

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

SUDAN

MAY 12, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

SUDAN: DIPLOMATIC OFFENSIVE & RSF FRAGMENTATION - A STRATEGIC SHIFT

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE SUMMARY

DIPLOMATIC OFFENSIVE (SAF & GOVT)

Multi-front campaign isolating RSF & alleged backers (UAE, Ethiopia). High-level engagements framing conflict as foreign aggression.

RSF STRUCTURAL DECAY

Terminal fragmentation. Significant defections signaling tribal breakdown and rejection of Dagalo leadership. Exploited by SAF.

MERCENARIZATION RISK

DOMESTIC NORMALIZATION & RESILIENCE:

Rehab of Health Centers, Hajj Management, New Currency Regime.

REJECTION OF INTERNATIONAL OVERSIGHT (Banjul)

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS & KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

GEOPOLITICAL POWER DYNAMICS

Challenging UAE influence. Demanding intra-Arab crisis over RSF funding. Strained ties with Ethiopia over alleged launchpads.

NATIONAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

Integration of 'Popular Resistance' & 'Joint Forces' into SAF. Countering RSF propaganda. RSF using Darfur mercenaries on Ethiopian border.

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ELITE POLITICS & LEADERSHIP

SAF media highlights Hemedti/Dagalo absence as leadership vacuum. Government projects active presence.

STATE CAPACITY & FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

Central Bank currency replacement to drain RSF liquidity. Successful Hajj logistics projecting competence.

INFRASTRUCTURE & ECONOMIC SECURITY

Prioritizing energy/transport repairs (Port Sudan, Barbar-Abu Hamad). Modernizing tax collection via digital pacts.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS, THEMES & STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

TREND 1: RSF TRIBAL COLLAPSE

Foundational alliance crumbling. Loss of social base & legitimacy. Shift to "mercenaryization" alienating traditional supporters.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

TREND 2: STATECRAFT THROUGH NORMALIZATION

Prioritizing services over combat news to win perception war. Signaling administrative grip & SAF as only state provider.

SHORT TERM (1-4 WEEKS)

- Intensified SAF offensives.
- Diplomatic pressure on UAE at Arab League.
- Medical center reopenings.

TREND 3: RISE OF REGIONAL LAWFARE

Using regional forums to challenge international reports. Building legal cases for reparations against UAE & Ethiopia.

MEDIUM TERM (1-6 MONTHS)

- RSF transformation into localized cells.
- Currency success determines financial impact.
- Potential formal charges against foreign entities.

LONG TERM (1-5 YEARS)

- New military-joint forces political identity.
- Potential realignment towards Egypt/Saudi bloc, away from UAE/Ethiopia axis.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY

- Shift focus to disintegrating RSF factions for local settlements.
- Address drone proliferation threat in Horn of Africa.
- Engage national judicial mechanisms, bridging gaps.

FOR PRIVATE SECTOR / INVESTORS

- Logistics Risk:** Secure supply chains, especially for minerals.
- Currency Risk:** Adopt digital payment systems.
- Reconstruction Opportunities:** Demand for medical equipment & solar energy.

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SUDANESE DIPLOMATIC OFFENSIVE TARGETS FOREIGN BACKERS AMID RAPID STRUCTURAL FRAGMENTATION OF THE RSF MILITIA

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

Sudan has launched a sophisticated multi-front diplomatic campaign to isolate the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and its alleged regional sponsors, notably the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Ethiopia. This offensive is characterized by high-level engagement with the Arab League, the Vatican, and prestigious British academic institutions, intended to frame the conflict as a foreign-backed war of aggression rather than a civil dispute. The Sudanese government is specifically leveraging recent drone strikes, which it claims [originated from Ethiopian territory](#) with UAE financing, to demand international condemnation and a re-evaluation of the RSF's status within the global security architecture.

Simultaneously, the RSF appears to be entering a phase of terminal structural decay. Significant defections of senior field commanders, including Al-Nur Qubba and Ali

Rizqallah (Al-Safna), signal a [breakdown in the militia's internal cohesion](#) and a rejection of the Dagalo family's leadership by broader tribal components. These fractures are being exploited by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) to consolidate territorial gains and advance the narrative that the militia is devolving into a collection of uncoordinated mercenary groups. However, this fragmentation poses new risks of localized violence and "mercenarization" of the conflict, as remnants of the RSF may seek independent survival through banditry or shifts in allegiance.

