names of people who were not members of the EF forces.

Although women contributed in many ways to the armed struggle in Eastern Sudan, not many were combatants. The few women who were active in the region were not included in the initial list that the EF presented to the GoS. The list included one woman. Most of the women who went through the DDR process were from the PDF.⁴⁴ The DDR Commission also had a programme for combatants with disabilities and child soldiers.⁴⁵

Table 9 **EF ex-combatants enlisted for DDR**

	Rashaida Free Lions	Beja Congress	Total
Combatants registered in the original EF list (2007–08)	3,184	2,233	5,417
Combatants not registered in the original list	1,941	1,558	3,499
New cases presented in 2012	3,835	2,200	6,035

Source: interview with former Sudan DDR Commission official, 2014

The DDR process was flawed in many ways. An ex-combatant received limited in-kind support of about SDG 1,700 (about USD 675 at the time). Many in this group sold their packages and spent the money.⁴⁶

A former DDR case worker in Kassala state said,

I worked with 60 ex-combatants in the DDR programme in Kassala. My role was to provide support for the combatants to start small businesses such as selling scratch phone cards, selling food, or fixing cars. All but one sold the inputs for their projects. One ex-combatant from the PDF created a successful business. He created a mill to grind flour and then expanded by selling food. When I followed up with the ex-combatants to assess the impact of the integration programme I found that the majority had changed their phone numbers or refused to take my calls. The group I worked with included former PDF members and some ex-combatants from the EF. These included people who never participated in the war, but who were asked by the EF leaders to join so that they could benefit from the programme.⁴⁷

Ex-combatants who were not integrated into SAF, the police, or national security structures and who were also excluded from the initial DDR programme protested against their exclusion. They organized a number of demonstrations in Port Sudan (where they occupied the offices of the DDR Commission in July 2013) and Khartoum. The GoS had formed a committee to investigate and address the grievances of EF ex-combatants. The late EF leader, Salah Barkwain, chaired the committee.⁴⁸ One strategy to address the ex-combatants' grievances was to provide employment for some of them in Eastern Sudan. The DDR Commission created 1,000 positions in the civil service for ex-combatants,

but the majority did not have appropriate education or training for these jobs. Instead, 3,000 ex-combatants were employed as security officers in schools, cleaners, and workers in their localities. Two hundred ex-combatants in Red Sea state were appointed to various positions according to their education and training. The government made similar arrangements for ex-combatants in Gedaref state.⁴⁹ Ex-combatants and some of the leaders of the Beja Congress are bitter that 'The [Eastern Sudan Peace] Agreement turned [EF] fighters and heroes into garbage collectors'.⁵⁰

Ex-combatants are in a precarious position. GoS officials argue that EF leaders often exploit the discontent among ex-combatants to achieve political goals and put pressure on the government. Members of the Beja Congress and Rashaida Free Lions point to the shortcomings of the DDR process and argue that the GoS has not addressed ex-combatants' grievances so as to divert the attention of the EF, avoid scrutiny of the implementation of the ESPA, and give the ex-fighters the impression that their leaders have forgotten about them.

Numerous combatants who were part of the NDA forces in Eastern Sudan and Eritrea have not been integrated into government forces, nor have they gone through the formal DDR process.⁵¹ Some of these combatants are from other parts of Sudan, especially Western Sudan. Many married Eritrean women in the 1990s and early 2000s and had children with them. They work in or around Kassala town and occasionally visit their families in Eritrea. One political activist in Kassala said that many of these combatants had buried their weapons in a forest on the western outskirts of the town. Between 100 and 150 combatants have written memos asking to join the DDR programme, while a handful approached a political activist in the area in 2013 and 2014 and indicated that they wanted to resume the armed struggle. The activist discouraged them, saying their movements did not sign peace agreements because they wanted to, but because of changes in the relationship between Asmara and Khartoum.⁵²

In order to address the discontent, Sudan's DDR Commission has included Eastern Sudan in its plan for the years 2014–16, which targets former combatants in Blue Nile state, South and West Kordofan states, the central sector, Darfur, and Eastern Sudan (al-Silah, 2014). According to the deputy commissioner for DDR in Sudan, in Eastern Sudan the plan targets 4,500 ex-combatants,

but the DDR Commission lacks funding to implement this plan (*Al-Intibaha*, 2014). Those include 3,000 EF ex-combatants in addition to 1,500 ex-combatants from other groups.

