
THE COUPVOLUTION IN SUDAN IN 2019 AS AN EPISODE IN THE RECONFIGURATION OF THE WORLD SYSTEM

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The world has undergone significant changes in recent decades. These transformations take different forms, but one of the most prominent ones is revolution. Revolutionary events in the twenty-first century are very diverse and tend to come in waves. The revolution in Sudan in 2019 is one of these events: it is not just a revolution or just a coup, it is a coupvolution and also part of the Arab Spring 2.0. This article argues that the events in Sudan have great significance for the reconfiguration of the World System because they are a coupvolution, a concept that combines the features of revolution and military coup. Thus, they represent a new type of revolutionary event that highlights the peculiarities of modern revolutionary movements and has the potential to significantly affect the world. The Sudanese coupvolution has also led to a power struggle in Sudan which affects the regional and global political landscape. It also attracts various regional and global actors who seek to influence the outcome of this struggle and gain better position in the region. Thus, the coupvolution led to Sudan to become one of the main stages of the reconfiguration. This article attempts to identify the main drivers of the Sudanese coupvolution, while also comparing it to other coupvolutions that have occurred in the past decade.

Keywords: *coupvolution, coup d'état, coup belt, reconfiguration of the World System, Sudan.*

Introduction

The twenty-first century is characterized by the significant changes in the World System. The end of the twentieth century was, for many people, the conclusive end of significant political contention (Snyder 1999). However, the first decades of the twenty-first century have been able to demonstrate immense levels of internal instability in various countries. One of the early signs of the looming destabilization was the series of 'color revolutions' (Mitchell 2022). But probably the biggest shock to the world, ending the idea of 'the end of history' and starting a new era of revolutionary events, was the Arab Spring, which completely rewired the balance in the Middle East and also inspired protest movements around the world (Grinin and Korotayev 2012; Grinin 2022b). The influence of revolutions on the World System is an understudied subject, but they can directly or indirectly affect the global order politically and economically. Revolutions can spark international political tensions due to the rise of new governments, and

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they can significantly affect the world economy due to sanctions, changes in trade routes, *etc.* Revolutions also lead to the geopolitical changes as countries that have just experienced a revolution search for new alliances (Grinin 2022a).

The Arab Spring and its ‘global echo’ were the processes that pushed the World-System reconfiguration even further. The reconfiguration in question is an extremely complex process involving several fundamental processes. The first is the gradual weakening of the US dominance in the world (Chase-Dunn *et al.* 2015; Grinin 2022b). It is especially pronounced in the intensifying confrontation between the USA and China, between the USA and Russia and between Western international institutions and various countries (Grinin, Grinin, and Korotayev 2024). These confrontations have played an important role in strengthening new coalitions, such as the BRICS, which aim to be an alternative to different pre-existing organizations. Globalization, which seemed unstoppable after the Cold War, has not only slowed down, but, in fact, has been transformed, according to various scholars (Olivie and Gracia 2020; Hochuli and Hoare 2021; Moghadam 2021).

One of the main symptoms of the weakening of the West's positions in the World System is the increasing instability. Western countries gradually became de-industrialized and the GDP gap between them and the Global South is decreasing quite rapidly (Grinin, Grinin and Korotayev 2024). Moreover, it has become clear since the 2008 financial crisis that the political element of the World System is lagging behind the economic element, and that no single power in the future will be able to hold the position of political dominance (Grinin and Korotayev 2010). At the same time, the US is imposing numerous sanctions against various states like Russia, China, Venezuela, Sudan and others, further hindering globalization. The current fragmentation of the previously globalized world leads many countries to solve their problems in more direct and violent ways that were previously taboo. The World System is going through a process of various transformations, including armed conflicts, revolutions and riots. These processes are particularly widespread in the Afrasian zone of instability, which has become the belt of these events, stretching from the Sahel to Afghanistan and Pakistan (Korotayev *et al.* 2016). In sum, the World System is changing, and perhaps the greatest illustration of this is the revolutionary transformation of regimes around the world. A very intriguing example of such a revolutionary transformation is the Arab Spring 2.0.