On the domestic front, the government is aggressively projecting a narrative of "normalization" and state resilience. This is manifested in the large-scale [rehabilitation of specialized health centers](#) in Khartoum, the continued management of the Hajj pilgrimage involving citizens from dozens of countries, and the implementation of a new currency exchange regime. Despite these efforts, the state remains highly defensive regarding international human rights oversight, as evidenced by its blunt [rejection of the Banjul Joint Declaration](#). The convergence of these events suggests a regime that is gaining military and diplomatic confidence but remains deeply skeptical of international legal frameworks that could potentially impede its total-victory objectives.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **High-Level Diplomatic Mobilization:** Prime Minister Kamil Idris and various government delegations have engaged in a global tour to present the "Sudan Peace Initiative." This included a [meeting with Pope Francis](#) at the Vatican to discuss humanitarian corridors and a series of [lectures at Oxford and Cambridge](#) to lobby the British academic and political elite for support against the RSF.
- **RSF Structural Collapse and Defections:** The defection of [senior field commanders](#) like Al-Nur Qubba and Ali Rizqallah is being analyzed as the "inevitable end" of the RSF. Analysts suggest the group is losing its tribal "social incubators" as the [Mahamid clan breaks away](#) from the Dagalo-led core, leading to a loss of operational effectiveness in Darfur and Kordofan.
- **Allegations of UAE-Ethiopian Collusion:** Sudan has intensified its rhetoric against the UAE, accusing it of using Ethiopia as a [launchpad for advanced drones](#) to target Khartoum and Blue Nile regions. The Sudanese delegation at the Arab League has demanded [direct pressure on the UAE](#) to cease its support for the militia.
- **Rejection of International Human Rights Oversight:** Sudan officially rejected a joint report by the African Commission on Human Rights and the UN's fact-finding mission. The government claimed the ["Banjul Joint Declaration" lacked legal basis](#) and was based on incomplete investigations that ignored national judicial mechanisms.

- **Urban Rehabilitation and Normalization:** The government has begun the [rehabilitation of central Khartoum](#), specifically targeting specialized medical facilities like the Jaber Abu El-Izz Diabetes Center. This is coupled with a [plan for students to return](#) to university dormitories following the expulsion of militia elements.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Geopolitical Power Dynamics

- The Sudanese government is actively [challenging the UAE's influence](#) within the Arab League and the United Nations. By presenting evidence of UAE funding for RSF drone strikes, Khartoum is attempting to force an intra-Arab diplomatic crisis that isolates Abu Dhabi.
- The relationship with Ethiopia is at a nadir, with Sudan accusing Addis Ababa of facilitating [attacks from Bahir Dar](#) and Benishangul, despite historical strategic ties between the two peoples.

National Security & Security Architecture

- The integration of the "Popular Resistance" and "Joint Forces" (armed movements) into the SAF command structure is becoming a [permanent feature of the security architecture](#), intended to counter RSF propaganda aimed at creating rifts between these forces.
- The deployment of [RSF mercenaries from Darfur](#) to the Ethiopian border regions indicates a tactical shift in the militia's deployment strategy, likely under foreign direction to open new fronts in the Blue Nile.

State Capacity & Financial Resilience

- The Central Bank of Sudan is continuing its [monitoring of currency replacement](#) efforts, an essential move to drain the RSF's liquidity and combat the parallel market.
- The management of [Hajj logistics for 8,500 pilgrims](#) from 38 different countries serves as a significant exercise in projecting administrative competence during wartime.

Elite Politics & Leadership Dynamics

- The [absence of Hemedti and Abdul Rahim Dagalo](#) from the frontlines is being used by SAF-aligned media to suggest a leadership vacuum within the RSF, contrasting it with the active diplomatic and military presence of the Sovereignty Council members.

Infrastructure & Economic Security

- Reconstruction efforts are prioritizing [energy and transport infrastructure](#), including the repair of the Port Sudan refinery and strategic roads (Barbar-Abu Hamad) to secure supply chains for fuel and minerals.
- The signing of [digital payment agreements](#) between the Ministry of Finance and various banks (e.g., Export Development Bank) aims to modernize tax and fee collection to stabilize the war economy.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative and policy activity centered on asserting sovereignty over human rights narratives and formalizing reconstruction partnerships. The government is moving away

from international oversight toward domestic judicial and administrative control.