While the war has stopped in Eastern Sudan, security is still precarious. As mentioned above, several tribal leaders now run their own armies. Sheikh Omer Mohamed Tahir, *nazir* (chief) of the Gameilab tribe, former chair of the Beja Congress-Armed Struggle,⁵³ and head of the Popular Front for Eastern Sudan, who is based on the Eritrean side of the Sudanese–Eritrean border, has a substantial force that can be mobilized at any time if the relationship between Sudan and Eritrea deteriorates.⁵⁴

Suleiman Ali Betai also has his own militia, and although he supports the NCP, he maintains strong relationships with Eritrean security. On 17 October 2010, for example, Betai reportedly organized a celebration in Hameshkoreib after the Eritrean president supported the opening of a *kisra* (local bread) business to serve the religious schools in the area. The governor of Kassala state and General Takle, who was responsible for liaising with the NDA and SPLM forces that were active in Eritrea and Eastern Sudan in the 1990s and early 2000s, attended the event.⁵⁵

Eastern Sudan is a site for transnational crimes such as smuggling (including the smuggling of small arms) and human trafficking. Arms smuggling is directly linked to the wide availability of small arms in the region and to the free movement of the Rashaida tribe in western Kassala (Ammar, 2012; Galad, 2014). Human trafficking particularly affects refugee camps in Kassala. Eastern Sudan has hosted large number of refugees from neighbouring countries since the 1960s and 86,000 refugees were registered in the region as of June 2013. The majority of refugees are from Eritrea, with smaller numbers from Ethiopia, Somalia, and Chad (OCHA, 2013). The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) expects at least 1,000 Eritrean refugees to arrive in Eastern Sudan each month during 2015 (UNHCR, 2015).

In 2013 UNHCR reported an increase in abductions of Eritreans in Eastern Sudan, particularly from Shagarab refugee camp (UNHCR, 2013). The organization also reported 338 verified cases of trafficking in Eastern Sudan in 2012 (UNHCR, 2013). A recent UNHCR report, however, indicates that the number of registered cases of abduction has declined since 2012 (UNHCR, 2015). Sudan's

minister of foreign affairs said in 2013 that the sale of human organs drives the trafficking in persons to Israel. Research conducted among hostages and smugglers in Sinai, Egypt (van Reisen, Estefanos, and Rijken, 2013, p. 39) found that a large number of interviewees were abducted from or near refugee camps in Eastern Sudan. Others, including high school pupils completing national service on farms owned by the Eritrean army, were lured from Eritrean towns that border Sudan. Smugglers particularly target high school children whose relatives are in Western European countries. The relatives are forced to wire a ransom to an account in Saudi Arabia before their children or relatives are released in Khartoum. Some trafficked persons are abducted from Eritrean refugee camps in Ethiopia (such as Mai Ayni camp) and transported to Egypt via Eastern Sudan (van Reisen, Estefanos, and Rijken, 2013, p. 40). Kidnappers also lure people by promising to transport them to Libya for free (from where they can cross the Mediterranean to Europe). In Metema, on the Sudanese–Ethiopian border, victims of trafficking are handed over to ‘Bedouin groups’ (van Reisen, Estefanos, and Rijken, 2013, p. 40).

There are allegations, including by the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, that high-ranking officials in Eritrea and Sudan are involved in human trafficking. The report for 2011 has identified General Teklai Kifle as a principal leader of smuggling on the Eritrean side of the border. On Sudan’s border, the report identified Mabrouk Mubarak Salim and Hamid Abdallah as principal leaders of smuggling. The latter is a businessman based in Khartoum who has strong links with Eritrean officials and kinship links with Sudan’s border guards (UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, 2011; 2012; 2013). Trafficked persons who were interviewed for the van Reisen, Estefanos, and Rijken study (2013, pp. 43, 44) said that the Rashaida abducted them from Gedaref. The Rashaida transport trafficking victims from the Sudanese–Eritrean border to ‘Mastura’ and then ask for a ransom. Others said that people smuggled from Eritrea board Rashaida trucks for an average fee of USD 3,000. Given that in recent years some of the inhabitants of Eastern Sudan have fallen victim to trafficking, some commentators have argued that this could lead to armed conflict in the area, given that most of the traffickers belong to one tribe (Ammar, 2012). The GoS passed an anti-trafficking law in 2014 that imposes severe penalties on traffickers.

