

# STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS FOR POST- CONFLICT SUDAN: BALANCING GLOBAL POWER COMPETITION AND SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY BEYOND AGENDA 2030

**DR INSHRAH MOHAMED KHALIL SHARIF**

*Reyada for Capacity Building Studies and Consultations*

Email: reyadango@gmail.com

ORCID: 0009-0007-5022-9291

## ABSTRACT

**PURPOSE:** This research explores how post-conflict Sudan can leverage strategic global partnerships to achieve sustainable development beyond Agenda 2030 by balancing global competition and advancing resilience.

**DESIGN/METHODOLOGY/APPROACH:** This research adopts a qualitative approach, integrating world theory, dependency theory, and resilience theory with scenario planning 2025-2040. It also uses a secondary data review and coding, and secondary data analysis from international and national sources.

**FINDINGS:** The study identifies sequencing of recovery priorities, resilience building, and climate-smart partnerships as essential pathways for Sudan's transformative recovery. Balancing geopolitical interests through transparent and adaptive partnerships is crucial to sustainable stability.

**ORIGINALITY/VALUE OF THE PAPER:** The paper provides an integrated framework linking global power competition and resilience-based recovery for Sudan, contributing to post-2030 sustainable development debates. This research contributes to the global debate on shaping post-2030 sustainability pathways, with Sudan as a critical case study.

**RESEARCH LIMITATIONS/IMPLICATIONS:** Limited access to primary data in conflict settings constrained empirical validation.

**PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS:** The paper offers guidance for policy-makers and donors on designing resilient, context-specific partnership strategies.

**KEYWORDS:** *Post-Conflict Recovery; Strategic Partnerships; Fragile and Conflict-Affected States (FCAS); Resilience Governance; Red Sea Geopolitics; Sustainable Development; Institutional Reform; Scenario Planning (2025-2040).*

**CITATION:** Sharif, I.M.K. (2025). Strategic Partnerships for Post-Conflict Sudan: Balancing Global Power Competition and Sustainable Recovery beyond Agenda 2030. In Ahmed, A. (Ed.): *United Nations: What Next After 2030 Agenda and SDGs*. World Sustainable Development Outlook 2025, Vol. 21, pp.61-80. WASD: London, United Kingdom.

**RECEIVED:** 13 October 2025 / **REVISED:** 17 November 2025 / **ACCEPTED:** 24 November 2025 / **PUBLISHED:** 30 December 2025



## INTRODUCTION

Global Partnership (GP) has emerged as a central paradigm in contemporary development discourse. Originating in the 19th century as a moral and political commitment between wealthier and poorer nations, GP embodies the shared responsibility to achieve sustainable development. It is understood not merely as a financial transfer mechanism, but as a collaborative arrangement involving states, markets, and civil society actors working together in non-hierarchical ways towards sustainability goals. By linking resources, expertise, and legitimacy across different spheres, global partnerships seek to overcome collective challenges such as poverty, fragility, climate change, and inequality.

The global partnership for sustainable development has been more institutionalised after the United Nations Agenda 2030, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by highlighting SDG 17 and integrating it into the remaining 16 goals. In the context of post-conflict situations, countries are currently managing comprehensive, complex, and transformative processes that transition from vision to practice.

The post-conflict Sudan context has been shaped by political instability and humanitarian crises in addition to the international competition in geopolitics (Red Sea corridor) and natural resources. How Sudan can utilise global partnerships for resilience and recovery remains a significant question.

This research situates Sudan post-conflict within the broader debate on global partnerships and sustainable development. It explores how Sudan can leverage its geostrategic position, abundant natural resources, and community networks to shape innovative partnerships while confronting significant challenges such as institutional fragility, corruption, displacement, and vulnerability to external rivalries. By applying scenario-building methodologies, the research seeks to contribute both to the academic literature on partnerships in fragile contexts and to the policy debate on Sudan’s recovery pathways.

## THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### Conceptual Definitions

#### *Origin of the concept of sustainable development*

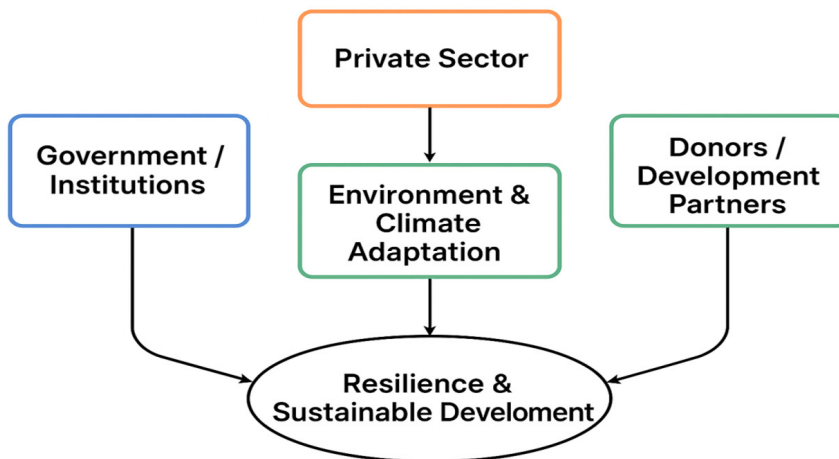
The conceptual framework outlines the research path and firmly establishes it within a theoretical construct; additionally, it provides background knowledge in this area. The theoretical framework is based on existing theories, and the conceptual framework considers the concepts that will shape the research.

Whilst earlier literature discussed a wide range of issues around the emerging concept of sustainable development, the following statement from the World Conservation Strategy (IUCN, 1980) appears to be the first actual attempt to define sustainable development:

“For development to be sustainable, it must take account of social and ecological factors, as well as economic ones; of the living and non-living resource base; and of the long-term as well as the short-term advantages and disadvantages of alternative action”

Only governments can create the right political and economic framework for sustainable development, and one part of the framework is effective co-ordination with other stakeholders. Ministries, civil society organisations, industry, and donors can often work within their own spheres without reference or responsibility to each other, inevitably leading to unsustainable policies and programmes. There is a need to build capacity for participatory planning for sustainable development among these organisations. As illustrated in Figure 1, global partnerships play a central role in shaping post-conflict recovery pathways by linking institutional capacity, governance reforms and external co-operation.

National strategies for sustainable development are a tool to assist countries in overcoming these sorts of problems and begin to strengthen their capacity for sustainable development (Carew-Reid, Jeremy, 1994).



**Figure 1: Global Partnerships in Post-Conflict Recovery**

Source: Author based on Conceptual Definitions

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



15 LIFE ON LAND



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS





## THEORIES

### Dependency Theory

Dependency theory emerged in the 1950s as a way of understanding relationships between developed and developing countries. In general, dependency could mean reliance; that is, developing countries depending more on developed countries for survival or development. Dependency is an historical condition in which the economy of a certain group of countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which their own is subjected.

International institutions play an essential role in facilitating this co-operation; nevertheless, co-operation can occur outside them through bilateral relationships between states. However, it remains that international institutions facilitate the greatest amount of co-operation; this is characterised by behavioural patterns based on international norms and rules. The first set of international institutions is what is ordinarily named international organisations, such as the UN and EU.

The under-development of periphery countries is primarily caused by the actions of capitalist and developed nations who deliberately control and manipulate world markets for their own benefit, often to the detriment of these periphery countries.

It is becoming clear that “under-development” and “dependency” theory are no longer serviceable and must now be transcended.

### WORLD SYSTEMS THEORY

World system theory has obvious affinities with the dependency school in its interest in centres and peripheries. A more obvious connection with development theory was forged by the sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein (1974). It splits states into three groups: core, semi-periphery, and periphery. Core states are politically stable, industrialised, and rich in capital; peripheries provide cheap labour and raw materials, and semi-peripheries protect the system from conflict (Wallerstein, 1974; Shannon, 1989).

Sudan, with limited current capacity in industry and fully exporting its natural resources, needs to leverage its geopolitical location in the Red Sea to become a semi-peripheral country by fostering partnerships with other countries in the region for the enormous potential of international trade.

World-systems theory explains Sudan’s potentiality for great-power competitions, as external entities (Russia, the EU, and the Gulf States) vie for influence in precarious regions (ICG, 2024).