There are several revolutionary waves in the twenty-first century (Goldstone, Grinin and Korotayev 2022) and the Arab Spring 2.0 is a part of them (Issaev and Korotayev 2022). A revolutionary wave is a rapid spread of revolutions between countries in a given region or even across the globe. Waves usually have their roots in certain events in the World System that can ignite them. The first wave of this century was the wave of color revolutions. It was made possible by the promotion of democratization by Western countries (Mitchell 2022; Grinin and Grinin 2022a). The second wave was the Arab Spring. This wave was largely affected by geopolitical disputes between Western and Middle Eastern countries (Grinin and Grinin 2022a). The third wave includes a wide range of different revolutions: the Arab Spring 2.0, which includes Algeria (2019), Iraq (2019), Sudan (2018–2019), Lebanon (2019) and Jordan (2019), but it also includes Bolivia (2019), Hong Kong (2019–2020), Mali (2020–2021) and many other revolutionary episodes around the world. This wave was affected by the export of Islamist terrorism to African countries, which significantly affected their security (Grinin and

Grinin 2022a). It is worth noting that all three of the aforementioned world-system processes affected the second and third waves to some extent.

Just like the original Arab Spring, the Arab Spring 2.0 refers to the wave of protest campaigns and revolutions that took place almost simultaneously across the Middle East in 2018–2019. The countries most affected are those that managed to survive the events of 2011 with some degree of safety: Algeria, Sudan, Morocco, Jordan and Lebanon. This article is specifically dedicated to the case of the Sudanese coup d'état, which is interesting as an example of how the reconfiguration of the World-System looks in Africa, as it was a major part of the second Arab Spring. It is also an example of 'coupvolution', a concept that combines features of both a revolution and a coup. Finally, the coup in Sudan is also a part of a 'coup belt' – a region of high military coup activity in Sub-Saharan Africa, stretching from Guinea in the west to Sudan in the east (Ero and Mutiga 2024). In this 'belt', Sudan is on a par with countries such as Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Guinea, where the military also came to power by overthrowing unpopular rulers (Andrews 2023). Therefore, the Sudanese coup in 2019 can be seen as an event of extreme political importance, not only for the region, but also for the world. Taking into account the developments in Sudan after the coup (another coup in 2021 and a civil war in 2023), one can make a conclusion that the 2019 coupvolution was a regime change that affected many processes and may affect even more in the future.

The protests in Sudan began at the end of 2018. The primary catalyst was the surge in the prices of basic commodities such as food and fuel. President Omar Al-Bashir had been in power for 30 years, and in August 2018 the ruling party, the Sudan National Congress, endorsed Al-Bashir's candidacy for the 2020 elections. The economic difficulties, the loss of South Sudan and the government's response to any form of dissent undoubtedly contributed to the prevailing mood (Hassan and Kodouda 2019). The unrest was sparked by rising prices and the removal of subsidies on essential goods, which protesters directly attributed to the president's rule. The protests were particularly prominent in the capital, Khartoum. The protests, which involved several hundreds of thousands of participants across the country, lasted from December 2018 to April 2019. In April 2019, Bashir was forced to resign under pressure from army generals (Bassil and Zhang 2021).

The Sudanese Coup as a Coupvolution

The events in Sudan can be regarded as one of the many episodes of revolutionary mobilization in the twenty-first century. The events in Sudan may not look like a revolution at first glance, but the long episode of Sudanese protest activity can be seen as an example of a revolutionary movement in the modern sense, the so-called revolutionary movement without revolution (Goldstone, Grinin, and Korotayev 2022).

The very concept of 'revolution' has actually acquired new meanings. The fact is that the classical understanding of revolution is based, firstly, on its understanding as an event with a specific time frame, and, secondly, on the fact that a revolution necessarily has a social class aspect with subsequent changes in the entire social system (Beck *et al.* 2022). Modern scholars have other considerations, and the main one being the idea that a revolution is a long process that does not always end in success. It follows from these ideas that the objects of research in the study of revolutions are often revolutionary campaigns, movements and episodes. At the same time, most of the revolutionary pro-

cesses of our time do not aim at a total change of society and are not ideological in nature, but are directed against a specific acting government and its policies, corruption and economic problems. One of the most striking examples of such revolutions was the Arab Spring and later revolutionary waves (Issaev and Korotayev 2022). The Sudanese opposition movements also belong to these new revolutionary movements: they were directed against a specific political leader and the problems mostly associated with his long stay in power.