Finally, several interviewees argued that the content and implementation of the ESPA and the process that led to the formation of the EF created a situation that increased ethnic polarization in Eastern Sudan, which previous commentators have noted (Egemi and Ahmed, 2009, p. 108). One example was the allocation of government positions (in quotas) according to ethnicity. Some Beja, especially those who belong to the Hadendawa tribe, feel that the quotas allocated to them in government reflected neither their numbers nor their role in peaceful and armed resistance in the east. For example, a Hadendawa leader reportedly said in a three-hour 'press conference' in Tu-Bedawyi that the ESPA brought to power the refugees of the camps (referring to the Beni Amer) and the smuggler thugs (referring to the Rashaida).⁵⁶ Ethnic polarization has gradually translated into tension and a lack of tolerance between previous allies.⁵⁷

Others feel that the ESPA ignored the concerns of the inhabitants of the region of West African origins, such as the Hausa. Beyond the ESPA, some members of the Hausa leadership have had good relations with the NCP, which granted them an *imara* (princedom). Some of the Beja protested because this entailed access to land that historically belonged to the Beja. Young Hausa men are showing increased discontent and are considering armed resistance.⁵⁸ Several interviewees also said that Khartoum has a secret agreement with the Government of Kuwait for resettling members of Kuwait's Bidoon tribe⁵⁹ in Eastern Sudan and that this process has already started. 🗨️

IX. Conclusion

Previous research on the ESPA suggested that the agreement was ‘a by-product of a larger process of reconciling the governments [of Sudan and Eritrea]’ and that while the ESPA has contributed to the ending of ‘the violence associated with a low-level insurgency in eastern Sudan’, it was unlikely to end the marginalization that ‘led the components of the Eastern Front to launch their armed struggle’ (Young, 2007, p. 45). The same report stated that

The weak and disfranchised majority frequently gains little and loses significantly from international engagement that has the effect of suppressing conflict but not addressing, much less overcoming, the social injustices that produce the insurrections in the first place This appears to be an apt summation of the ESPA (Young, 2007, p. 45).

The findings of the present research confirm this analysis. A range of stakeholders, including officials in Khartoum, leaders and members of the movements that comprised the EF, civil society activists, and members of local communities agree that the ESPA—along with the two other agreements that the GoS signed with the SPLM/A and NDA in 2005—put an end to armed conflict in Eastern Sudan. Both the EF and GoS have observed the ceasefire protocol in the past nine years. Nonetheless, security in the region remains precarious at different levels. The majority of the population lacks voice and control of the region’s wealth, and suffers poverty, unemployment, political disenfranchisement, and lack of access to basic services, while part of the region, especially the Tokar area, is on the verge of a humanitarian crisis. In short, the agreement did not eliminate the causes that led the parties that comprised the EF to take up arms and seek change and transformation, nor the reasons for the protests that preceded the signing of the ESPA.

On the contrary, the ESPA has created new conditions that sharpened polarization between a minority of ‘winners’ who benefitted from peace dividends, mostly at the personal level, and a majority of disenfranchised and marginalized

'losers'—what Jaafar Mohammed (2007) called 'the margin of the margin'. This polarization has alienated the leadership of the EF from its base and has also weakened the prospects for unified resistance and transformation in Eastern Sudan. Moreover, the absence of warfare in the region has resulted in minimal international attention or pressure to ensure the implementation of the agreement, with the exception of European Union's recent investment of 12.8 million euros in healthcare in Eastern Sudan (Radio Dabanga, 2014).

Yet security in Eastern Sudan deserves urgent attention. The region has become a hub for transnational criminal networks, including human traffickers who operate in refugee camps in Eastern Sudan, on the Sudanese–Eritrean and Sudanese–Ethiopian borders, and on the Sudanese–Egyptian border. The question of trafficking requires an independent assessment, but more robust implementation of the ESPA might have prevented such activities and networks from growing such deep roots in the region.

Yet the failure of the government to fulfil its commitments and the incomplete implementation of the agreement were not the only reasons why the ESPA has not significantly improved the lives of ordinary people in Eastern Sudan. The agreement itself was flawed, given its lack of emphasis on the restructuring of power relations and access to wealth in the region. It emphasized equitable political participation for the people of Eastern Sudan in a non-democratic political system. The limited positions that the ruling NCP offered to EF leaders at the national level, coupled with weak and divided EF leadership, has served to maintain the status quo without offering these leaders a platform to promote the principles of their movements. The allocation of political and administrative posts on the basis of a quota system divided along ethnic lines sharpened ethnopolitical polarization in the three states of Eastern Sudan and ignited hitherto suppressed resentment among several ethnic groups in the region. In addition, the agreement never questioned the relations, institutions, and structures that have marginalized communities, including women, and including at the household level.

The ESPA required resources to be allocated to development through the ESRDF, a relatively modest fund, and through a system of federal transfers set up by the CPA. The ESRDF appears to have been systematically underfunded, and much of the funding it received has been allocated to national dam-building

projects, which may aggravate the region's patterns of inequality. Both the ESRDF and the federal transfers system lack transparency, and the authorities are reluctant to provide evidence that either measure has made a dent in the region's inequality. Many observers attribute this to corruption and favouritism.