This framework highlights the necessity for Sudan's recovery to be safeguarded by international structural dynamics rather than being viewed exclusively as a national issue. However, the broad historical context sometimes constrains the ability of fragile states to shape their futures (Chase-Dunn, 1989).

## RESILIENCE THEORY IN POST-CONFLICT RECOVERY

Resilience Theory originated in ecology but has since been widely applied in development, conflict studies, and disaster risk reduction.

- Resilience is “*The capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change, so as to retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks.*” (Holling, 1973)
- *Adaptation to social sciences, emphasizing the adaptive capacity of communities, institutions, and states to cope with and recover from shocks such as armed conflict, displacement, and climate disasters* (Folke, 2006).

In this theoretical frame, post-conflict recovery focusses on building adaptive systems rather than restoring the pre-conflict system, considering the major changes in institutional, community, economic, and environmental contexts. Institutional resilience refers to a government's ability to provide services in fragile systems, while community resilience involves adapting for survival despite stress. Additionally, economic resilience enhances the capacity of local markets to address recovery needs and adapt ecosystems and livelihoods to climate change.

Resilience theory, in accompaniment with scenario planning, helps the exploration of futures ranging from collapse to prosperity. This encourages long-term thinking, recognising that fragile states must not adopt short-term aid cycles but instead require durable systems of governance, economy, and environment. Its limitation is that the resilience debate can sometimes shift responsibility from international actors to fragile communities, downplaying structural inequalities (Joseph, 2013). The linkages between global systems and national resilience are mapped in Figure 2, which demonstrates how external actors and internal institutions interact in shaping Sudan's recovery trajectory

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



15 LIFE ON LAND



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS





**Figure 2: Strategic Partnerships Bridged Global Systems & National resilience**

Source: Author based on Theories Analysis

## Contextual Background: Sudan's Post-Conflict Recovery

The post-conflict situation in Sudan has negatively impacted governance and the government's capacity to implement its development strategy, necessitating that the global partnership for recovery focusses on strengthening internal institutions.

- *Recent evidence underscores that engagement in fragile contexts must be politically informed, country-led, and oriented to prevention and resilience rather than short project cycles* The OECD States of Fragility 2025 stresses that partnering effectively in high and extreme fragility is both a global good and a geostrategic necessity, given concentration of extreme poverty in these contexts. (OECD, 2025 )
- *For Sudan specifically, the World Bank's Sudan Economic Update (May 2025) and the STARS Trust Fund documentation show a pivot from short-term crisis response toward community resilience and social protection, illustrating how partnerships are being reframed during protracted crisis.* (World Bank, 2025)

Therefore, while designing a sustainable development strategy, Sudan should act as a state-capacity multiplier by enhancing public finance, service delivery, and local systems, as well as fostering conflict sensitivity and transparency.



### 1. Climate change between risk and opportunity

*Sudan is among Africa's most climate-vulnerable settings—facing compounding risks from heat, drought, floods, and food insecurity—making it a priority case for adaptation finance and climate-smart agriculture partnerships. (IPCC, 2023; WFP, 2025; Reuters, 2025)*

### 2. Geopolitics between competing and investment and leverage

*Sudan sits on the strategic Red Sea corridor where regional and extra regional powers increasingly compete, shaping external financing, security assistance, and diplomatic sponsorship. (ICG, 2024; OECD, 2025).*

### 3. Digital transformation as a new path for partnership

*Regional digital initiatives and development operations (e.g., connectivity and energy access programs; regional fibre corridors) have opened pathways for public–private partnerships that couple humanitarian continuity with long-term infrastructure (World Bank, 2025).*

Sudan's geostrategic location along the Red Sea Corridor is shown in Figure 3, highlighting the country's exposure to regional competition as well as its potential for strategic partnerships.



**Figure 3: Map of Sudan and Red Sea Corridor**

Source: <https://share.google/bOlb2TFcZ1lfO8odj>

The variety in Sudan's geopolitics factors will enable Sudan to balance the regional and international powers with the opportunities of diplomatic negotiations and strategic partnerships to enable recovery and development post-conflict.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



15 LIFE ON LAND



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS





Agenda 2030 is a global standard measuring the progress over the SDGs goals, but it also takes into consideration the country context and what the baseline is in institutional capacity and stability.