From a scholarly point of view, military coups are a narrower concept than revolutions. A military coup is an episode of change of power in which the military (usually represented by high-ranking officers) forces the current government to resign. Military coups are interesting as a phenomenon because in the history of their observation and study in various works it has been found that successful and unsuccessful coups occur with equal frequency (McGowan 2003). This makes it all the more interesting that in Africa in the 2020s almost all coups succeeded in overthrowing the incumbent government in the country: perhaps the only exceptions were the attempted coups in Niger in 2021 (France 24 2021) and in Sierra Leone in 2023 (Al Jazeera 2023). Thus, the series of military coups that have taken place in the Sahel and West Africa is an intriguing topic to study from the point of view of the theory of military coups: what was the reason for their massive success? First of all, many military coups can have far-reaching political and economic reasons, which is what much of our understanding of coups is based on. Secondly, if we look directly at the events immediately preceding the coups, we can see that African coups coincide with mass protest mobilization, and for a short period of time, the military essentially supports the efforts of the opposition forces.

The simultaneous mobilization of mass protest of a revolutionary nature and a military coup has been identified by some experts and scholars as a separate political event – ‘coupvolution’ (from the English words ‘coup’ and ‘revolution’). An almost identical concept is also the ‘endgame military coup’, so called because it occurs at the end of an episode of political struggle. The concept of ‘coupvolution’ was first used in the context of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, in which national protests ended with the intervention of the military, or rather their ultimatum to Hosni Mubarak, after which power passed to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. According to researchers such as Nathan Toronto and Robert Springborg, the events in Egypt in many ways represent a new type of political process, namely ‘coupvolution’ (Toronto 2011; Springborg 2012). Robert Springborg conceptualizes the concept of coupvolution quite deeply, distinguishing it from a military coup. First of all, according to the author, the military coup during the revolution has the character of a preventive action, and is aimed at preventing the outbreak of chaos and lawlessness in the country. But Springborg highlights the following point: the army is acting on the side of the protesters in a particular moment and partially satisfies their demands. The result is something between a revolution and a military coup. In the case of Egypt, according to Springborg, this is an illustration of the role of the army in the whole region of North Africa, where the military ‘rules but does not govern’ (Springborg 2016). Revolution scholar Mark Beissinger also writes about coupvolutions, describing them as processes in which the military seizes power in support of a revolutionary movement. And Beissinger says, based on his database covering all revolutionary episodes from 1900 to 2014, that 12 per cent of all episodes end this way – with a coupvolution (Beissinger 2022).

The emergence of the concept of coupvolution and the study of such phenomenon in modern political science can become an important field of study that can simultaneously unite the theory of revolution, the studies of military coups, and the studies of the current reconfiguration of the World System. The events in Sudan in 2019 are also an example of a coupvolution. The coup led by Ahmed Awad Ibn Auf was preceded by a mass protest mobilization across the country that started several months earlier. In the case of Sudan a military coup coincided with a peak in protest activity. The peak of the protest movement in Sudan was in early April, with protests against Omar Al-Bashir reaching almost a million participants and constant sit-ins in the center of Khartoum. The military coup was also directly followed the clashes between police and pro-opposition soldiers. We will try to follow the events of the coup and explain them based on the political and socio-economic factors.

Protest Campaign and the Coup

By the end of 2018, Omar Al Bashir had been in power in Sudan for 29 years. His regime faced many challenges, including the War in Darfur and the loss of South Sudan after a long civil war and referendum. And while it would be a stretch to describe Al Bashir's regime as stable, several years prior to 2018 were largely spared from major destabilization. Despite all odds, Al Bashir's regime managed to withstand the 2011–2013 protests (Rosen 2012) that were part of the Arab Spring. In August 2018, the ruling National Congress Party announced that Al-Bashir would seek re-election in 2020 (Adam 2018). However, the extreme inflation and surge in prices throughout 2018 led to the largest and most uncontrollable protest movement in the country's history, known as the December Revolution.

In early December of 2018, the first protests of the December Revolution took place in different Sudanese states. Perhaps the most notable initial protest was a student protest on 13 December in the city of Ed Damazin in Blue Nile State. The demonstration was against rising bread prices (Radio Dabanga 2019b). The protests spread quickly, and by 19 December they were taking place simultaneously across the country. On this day, protestors set fire to several buildings related to the regime, most notably the ruling party headquarters in the city of Atbara in River Nile State. Interestingly, attempts by security forces to suppress protests in Atbara, Gedaref and Port Sudan allegedly met with resistance from the military stationed in the areas, which provides an early insight into the potential conflict between the army and the government (Mada Masr 2018).