All this has generated various forms of resistance. There are currently voices in the Beja Congress calling once more for self-determination and, now, the secession of Eastern Sudan. Although an outbreak of armed conflict in the region is relatively unlikely given the good relations between Asmara and Khartoum, small arms are widespread and some of the forces in the region are likely to join armed resistance in other parts of Sudan. As long as the marginalization that led to the rebellion in Eastern Sudan remains, so does the possibility of renewed forms of armed resistance. 📄

Annexe. Chronology of Eastern Sudan

Pre-20th century

7th century onwards: Migrants from the Arabian Peninsula settle in Beja areas.

16th century: Ottoman Empire occupies the Red Sea coast, including Suakin port.

18th–19th centuries: Beja areas are Islamized; trade with Nile Valley states.

~1800: Hadendowa people settle along Gash and Atbara rivers in rich grain areas.

1821: Egypt conquers Sudan.

1840s: Egyptian authorities dam the Gash River and push the Hadendowa people away from their grain areas. Kassala town established. Khatmiya Sufi orders spread in Eastern Sudan.

1860s: Egypt begins cotton schemes in Eastern Sudan. Rashaida people migrate from Arabia to Eastern Sudan.

1870s: West African labour migrants start moving to Eastern Sudan.

1885–98: Mahdist period: Eastern Sudan is a battleground for Mahdist, Italian, and British forces. Severe famines.

1898: Anglo-Egyptian rule established in Sudan.

20th century

1906: Rashaida and Beni Amer areas divided between Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and Italian Eritrea.

1909: Port Sudan established.

1920s: Rail link from Khartoum to Red Sea. Gash River cotton scheme established. Several years of famine, possibly linked to new agricultural schemes. Shaykh Ali Betai's educational order is set up in Hameshkoreib.

1930s: Agriculture schemes attract both West African and Darfurian workers. Khatmiya groups who supported the British against the Mahdi benefit from land allocations.

1933: In a deal brokered by the government the Rashaida recognize the primacy of Hadendowa rights to land and water.

1940s: Eastern Sudan is a Second World War battleground for Italian and British forces. Several years of famine, possibly linked to agricultural schemes and wartime grain needs.

1950s: New agricultural schemes are set up. Many tenancies on agricultural schemes are given to Hadendowa people, but schemes deprive Beja pastoralists of richest grazing lands. M. Ismail's *The Beja Struggle* (1953) points to the harmful effects of new gold-mining and agricultural schemes on Beja interests. Several years of famine in Beja lands, possibly affected by agricultural schemes. In Sudan's first parliamentary elections the National Unionist Party, linked to the Khatmiya order, wins most seats in Eastern Sudan.

1956: Sudan's becomes independent from British-Egyptian rule.

1958: The Beja Congress is formed by a group of educated Beja as an alternative to the Khatmiya/National Unionist Party. It calls for regional autonomy and measures to address social and economic problems. Military coup abolishes parliamentary system.

1960s: Eritrean refugees begin moving to Sudan, many of them border peoples such as the Beni Amer. Forty thousand Nubian people displaced from the flooding caused by the Aswan High Dam are relocated to the Khashm al-Girba scheme in the south-western Beja lands.

1965: Parliamentary rule restored. Beja Congress becomes a political party; wins ten seats in the national parliament.

1968: Beja Congress wins three seats in national elections, as the renamed Khatmiya-linked Democratic Unionist Party regains political credibility after years of division.

1969: Military rule; all parties are banned. Several Beja leaders ally with the new government, and Beja politics shifts towards brokerage of government services and attracting development investment.

1970s: Establishment of al-Rahad agricultural scheme in Gedaref. Water for pastoralists is scarcer and they sell herds to farmers. The state follows a policy of settling pastoralists. New gold prospecting in Eastern Sudan.

1980s: Civil war breaks out in Southern Sudan. Very severe drought aggravated by famine leads to a loss of about 80 per cent of Beja livestock, exposing the weakness of the military government's development policies. Refugees move from Ethiopia to Sudan.

1986: After a brief transitional government, parliamentary rule returns. Beja Congress wins one seat in parliamentary elections. Khatmiya-linked Democratic Unionist Party wins most seats in Eastern Sudan. Beja Congress moves towards alliance with Sudan Rural Solidarity, a coalition of parties from marginal areas of Sudan.

1988–90: Famine and drought.

1989: Parliamentary government gives Rashaida people a *nazir*—a chief with land rights—but the title is then downgraded.