- *OECD and UNDP analyses caution that fragile and conflict-affected settings require tailored, politics-aware approaches; applying universal targets without adaptation can miss immediate state-building and peace priorities.* (OECD, 2025)
- *Latest assessments for Sudan show acute humanitarian stress and food insecurity on a massive scale, which crowd out longer-term SDG investments and demand sequenced recovery (humanitarian–development–peace nexus).* (Reuters, 2025)
- *Sudan Update documents a war-induced economic collapse that necessitates social protection, macro-stabilization, and core service restoration before scaling broader SDG ambitions* (World Bank, 2025).

Sudan should start definitely from the security access; institutional recovery and mainstreaming the climate issue in investment and livelihoods, then merge to SDGs achievement

- *Global partnerships in fragile and post-conflict contexts must be context-specific, conflict-sensitive, and oriented toward long time-horizons rather than short project cycles* (OECD, 2025).
- *The empirical evidence on partnerships' performance has historically been uneven: while partnerships are widely promoted, rigorous evidence of consistent performance remains limited and often anecdotal.*
- *Multilateral institutions and evaluations now stress the need to combine immediate relief with early institution-building to make partnerships effective in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations (FCS)*( IEG World Bank Group, 2020).

Reviewing the literature about global partnerships ensures they play a significant role in humanitarian relief, post-conflict recovery, and sustainable development in Sudan.

- *Scholars note a shortage of research on governance arrangements for partnerships in post-conflict settings—specifically how control, accountability, and power asymmetries between donors, multinational firms, and local institutions are governed in practice* (Pfisterer and Van Tulder, 2020).
- *Policy evaluations underline an evidence gap on how geopolitical competition (great-power rivalry) changes the incentives and outcomes of development partnerships in fragile states, limiting guidance for countries that must simultaneously manage multiple external patronage relationships*(OECD, 2025).



These gaps indicate three clear positions this research can fill:

- the research will answer the question of how partnership, by building the capacity of the country post-conflict, will achieve sustainable development;
- this research examines how Sudan can leverage geopolitical power competition to reshape its partnership opportunities;
- the research designs a practical framework to govern the component's public, private, government and donor relationships that makes partnerships conflict-sensitive, accountable and transparent and provides actionable guidance for Sudan.

## Emerging Opportunities and Challenges

There are many emerging opportunities and challenges for Sudan's foreign relations and development in the post-conflict context as it attempts to regain state capacity, restore legitimacy, and return to the ground of international partnerships. Sudan must contend with both strategic opportunities and intimidating challenges in its extended conflict.

### Emerging opportunities

- The competition among global actors for resources and strategic geopolitical locations has intensified; consequently, due to its significant geopolitical position in the Red Sea, Sudan facilitates international trade between Russia, the EU, and Gulf States, and possesses the ability to form partnerships that can help overcome recovery challenges through substantial infrastructure reconstruction deals, particularly in the Red Sea region.
- Sudan's significant agricultural potential, including its land, irrigation systems, diverse climate, and abundant mineral resources (such as oil and gold), will empower the country to negotiate favourable deals for its recovery and development.
- One of the opportunities is that, during the conflict, Sudan had a well-established local network from the humanitarian actors; this will be a good foundation for recovery programmes.

### New Challenges

- International competitions among various actors pose a significant challenge for Sudan due to its limited capacity to lead negotiations for partnerships and agreements related to recovery and development within the existing balance of power.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



15 LIFE ON LAND



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS





- The international private sector is confronting challenges such as low trust in the Sudan national system, rising corruption in government, and an urgent need to rehabilitate the government system. These issues will reduce the willingness of international private sector donors to contribute.
- Strong Sudanese national leadership and a clear vision from both government and civil actors with goodwill are essential to overcoming the fragmentation, instability, and insecurity currently facing Sudan and leading global partnership programmes for post-conflict recovery and development.

Policy-makers in Sudan face the challenge of integrating transparency, inclusive governance, and resilience into partnership frameworks in order to transform its vulnerabilities into negotiation assets.