The protests and the reaction to them quickly turned violent. Multiple casualties among protestors and security personnel were the norm from the very beginning. There are different estimates of the number of deaths between December 2018 and April 2019, with some exceeding one hundred (Dahab *et al.* 2019; Radio Dabanga 2019a). The regime's response to the situation was to suppress protests as much as possible. The government imposed curfews across the country and schools were closed (Amin 2018). The Internet was heavily censored, with access to social media and messaging being blocked. News outlets were put under strict control and surveillance. The most radical measures were the declaration of a state of emergency in February 2019, the dissolution of regional governments and the replacement of governors with military generals and security intelligence officers (Walsh 2019).

Protests were regular and intense throughout January, February and March. However, severe measures taken against the protests were effective in preventing them from becoming overwhelming. In early April 2019, protestors tried a new tactic. The Sudanese Professionals Association, an umbrella organization for several white-collar trade unions, proposed a march through Khartoum in order to occupy the square in front of the General Command of Sudan Armed Forces (Wind and Reddy 2019). And on 6 April, the anniversary of 1985 revolution, the opposition carried out the march, gathering more than 800,000 protestors. Over the next few days the number of protestors across Khartoum was estimated at one million. The idea was to set up an encampment in front of the army headquarters in order to create a rift between the government and the army. This strategy paid off, as during the days of the encampment, the military supported and defended the protestors from the security forces, which ended in their direct confrontation and shooting (Sudan Tribune 2019). Perhaps the clashes were the last straw that the army needed to make a decision. On the morning of 11 April, Defence Minister Ahmed Awad Ibn Auf and generals from the Sudanese army conducted a classic coup d'état, dismissing the previous government and establishing the Transitional Military Council (TMC).

The opposition was not satisfied with the coup because no one from the opposition was included in the new ruling body, and many army officers were associated with the regime of Al Bashir. The following several months saw multiple violent protests, civilian casualties and the infamous Khartoum massacre on 3 June. It was not until the end of July that the TMC and the opposition were finally able to reach an agreement to establish the Transitional Sovereignty Council, made up of both civilian and military representatives.

The regime transformation was very difficult and its achievements were largely reversed in the 2021 coup d'état (Zulueta-Fülscher and Noël 2021). However, 11 April remains an example of a successful coupvolution, while the Sudanese revolution as a whole remains an example of a successful (albeit temporarily) modern revolutionary movement. Firstly, the Sudanese protestors were not united by a common ideology or vision for the future, but rather by the simple goal of overthrowing the regime that was unable to cope with rising prices and falling living standards. Secondly, the Sudanese coupvolution was incredibly similar to the Egyptian coupvolution of 2011. The encampment in the center of the capital, the attempts to suppress it and the eventual military intervention are all common features of the events in both countries. One can argue that the outcome is also largely the same: the military never really conceded after taking power.

Political Factors of the Coup

The political factors of the 2019 Sudanese coup d'état are numerous but several most important ones must be highlighted. Firstly, Sudan experienced significant external pressure from the USA, which crippled country's economic performance and destabilized the region, affecting Sudan's internal security. Secondly, there was a problem with Al Bashir's legitimacy. Thirdly, the position of the army in Sudan made it vulnerable to coups. Finally, ethnic and regional cleavages also made the coup more likely.

As to the United States, it is evident that in its efforts to counter rivals in certain countries or to challenge undesirable regimes, the United States employs a well-

established set of strategies. These strategies often involve promoting the ‘democratization’ of the target country and advocating the protection of human rights. Historically, however, this approach has tended to undermine the strength of regime and exacerbate internal instability or encourage separatist movements. Therefore, in both the Middle East and Africa, one of the consistent objectives of U.S. foreign policy, both overt and covert, is to weaken or destroy strong regimes under various pretexts. Libya and Sudan serve as illustrative cases. For approximately three decades, Sudan has been under to sanctions and pressure, largely because of the conflicts in South Sudan and Darfur. Furthermore, the overthrow of a stable regime inevitably creates a source of destabilization that affects surrounding and even distant countries for an extended period of time. Such actions inevitably result in significant costs, destabilization, humanitarian crises, and the spread of terrorism. It is evident that the upsurge of terrorism in the Sahel, which has lasted for a decade and has spread to other regions of Africa, was not an unintended consequence of the events that began in 2012. The Western policy towards Libya, Syria, and Iraq was the proximate cause of the emergence of more terrorists in the region (Grinin, Korotayev and Tausch 2019; Grinin and Grinin 2022b). The Libyan example is quite telling, since after the fall of Gaddafi regime, various militias like the Tuaregs, who had previously served in Libya, became a threat to the entire region by joining different terrorist and separatist organizations.