1989: Military government takes power in coup; Beja Congress banned.

1990: National Democratic Alliance (NDA) founded.

1991: Gulf war. Rashaida men go to Kuwait, where there are other Rashaida groups, to fight against the Iraqi invasion. Khartoum supports Iraq. Eritrea becomes independent. President al-Bashir reportedly tells Beja representatives in Port Sudan that if they want to end their marginalization they must take up arms.

1992: Some Beja groups begin to organize for armed struggle.

1993: Beja Congress joins the NDA. Eritrea trains Beja Congress fighters, who carry out their first—unsuccessful—armed attack.

1994: Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional body, sponsors Sudan peace process.

1995: Beja Congress declares armed struggle. Attempted assassination of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa galvanizes Sudan's southern neighbours into a joint strategy to overthrow the Khartoum government.

1990s: Government sells Eastern Sudan agricultural schemes to foreign investors; Osama bin Laden a major investor. Agricultural financing mostly managed by Islamic banks, which use political criteria in capital allocation. Drought. Government gives Rashaida an administration and a rural council. Sudan People's Liberation Army and other NDA forces carry out attacks on roads and

infrastructure and the NDA periodically holds territory along the border, in Hameshkoreib and Tokar. Government seizes several hundred vehicles belonging to Rashaida cross-border traders.

1998: War between Eritrea and Ethiopia ends regional grand alliance against Khartoum government. Sudan backs Ethiopia. Sudan's new constitution allows political parties to form. National Congress Party (NCP) established as the party of government.

1999: Rashaida Free Lions and its armed wing are established. Government begins oil production in Southern Sudan and builds an oil pipeline through Eastern Sudan. Child mortality in Eastern Sudan is higher than the rest of Northern Sudan.

2000: NDA briefly captures Kassala and attacks the oil pipeline.

2001: After Eritrea's war with Ethiopia, Eritrean youths flee conscription and repression to Sudan.

2002: New round of IGAD peace talks held between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the government in Kenya. A study in Gedaref state shows that grazing lands have been reduced from 78 per cent to 19 per cent in the previous 60 years. Mechanized farming has experienced a corresponding increase.

2003: NDA is refused inclusion in IGAD talks. Insurgency spreads in Darfur; some Darfurian rebels move to Eastern Sudan. Government commits troops to Eastern Sudan while simultaneously fighting insurgencies in the South and Darfur.

2004: NDA begins separate talks with the government; both the Beja Congress and Rashaida Free Lions withdraw from the talks. Drought in Kassala. The government's Zakat Chamber says poverty rates in Eastern Sudan are around 85 per cent.

2005: Government signs Comprehensive Peace Agreement with SPLM. Security forces kill over 20 protesters in Port Sudan who were calling for recognition of the Beja Congress. The Beja Congress and Rashaida Free Lions form the Eastern Front (EF) in Asmara at a meeting attended by a range of Eastern Sudanese political groups. The NDA signs the Cairo Agreement with the government.

2006: Khartoum and Asmara exchange ambassadors and Asmara hosts talks for the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA). The Justice and Equality Movement carries out military operations in Eastern Sudan. The government and some Darfur factions sign the Darfur Peace Agreement in May, and in October the government and EF sign the ESPA. The ESPA allocates government posts to the EF. Divisions within the EF on post allocation are configured around ethnic and sectional differences, and are partially resolved through Eritrean mediation. EU–Libya deal cuts off Eritrean refugee flows across the Mediterranean, and trafficking of Eritrean refugees to Israel begins.

2007: Beja Congress chair Musa Mohamed Ahmed appointed as assistant to the president; deputy-chair Asma Dirar is presidential adviser, and Rashaida Free Lions secretary-general Mabrouk Mubarak Salim is state minister of transport.

2008: EF warns that some fighters may return to war if delayed funds in support of ESPA are not disbursed. Amna Dirar leaves the EF, accusing it of tribalism, and forms the Democratic East Party.

2009: China donates funds to the Eastern Sudan Reconstruction and Development Fund. Israeli airstrikes hit convoys in Eastern Sudan. Urban youth opposition movements spread to Eastern Sudanese towns.

2010: Small numbers of Darfurian rebel fighters still in Eastern Sudan. Dockworkers strike in Port Sudan. International donors conference on Eastern Sudan raises limited amount of funds. Eastern Sudan reconstruction funds are diverted to dam construction, a national project. General elections see overwhelming NCP victory in Eastern Sudan. Student protests against unemployment in Kassala are met with state violence.