## METHODOLOGY

The research used a qualitative research design, integrating a secondary desk review, semi-structured interviews, and thematic coding to examine Sudan's post-conflict foreign relations and recovery strategies. This design was chosen for its suitability in fragile contexts, where quantitative data is limited and difficult to access, but qualitative insights provide reliable and trusted information. The thematic coding and content analysis through institutional reports, policy briefs, and academic sources were coded to identify recurring themes such as geopolitical balancing, governance resilience, and climate adaptation partnerships.

This approach is consistent with OECD guidance that stresses politically informed and context-specific methodologies in fragile states (OECD, 2025), and World Bank evaluations that highlight the value of flexible, adaptive designs in post-conflict environments (IEG World Bank Group, 2023).

## Data Sources

The research reviewed secondary data from various sources, including international reports, World Bank reports, humanitarian reports, and International Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) reports, to analyse reforms and identify humanitarian gaps and priorities for international donors. The semi-structured interviews conducted with national actors from the government, civil society, and think tank institutions filled the gap in the primary data. The interviews targeted decision-makers (two ministries in the current government, think tank members, members of the Humanitarian Aid Commission,

Sudan (HAC), academics in universities and technicians from foreign affairs) for primary qualitative data. The research designed an operational framework for the methodology that followed a four-phase analytical process: data collection, thematic coding, interpretation, and integration of thematic findings into the theoretical frameworks (dependency, world-systems, and resilience). An operational framework for a national mechanism for leveraging partnership for sustainable development was then developed.

## Thematic Coding and Content Analysis

Both secondary and primary data took thematic coding to extract periodic patterns across four core themes:

- geopolitical balancing in Sudan's foreign relations;
- institutional resilience and governance capacity;
- climate change as a risk and opportunity;
- modern models of digital transformation and private sector innovations.

## Rationale for the Design

This research is based on the approaches adopted by the OEC D regarding the adaptation of the most fragile countries after conflicts, as well as on flexible, long-term strategies that emphasise the importance of leadership and participation.

## ANALYTICAL TOOLS

### SWOT Analysis

#### Strengths

- The Red Sea is the strategic geographic power of Sudan that gives the country access to the international trade hub and the interest of major powers (Russia, the Gulf, and the EU).
- Sudan is rich in natural resources, minerals (gold, silver and others), cultivated land and agriculture that classify Sudan as extractive and food secure.
- Post-conflict, the internal ties and relationships of the communities and grassroots networks became more powerful, and a strong humanitarian network emerged with the potential for development to rely on.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



15 LIFE ON LAND



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS





- Regional relationships with Egypt, the African Union (AU), and IGAD have the potential to leverage improvements in infrastructure, energy, and water.

## Weaknesses

- The political instability and fragmentation pre- and post-conflict and the multi-power centres weaken the reliability in foreign relations.
- The weakness of the government and increased corruption decrease the reliance on foreign agreements.
- The humanitarian crisis and the current large displacements and destruction of infrastructure affect the order of priorities and agendas between relief and development.

## Opportunities

- Geopolitical power can be balanced between the Russian military ties and the Western powers and donors.
- Programmes of governance reform, post-conflict recovery and livelihoods and stabilities can be funded by grants from the EU, UNDP, and World Bank programmes.
- Regional relationships strengthen joint venture in infrastructure, agricultural programmes with Egypt as example.

## Threats

- The ties and links with Russia may increase the vulnerability to sanctions that will lower the opportunities of partnerships for development and increase the vulnerability of humanitarian context.
- The geographical position of the Red Sea increases the competition among external powers and may push Sudan into proxy conflicts instead of development-focused partnerships.
- Insecurity issues, the unstable and collapsed economy are risky for donors and the private sector to invest in development, livelihoods and infrastructure programmes.

## Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis in this research is an analytical case study focused on the state of Sudan leaning to global cases of states in a conflict context, examining its current conflict and fragile context, as well as how Sudan leveraged global partnerships during the war from 2023 to 2025. Based on that, the research focusses on and analyses the potentiality of Sudan's ability to link it to the following three main factors:

- the geographical geopolitical position of the Red Sea plays a significant role;
- the research also examines the capacity of national institutions and their ability to engage with international donors and regional partners, ensuring a balance between opportunities and challenges;
- local actors play a crucial role in achieving resilience and recovery by addressing gaps in food security and climate adaptation.