Al Bashir's legitimacy may seem an obvious problem, given that he ruled for almost three decades and elections were never considered even partly competitive. However, it was not only the length of Al Bashir's rule that was critical, but rather a combination of extremely poor economic performance with an announced desire to run for another term. The coupvolution in Burkina Faso in 2014 showed the same pattern: President Blaise Compaore announced that he aims to change the constitution and extend his rule amid economic and employment concerns. This combination led to a chain of protests which the government was unable to pacify and to eventual coup d'état (Chouli 2015). The same pattern can also be seen in Mali in 2020, where the constitutional court publicly canceled the opposition's electoral gains following difficult parliamentary elections, amid a difficult economic situation and war in the north of the country. The result was the same: enormous protests for several months, followed by a military coup (Korotayev and Khokhlova 2022). The situation in Sudan followed this pattern as well. During the protests, Al Bashir left the post of National Congress party chairman and promised to fight corruption, but this attempt at pacifying the protests did not work (Ahram Online 2019).

Scholars of military coups note that the position of the army in society and in the hierarchy of the regime can be crucial to its susceptibility to coups. African militaries have been observed to prioritize the protection of their own interests, including budgetary concerns and operational autonomy, in the context of competition with government institutions (Nordlinger 1977). Additionally, scholars have suggested that shifts from democratic to authoritarian rule may result in the military becoming a principal agent of authoritarian repression, potentially leading to the military acting independently and intervening in governmental affairs (Zolberg 1968). It is also assumed that military intervention is highly probable when the role of the army in society is not limited to the defence function and the army is one of the most influential institutions. This is also the case in many African countries, as evidenced by the works of Huntington (1981),

Austin (1966), and Besenyő (2019). In the case of Sudan, the army is indeed not a simple actor. The Sudanese army has amassed more than 250 companies in various industrial sectors that are exempt from taxation (Al Jazeera 2020). Moreover, the Sudanese army is mostly seen as a secular force, usually fighting against Islamist forces that came to power with Al Bashir's regime in 1989 (Denisova 2016; Kostelyanets 2022). In addition, there is also a strong belief that military budgets can have a direct impact on military coup attempts. Sudan's military expenditure has fallen from over US\$ 4 billion in 2017 to US\$ 1 billion in 2018 and to over US\$ 700 million in 2019 (World Bank 2024a). It is very likely that military elites were affected by this decline.

Finally, there is a problem of Sudan's ethnic and regional composition. Sudan has been and still is one of the most suffered victims of colonial borders. Even after the secession of South Sudan, there are multiple troubled regions where people are dissatisfied with the rulers in Khartoum. Moreover, these regions are often home to Sudan's major oil fields, exacerbating the problem of regional tensions. For the military, these conflicts can also be seen as a coup factor. The military is supposed to protect national borders and integrity. In a situation where the revolutionary movement has completely engulfed the country, secessionist attempts can be expected. Just as in other cases of coupvolutions, the military used a coup as a way to preserve the status quo and to avoid even bigger problems such as the dissolution of the state.

Socio-Economic Factors of the Coup

The socio-economic factors of the coup could be seen as the most important ones in the case of Sudan. The main reason for the protests in the first place was the price of bread. The inflation was triggered by a trade imbalance that arose after the Sudanese government attempted to liberalize trade as part of the WTO negotiations, which then led to a fall in the value of the Sudanese pound against the US dollar (Kostelyanets 2022). These problems exacerbated by the fact that most of the oil fields remained in South Sudan and Sudan is extremely dependent on oil exports.

It is important to recall that factors of political economy factors are crucial to the phenomenon of military coups. The deterioration of the economic situation is identified as one of the main factors triggering military coups (Johnson, Slater and McGowan 1983), especially in the context of overall very low values of per capita GDP (Korotayev et al. 2018). In the context of economic deterioration, militaries may perceive coups as a means of initiating a reboot of the economy (O'Kane 1981). Furthermore, militaries may perceive deteriorating economic conditions as a threat to national security, especially in the context of population struggles with poverty and fluctuating prices (O'Kane 1981).