- **Rejection of the Banjul Joint Declaration:** The Sudanese delegation at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) 87th session [rejected the joint statement](#) on human rights, citing a lack of legal mandate and procedural errors in investigating RSF atrocities.
- **Urban Rehabilitation Policy:** A new directive from the Sovereignty Council mandated the [clearing of debris and waste](#) from central Khartoum within one week to facilitate the return of essential medical services.
- **Inter-Agency Media Policy:** The Ministry of Youth and Sports established a [partnership with the National Broadcaster](#) to create content aimed at "combating the effects of the war" and promoting youth mobilization.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Fragmentation of the RSF Tribal Coalition

The most significant trend of the day is the apparent collapse of the RSF's foundational tribal alliance. For the first time, prominent leaders from the Mahamid and other major Kordofan/Darfur tribes are [publicly denouncing the Dagalo family](#). This is not merely a military loss but a social one; the RSF is losing its ability to recruit and sustain itself within the Darfuri social fabric. The "mercenaryization" of the RSF—the shift from a paramilitary with local roots to a group increasingly perceived as [beholden to Abu Dhabi](#)—is alienating its traditional base. This

trend suggests that even if the RSF survives as a military force, its political legitimacy as a representative of the "marginalized" is effectively dead.

Statecraft through Normalization

Sudan is attempting to win the war of perceptions by [prioritizing health infrastructure](#) and religious rituals over combat news. By focusing on the return of the Jaber Abu El-Izz hospital and the intricate [logistics of the Hajj pilgrimage](#), the government is signaling to both domestic and international audiences that its administrative grip is tightening. This "normalization" is a form of political warfare intended to show that the RSF's period of disruption is ending and that the SAF remains the only entity capable of providing state services.

The Rise of Regional Lawfare

Sudan is increasingly using ["lawfare" in regional forums](#) like the Arab League and the African Commission. By rejecting international reports [lacking legal foundations](#) and demanding the classification of the UAE as a co-belligerent, Khartoum is trying to turn the international legal order against its enemies. The government is successfully identifying procedural flaws in international investigations to insulate itself from criticism while simultaneously building a legal case for war reparations from the UAE and Ethiopia.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect an intensification of SAF offensives in Darfur and North Kordofan as the army attempts to capitalize on RSF [leadership defections](#). The diplomatic pressure on the UAE will likely reach a fever pitch during upcoming Arab League delegate meetings, possibly leading to

a [symbolic UAE withdrawal](#) from specific diplomatic sessions. In Khartoum, the reopening of medical centers will be used as a propaganda tool to encourage the return of displaced middle-class residents.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The RSF may transform from a centralized paramilitary into a series of [localized insurgent cells](#) or mercenary outfits, leading to a "Whac-A-Mole" security environment in Darfur. The success of the [currency replacement program](#) will determine whether the government can finally break the RSF's financial back. We may also see the first formal charges filed by the Sudanese judiciary against foreign entities for supporting terrorism.

Long Term (1-5 Years): The current war is forging a [new Sudanese political identity](#) rooted in the military-joint forces alliance, potentially sidelining traditional civilian political blocs for a generation. The structural damage to the relationship with the UAE and Ethiopia may lead to a permanent realignment of Sudan toward a [northern-red sea bloc](#) involving Egypt and Saudi Arabia, with deep-seated enmity toward the "Abiy-MBZ" axis.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For International Policy:

- Intermediaries should shift focus from the Dagalo brothers to [disintegrating tribal factions](#) within the RSF to facilitate local ceasefires and political settlements.
- The international community must address the specific [threat of drone proliferation](#) in the Horn of Africa, as the use of Ethiopian territory for UAE-backed strikes sets a dangerous regional precedent.

- Engage with Sudan's national judicial mechanisms to avoid the [total rejection of human rights reporting](#), bridging the gap between international standards and state sovereignty.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Logistics Risk:** Strategic roads like [Barbar-Abu Hamad](#) are under rehabilitation but remain vulnerable to fragmented militia groups; private security for mineral transport is essential.
- **Currency Risk:** The ongoing [currency replacement](#) creates high volatility; companies should move toward the [digital payment systems](#) currently being promoted by the Ministry of Finance.
- **Reconstruction Opportunities:** There is significant demand for [medical equipment and solar energy](#) solutions for hospitals and universities in Khartoum as the government pushes for "normalization."

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Today's Media Trends is a public interest experiment in applying deep thematic trend analysis to television news coverage from around the world to explore how responsibly applied advanced AI can help journalists and scholars better understand the overarching trends, themes and patterns of our global world.

No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

Each morning, in collaboration with the Internet Archive's TV News Archive, we apply Google's Gemini 3 to deeply examine yesterday's coverage from each television news channel to tease out the overarching themes and trends of its news coverage into a richly annotated thematic analysis. Each high-level insight is connected back to the original broadcast, allowing journalists and scholars to understand the dominate themes and trends and instantly click out to the underlying sources for details.

By helping journalists and scholars see the broader trends and patterns of global news coverage, this analysis helps them identify relevant stories and coverage they might not otherwise have encountered and uncover connections, emphases and narrative shifts that enable more comprehensive reporting and deeper, evidence-based research.

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