2011: South Sudan secedes after referendum. The Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), a coalition of armed opposition groups, is set up and some Beja Congress groups join. Trafficking of Eritrean refugees intensifies. The Arab Spring has echoes in Sudan: student-led protests in Halfa al-Jadida and Gedaref and later in Kassala. Shepherds and wood collectors killed by security forces, an indicator of threat to rural livelihoods.

2012: Gedaref becomes main sheep export centre for Sudan. Trafficking of Eritrean refugees increases in severity. Local groups and politicians call for arms

to help them confront traffickers. Weapons are allegedly smuggled to the occupied Palestinian territory and people to Israel. Anti-government activists arrested in Port Sudan. Farm yields decline, linked to intensive commercial cultivation. Gedaref state supplies surplus to Khartoum; governor challenges Khartoum over regional fiscal arrangements and resigns. UN report alleges that Eritrean officials are involved in smuggling. South Sudan shuts down oil production in protest against failure to reach agreement on oil revenue sharing with Sudan: Sudan's economy contracts sharply, inflation rises, and austerity begins. Sudan dramatically expands gold production.

2013: Eastern Sudan reconstruction funds used on dam construction; 150,000 people reportedly displaced from dam site on borders of Kassala and Gedaref states. Hundreds of former Beja Congress combatants demonstrate at the Port Sudan DDR Commission against failures of demobilization. The United People's Front for Liberation and Justice, an Eastern-based group, joins the SRF. Under international pressure Sudan reduces fuel subsidies, sparking protests across major cities in Eastern Sudan, with several hundred killed. The SRF prepares military plans to support anti-austerity protests. The government shuts down the internet for 24 hours. An eleven-year-old boy killed in Gedaref when government announces mining licence and licence for community graveyard and locals allegedly throw stones at police: four others are injured, and al-Gedaref hospital refuses to admit them. Government reportedly allocates two million acres in Kassala to Arab investors. Sudan adopts anti-trafficking bill.

2014: Government offers political dialogue to all groups who lay down arms. Eastern state governors tell an Omdurman meeting that they have received almost no central government money for reconstruction and that health centres built by the reconstruction fund have all closed. EF representatives are absent from the meeting. Second donor conference for Eastern Sudan proposed. 📌

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Key informant interviews, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions were held with a wide range of actors. These included Eastern Front and Government of Sudan officials, diplomats, political and civil society activists, and international and local NGO staff, among others. Academics at the universities of Khartoum, Kassala, and Gedaref, and Ahfad University provided valuable guidance, including background information and relevant literature. Two peer reviewers with extensive knowledge of Sudan and the paper's subject matter provided very helpful feedback. Hasnaa El Jamali provided valuable support in developing the chronology of events, Yodit Lemma and Emile LeBrun read and commented on drafts of the paper, and Emile LeBrun edited the paper.

We have only included the names or identifying information of individuals who consented to be referenced.

Endnotes

- 1 Mustafa Osman Ismail signed the agreement on behalf of the Government of Sudan; Musa Mohamed Ahmed, then chair of the EF, signed on its behalf; and Yemane Gebraab, officer for political affairs in the People's Front for Democracy and Justice, witnessed the agreement on behalf of the Eritrean government.
- 2 Interview with staff members of an NGO that works in the health sector, Kassala, July 2014.
- 3 Using census data, official statisticians adjusted mortality rates downwards, although the government still uses the higher figures in communications with donors. Later community surveys found Kassala town maternal mortality rates of 0.7 per cent and even higher rates in rural areas. See Alnoory (n.d.); GoS and UNICEF (2012); Kuwait Fund (2010); Mohammed et al. (2011). These rates are significantly higher than the national rate of 0.5 per cent; see UNDP (2012, p. 46).
- 4 'Founded in 1989, the NDA was an umbrella of 17 political parties, in addition to 51 trade unions, and independent "national characters". Opposition forces signed the initial NDA charter in October 1989, which was amended in March 1990 (Hassan, 1993), paving the way for the . . . SPLM/A to join it. [In the mid-1990s], the alliance constituted a government in exile and operated from Egypt, Eritrea, and the United Kingdom. The NDA captured and administered several areas on the Sudan/Eritrea and Sudan/Ethiopia borders in the 1990s. The alliance dissolved after the signing of the CPA in 2005. During the same year member parties of the NDA, except movements representing the people of Eastern Sudan, signed an agreement in Cairo with the GoS; and its member parties became part of the Government of National Unity' (Ali, forthcoming).
- 5 Interview with a Beja Congress representative in Kassala state government, Kassala, July 2014.
- 6 Interview with a member of the EF leadership, Khartoum, June 2014.
- 7 Interview with a senior official with extensive knowledge of the ESRDF and the DDR process in Eastern Sudan, Khartoum, July 2014.
- 8 Interview with Hameed Hamid, director of the office of Mabrook Mubarak Salim, Khartoum, June 2014; interview with Rashaida Free Lions ex-combatant, Khartoum, June 2014.
- 9 Interviews with EF representatives, students, civil society activists, and academics, Khartoum, Kassala, and Gedaref, June and July 2014.
- 10 Interviews with anonymous interviewee, University of Kassala, July 2014; political activist, Kassala, July 2014; civil society professional, Kassala, July 2014; civil society activist, Khartoum, June 2014; anonymous interviewee, Khartoum, June 2014; EF ex-combatant, Khartoum, June 2014; Skype interview with anonymous interviewee, May 2014.
- 11 Interview with the coordinator of the Joint Implementation Committee, Khartoum, July 2014.
- 12 It took the leaders of the EF a year to return to Sudan after signing the ESPA. They flew to Khartoum directly and addressed a rally at the Friendship Hall. Beja Congress political activists chanted slogans against the agreement. Taisier Mohamed Ahmed Ali, founder of the Centre