The Fragile State Index is one of the most representative tools for tracking negative trends in a country's development. In 2017, Sudan was ranked 5th as one of the most fragile states in the world. This could be seen as an improvement as Sudan was constantly in the top three most fragile countries from 2006 to 2013. However, the reason for the improved rating is the economic development, while major destabilizing factors such as elite factionalization, group grievances and state legitimacy remain very high (The Fund for Peace 2024).

The concept of state capacity is a concept that does not aim to show how many resources a state has, but rather how it can manage them (Herre, Arriagada and Roser

2024). For example, one indicator that can be a component of wealth is the fiscal efficiency of the state, the ability to collect taxes. In many developed and developing countries, taxes account for a significant proportion of a country's GDP, but in Sudan, according to the UN, the figure is only 6.8 per cent in 2018 (*Ibid.*). Another indicator could be the ability to effectively control the country's territory. According to V-Dem's expert assessment, the Sudanese government controlled only 73.3 per cent of the country's territory in 2018, which is low even compared to other conflict countries (e.g., Mali has a control rate of 76.2 per cent in the same year) (*Ibid.*).

Sudan is a country that remains rich in oil and controls oil pipelines that originate in South Sudan. Despite its vast amount of resources, the country is not industrialized and 64 per cent of the population lives in rural areas (World Bank 2024b). In terms of the relationship between the civilian government and the military, this situation is one of the main incentives for a military coup. According to researchers in the field, the presence of readily available resource rents combined with weak civilian institutions is a highly attractive situation for a coup d'état (Mbaku 1994). This is because the military sees not only the weakness of the government, but also an opportunity for personal enrichment.

Summarizing the socio-economic factors, we see that the situation in the country is indeed conducive to instability. Accessible resource rents, the general weakness of state institutions and poor economic decisions are all elements that made the coup d'état in Sudan possible. Moreover, since the socio-economic situation in the country has not yet changed, it can be assumed that the instability in Sudan will continue.

Impact of the Coupvolution in Sudan on the World System Reconfiguration

Like other revolutions, the Sudanese coupvolution of 2019 has become an event that has already led to significant changes in the regional and even global order. As Grinin (2022b: 989) writes: 'Revolutions will be a kind of a battering ram destroying the old world-system/global order and preparing the ground for the establishment of a new world order.' This is particularly true for the December Revolution. Of all the events of the Arab Spring 2.0, Sudan's December Revolution is probably the one that will have the most long-lasting effect, both on the country itself and internationally. It was the revolution that allowed for the new junta government to gain power over Al-Bashir. The revolution set in motion the chain of events that has now reached global scale. In 2021, Sudan experienced a second coup aimed at removing civilian opposition leaders from the government. In 2023, a civil war broke out in Sudan between two forces for power distribution: the leader of the junta Abdel Al-Burhan and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) against the Rapid Support Forces, an Arab militia led by Mohamad Hamad Dagalo, also known as Hemedti (Rickett 2023). The Rapid Support Forces were a militia created by Omar Al-Bashir in order to fight against insurgents in Darfur. Since 2021 there have been tensions between the SAF and the RSF since the latter has not been integrated into the army.

In some way, the Sudanese situation is similar to that of Syria and Libya in the original Arab Spring. Libya and Syria, after their revolutionary events, basically became the grounds for the growth of various organizations and disputes between global and regional powers. Similarly, Sudan became one of the many stages of global reconfiguration. For a long time, Omar Al-Bashir's regime, despite all of its problems, was

able to localize various conflicts. However, five years after its fall due to coupvolution in 2019, various actors have intensified their presence in the country. It is hard to overestimate the strategy and geopolitical significance of Sudan. Sudan borders the Horn of Africa, is part of the Sahel region and has a long coastline on the Red Sea. Thus, the conflict in Sudan was bound to become a proxy war for global and regional powers. Regional actors include the Libyan National Army, which supports the RSF (The New Arab 2023) and Egypt, which supplies drones to the Sudanese Armed Forces (Faucon, Bariyo, and Said 2023). Globally, there are various reports of UAE involvement on the side of the RSF (Townsend 2024), Russian involvement (Rickett and Amin 2024), Ukrainian involvement (Sabbagh 2024) and potentially the involvement of Ethiopia and Eritrea (Nashed 2023). There is also the QUAD – an alliance of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, the US and the UK, which tries to mediate the Sudanese conflict together with the African Union (Sudan Tribune 2023). The UAE's involvement in the conflict has been so far described as a way of combating political Islam on the African continent.