## Limitations

Several limitations affect the scope and generalisability of this paper:

- the fragile context and limitations of access affected the data collection, resulting in limitations of data and reliance on secondary data collection and a qualitative approach to fill the gap;
- the reports from donors may be biased due to conflicts of interest and their perspectives, and national actors such as government and think-tanks may also carry normative bias.

## Ethical Considerations

The ethical principles that guided this research are dignity of local communities, transparency and integrity. Due the on-going humanitarian situation in Sudan, the research adopted the principle of Do No Harm for the communities and confidentiality for the participants in interviews with policy-makers, experts, and civil society actors.

## SCENARIO ANALYSIS (2025-2040)

The paper adopted the scenario analysis tool to identify four potential scenarios for Sudan post-conflict, varying from optimal best scenario to the worst one

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



15 LIFE ON LAND



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS





Business-As-Usual Scenario

Description

The current situation will remain; the delay in reforming the government and institutions will create a gap in humanitarian aid, the partnership will be restricted by aid priorities and vulnerability of foreign relationships. External partnerships remain fragmented

Influencing factors:

Weak institutions and over-dependence on external aid without domestic reform.

Outcomes:

Delay and insufficient economic growth with increased dependency on external powers and actors that will lead to politically instability.

Worst-Case Scenario (Collapse)

Description:

With on-going conflict and insecurity, the Sudan government increases delays in military supply, resulting in weak capacity to develop a strong governance system for peace and development.

Influencing factors:

External powers competition over the Red Sea will increase deepening internal divisions and weak central governance.

Outcomes:

Increased fragmentation into multiple centres of power, with limited foreign humanitarian aid due to sanctions; this may lead to humanitarian and economic collapse.

Transformative Recovery Scenario

Description

Sudan gradually undertakes reform and builds governance and capacity of institutions for long-term international partnership, focussing on sustainable development programmes on agriculture, renewable energy and regional integration with Egypt and the African Union.



### ***Influencing factors***

The adoption of resilience approaches enables the design recovery programmes funded by the World Bank.

### ***Outcomes:***

Sudan will gradually build an attractive environment to leverage international partnerships for durable and long-term programmes, and improve resource management.

## **Best-Case Scenario (Prosperity)**

### ***Description***

Comprehensive political settlement leads to internal stability. Sudan becomes a strategic hub linking Africa and the Middle East through the Red Sea, agriculture, and digital transformation.

### ***Influencing factors***

The successful implementation of regional digital corridor projects has been achieved. International finance and investment in climate-smart agriculture have achieved success.

### ***Outcomes***

Sustainable economic growth is likely achievable, strong regional trade integration has been established, and Sudan has reduced its dependency on humanitarian assistance.

The first scenario, business-as-usual, is most likely with the risk of continuous conflict and full collapse if regional challenges intensify. Policy-makers prefer a transformative recovery that has most potential if they have enough goodwill to lead the transformative process. The prosperity scenario is a strategic vision despite the challenges to be achieved in the long-run term.

## **DISCUSSION: LESSONS BEYOND AGENDA 2030**

The lessons learned from Sudan's post-conflict recovery are crucial insights that extend beyond the framework of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. While the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a global measurable mark on progress, the context of fragile and conflict-affected states underlines the need for approaches that are more specific to the Sudanese context, political situation, and adaptive to long-term conflict.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



15 LIFE ON LAND



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS





First, Sudan’s case demonstrates that sequencing is critical in post-conflict recovery. The World Bank (2025) stresses that recovery in fragile contexts cannot jump directly into the inclusive achievement of the SDGs; rather, it must begin with the restoration of basic security, essential state functions, and basic services. In the context of Sudan’s economic recovery, macro-economic stabilisation and inclusive social protection must precede international and regional investments in education, infrastructure, and climate.

Second, resilience emerges as a keystone of sustainable recovery. Relying on resilience theory, Sudan shows how communities, institutions, and economies must adapt to overcome shocks, armed conflict, climate stress, and displacement. Donor strategies that integrate resilience into their design have short project cycles, a lesson reflected by OECD’s States of Fragility 2025. Beyond 2030, resilience-based partnerships will be essential to avoid deteriorating into conflict and to create adaptive systems that can tolerate future disturbances.