for Peace Studies in the Horn of Africa, suggested that the EF should not travel directly to Sudan, but rather go first to the states of Eastern Sudan to introduce the agreement to the people of the region and build consensus on its content (telephone interview with Eritrean observer, May 2014).

- 13 Focus group discussion, Khartoum, June 2014; interviews with civil society activists, Kassala, July 2014.
- 14 Interview with civil society activist, Kassala, July 2014.
- 15 Focus group discussion, Khartoum, June 2014.
- 16 Interview with a member of the Committee of the Families of the Martyrs, Port Sudan, July 2014.
- 17 Interview with a member of the Committee of the Families of the Martyrs, Port Sudan, July 2014.
- 18 Interview with a member of the Committee of the Families of the Martyrs, Port Sudan, July 2014.
- 19 Interview with a member of the Committee of the Families of the Martyrs, Port Sudan, July 2014.
- 20 These demonstrations have been widely reported; see, for example, Girifna (2013).
- 21 According to Galad (2014). A journalist wrote that this was an attempt by the Rashaida Free Lions to show Khartoum their strength, given that they are facing severe pressure from the Egyptian regime because of their role in human trafficking, including via Egypt.
- 22 It was not possible to find official accounts of the wage bills in eastern states. But in Darfur and South Kordofan official accounts suggest that well over half the federal reinvestment in states after 2003 went on wage bills (Darfur Joint Assessment Mission Update, 2012, p. 4; Klugman and Wee, 2008, p. 40).
- 23 Large cotton plantations established during Turko-Egyptian rule in the 19th century and expanded by British colonialists in the Gash and Tokar deltas and in Kassala undermined local pastoralist economies (Young, 2007, p. 17), because they deprived the Beja of a resource that they relied on for grazing during severe famine. Similarly, the building of dams on the River Atbara for the irrigation of the New Halfa Agricultural Scheme has had adverse effects on the Bishariyeen Beja, because it ‘reduced the amount of downstream water’ in their areas; see Pantuliano (2006, p. 210).
- 24 See also Salih Ammar, ‘Altahaddiat walawlawiat ilmujtamaa almadani fi sharq al Sudan’ (email sent to the Small Arms Survey, 2014).
- 25 Researchers were told that a specialist doctor worked two days per week at the hospital.
- 26 Interview with civil society activist, Port Sudan, July 2014.
- 27 Focus group discussion with young people from Eastern Sudan, Khartoum, June 2014.
- 28 Focus group discussion, Gedaref, July 2014.
- 29 Interview with civil society worker, Kassala state, July 2014.
- 30 ESRDF officials said that EF leaders did not follow up on the implementation of the agreement.
- 31 Abuobaida Duj is the secretary for organization and communications for the Islamic movement in the eastern sector, which includes Kassala, Gedaref, and Port Sudan (SUNA, 2014).
- 32 Duj said in several newspaper interviews, however, that the role of the ESRDF was to implement the schemes that states proposed.
- 33 Interview with journalist from Eastern Sudan who attended the meeting, Khartoum, June 2014.
- 34 Interview, Port Sudan, July 2014.
- 35 Interview with a journalist, Port Sudan, July 2014.
- 36 Telephone interview with one of the two women, July 2014.