Another side to this conflict is the interests of Russia and Iran. In 2020, Russia and Sudan agreed to open a Russian naval base in Port Sudan. The agreement was not ratified by Sudan, however, but today the discussion about the base continues between the Russian and official Sudanese governments. The Red Sea base will allow Russia to support its operations in Africa and in the Middle East. In return, Russia can potentially provide weapons, fuel and security services to the Sudanese government (Sudan Tribune 2024). According to the media, Iranian officials have been trying to pressure Sudan into providing Iran with the naval base (Bariyo and Faucon 2024). For Iran, the situation in Sudan may become an opportunity to expand its influence and gain strategic access to the Red Sea. In sum, there is a contest over Sudan, in which various actors try to project their influence on the country while there is a window of opportunity. The influence over Sudan will allow it to gain more power in several regions simultaneously. Considering that the talks over the subject of the Russian naval base continue, and that American attempts at mediation have so far been unsuccessful, it can be argued that Sudan has become one of many countries where American influence is diminishing. Although American allies are actively involved in the conflict, they appear to pursue their individual interests.

The civil war in Sudan is creating large numbers of displaced people and refugees. It is estimated that around two million people have left the country due to the violence since the spring of 2023. There are also more than 10 million internally displaced people. Refugees are leaving in different directions, some go to Chad, some to South Sudan, some to Egypt, Ethiopia, the Central African Republic and other countries (Ferahamo and Roy 2024). The conflict has put an enormous strain on global humanitarian resources. With international attention and funding already stretched thin by other crises, the ongoing civil war in Sudan has further burdened global aid agencies. Such a mass exodus from the country is bound to cripple its economy, but it is also bound to destabilize the region and neighboring countries economically and politically. For instance, after the fall of the Gaddafi regime in Libya, migration from that country to the Sahel had a destabilizing effect: Libyan Tuaregs became involved in separatist movements in Mali, while terrorist organizations experienced an influx of new recruits (Issaev, Fain and Korotayev 2021). Unprecedented numbers of refugees from Sudan may create similar problems in neighboring African countries. It will also exacerbate the

refugee crisis in Europe, as Sudanese refugees have already started to leave Africa for Europe.

Finally, there is an economic dimension to the conflict that is also likely to have global implications. The transit of oil from South Sudan to the north through Sudanese pipelines has largely stopped due to fighting on Sudanese territory, which has damaged the pipeline (Reuters 2024). Sudanese oil transit is closely connected to Chinese and Malaysian oil companies, and its disruption negatively affects the global oil market. Sudan also has a significant agricultural potential and the country is seen as capable of solving Africa's food crisis (FAO 2023), however, the conflict has severely hindered agricultural production, threatening regional food security.

Conclusion

The 2019 coup d'état in Sudan has many of the characteristics of a classic coup. It became possible because the Sudanese military saw an opportunity to take power in its own hands, and we can see that many 'traditional' coup factors are present. And yet the Sudanese coup represents an intriguing case of World System reconfiguration at the country level. The influence of the Sudanese events is especially evident in the context of the consequences of the coupvolution. The new military government was unable to maintain a stable course and came into conflict with both the civilian opposition and the RSF militia. The result is a civil war that has become a ground for other powers to fight for influence in the region and has already affected the region's economy.

Revolutions, coups and coupvolutions are not isolated from each other. On the contrary, they come in waves and are strongly interconnected (Grinin and Korotayev 2024). Revolutionary waves, like the Arab Spring 2.0, are large-scale global events that can rapidly change the political landscape of zones in the World System. In the twenty-first century, such waves are transforming the World System and reshaping political relations between countries. Revolutionary waves will continue to play a major role in future processes of the World System reconfiguration. The waves of the twenty-first century have so far led to political and economic struggles all over the world, and the next revolutions will add to these processes.

In the case of Sudan we witness the rapid fall of a regime that has existed since the end of the Cold War. And this fall is conducted by a modern revolutionary movement which is decentralized and not tied to any particular ideology. The coupvolution itself is a revolutionary event that is only now getting more attention and takes place in different countries. Even more importantly, the Sudanese coupvolution is a part of two waves of destabilization: the second Arab Spring and the African 'coup belt'. Therefore, the events in Sudan in the 2018–2019 period can be presented as significant for the region and for the world.

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