- 37 Interview with Hameed Hamid, director of Mabrook Mubarak Salim's office, Khartoum, July 2014.
- 38 For a discussion of projects to address poverty, gender inequality, and social exclusion (including through legal aid programmes, livelihoods, and support for budgetary planning) introduced in Eastern Sudan by UNDP and other partners, for example, see UNDP (2013). For information about projects to ensure improvement in nutrition and food security in Kassala state, see Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada (n.d.)
- 39 Twenty ex-combatants who belonged to the Democratic Party of Eastern Sudan were neither integrated into SAF nor given DDR packages, due to differences between Amna Derar and Musa Mohamed Ahmed (interview with Democratic Party of Eastern Sudan leader, Khartoum, June 2014).
- 40 Interview with leading member of one of the EF parties, Khartoum, June 2014.
- 41 An analysis of the structure and practices of Sudan's army, police, or national security agencies is beyond the scope of this report.
- 42 Interview with member of the Beja Congress, Kassala, July 2014; interview with former EF combatant, Khartoum, June 2014.
- 43 Interview with Sheiba Derar, Port Sudan, July 2014.
- 44 Skype interview with a gender officer in Sudan's DDR Commission during and after the signing of the ESPA, May 2014.
- 45 Interview with GoS official, Khartoum, July 2014.
- 46 Interview with former DDR finance officer, Kassala state, July 2014; interview with Hameed Hamid, director of the office of Mabrook Mubarak Salim, Khartoum, June 2014.
- 47 Interview with female former NGO DDR case worker, Kassala state, July 2014.
- 48 Interview with GoS official.
- 49 Interview with a senior official with extensive knowledge of the ESRDF and the DDR process in Eastern Sudan, Khartoum, July 2014.
- 50 Interview with EF ex-combatant, Port Sudan, 2014.
- 51 A DDR Commission official said that heads of political parties who were part of the Cairo Agreement between Khartoum and the NDA requested that they receive and distribute the packages intended for ex-combatants. According to this official the government handed over these packages, but it seems that they were not distributed to ex-combatants.
- 52 Interview with political activist, Kassala, July 2014.
- 53 Now the Beja Congress.
- 54 According to the International Crisis Group, Sheikh Omer commands 2,000 combatants (ICG, 2013).
- 55 Interview with civil society activist, Khartoum, June 2014.
- 56 Interview with anonymous interviewee, Kassala, July 2014.
- 57 An interviewee said that in the past people used to make jokes about the various ethnicities in the east, but in recent years tolerance has become scarce. The Beni Amer, for example, gathered holding their swords as a reaction to a derogatory joke that someone told in one of the schools in Kassala (interview with anonymous interviewee, Kassala, July 2014).
- 58 Interviews with political and civil society activists, Khartoum, June 2014, and Kassala state, July 2014.
- 59 These are stateless, often disenfranchised people who reside in a number of Arab Gulf countries, including Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. The Bidoon in Kuwait missed the opportunity

to register as citizens when Kuwait became a country in 1950. The majority of them are believed to be of Iraqi origins, although some are from Saudi Arabia. Before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait they constituted the majority of the Kuwaiti army. Since 2011 the Bidoon have organized regular protests in Kuwait demanding nationality and rights. There are about 100,000 Bidoon in Kuwait, which is a significant number, given the size of the Kuwaiti population, which is about 1.5 million (Albarazi and van Waas, 2014). The Kuwaiti government has reportedly paid other countries, such as Comoros, to accommodate its Bidoon population (Kholaiif, 2014).

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The Small Arms Survey

The Small Arms Survey is a global centre of excellence whose mandate is to generate impartial, evidence-based, and policy-relevant knowledge on all aspects of small arms and armed violence. It is the principal international source of expertise, information, and analysis on small arms and armed violence issues, and acts as a resource for governments, policy-makers, researchers, and other stakeholders. It is located in Geneva, Switzerland, at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies.

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The Human Security Baseline Assessment

The Human Security Baseline Assessment (HSBA) for Sudan and South Sudan is a multi-year research project administered by the Small Arms Survey, an independent research project of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. The HSBA has been developed in cooperation with the Canadian government, the United Nations Mission in the Sudan, the United Nations Development Programme, and non-governmental partners. Through the active generation and dissemination of timely empirical research, the project supports violence reduction initiatives, including disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programmes, incentive schemes for civilian arms collections, and security sector reform and arms control interventions across Sudan. The HSBA also offers policy-relevant guidance on redressing insecurity.

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The HSBA receives direct financial support from the US Department of State, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the United States Institute of Peace. The project has received support in the past from the Global Peace and Security Fund at Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the UK Government Global Conflict Prevention Pool, as well as the Danish Demining Group and the National Endowment for Democracy. The Small Arms Survey receives additional support from Switzerland, without which the HSBA could not be undertaken effectively. For more information, please contact:

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