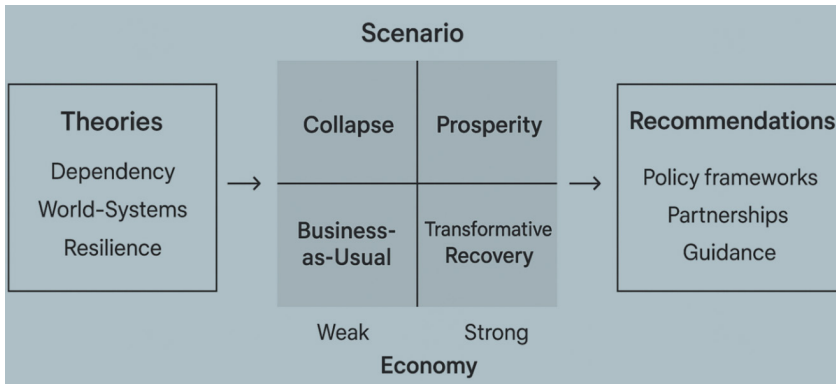
Third, Sudan illustrates both sides of geopolitics: its location on the Red Sea corridor offers opportunities for strategic partnerships but also exposes the country to great-power competition. External actors increasingly treat Sudan as an arena of influence, complicating its recovery trajectory. The most important lessons learned in fragile states are that strategies must be developed to leverage external interests without yielding to proxy actors as a result of pressure and competition.

Fourth, climate change represents both a threat and an opportunity; therefore, both aspects must be addressed simultaneously.

The case of Sudan illustrates the need to redesign global partnership frameworks; the traditional donor-recipient model is insufficient in protracted conflict contexts. Instead, partnerships must be multi-level, trust-based, and adaptive, joining humanitarian relief, development programming, and peace-building into a logical strategy.

In summary, Sudan’s post-conflict path will lead to a future of sustainable development that extends beyond Agenda 2030, highlights that recovery in fragile contexts is not linear but depends on a sequence of priorities, resilience-centred systems, careful steering of geopolitics, climate-smart strategies, and innovative partnership models. It highlights that recovery in fragile contexts is not linear but depends on a sequence of priorities, resilience-centred systems, careful steering of geopolitics, climate-smart strategies, and innovative partnership models. These lessons are not only relevant to Sudan but also to the wider international community seeking to reconcile global development agendas with the fragility and conflict context.

The four potential future scenarios for Sudan’s post-conflict trajectory, ranging from collapse to prosperity, are summarised in Figure 4.



**Figure 4: Scenario Matrix (2025-2040)**

Source: Author's synthesis based on Scenario Comparison

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND GLOBAL LESSONS

Based on the scenario analysis and lessons from Sudan's post-conflict recovery, the following recommendations are proposed for policy-makers, donors, and international partners working beyond Agenda 2030:

### Sequence Recovery Priorities

- Security comes first: it must restore basic core state functions and basic services before scaling up SDGs.
- Design international support to the above priorities; stabilisation, social protection, and institutional enhancing capacity

### Build Resilient Systems

- Adopt resilience approaches in all recovery stages of strategies, ensuring the adaptive capacity of communities and institutions shift from short-term project cycles towards longer-term, conflict-sensitivity programming in line with OECD's States of Fragility 2025.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



15 LIFE ON LAND



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS





## Control and Manage Geopolitical Competitions Strategically

- Develop diplomatic strategies that leverage Sudan's Red Sea location for investment while avoiding entanglement in proxy competitions.
- Develop national mechanisms to control and promote transparent agreements in infrastructure, ports, and extractives to limit external capture of national resources.

## Leverage Climate Finance and Green Partnerships

- Position Sudan as a priority case for climate adaptation finance, drawing on evidence of vulnerability.
- Investment in agriculture and renewable energy are essential factors of resilience and economic growth.

## Redesign Global Partnerships for Fragile Contexts

- Renew the current donor-recipient models with multi-level, trust-based partnerships that integrate humanitarian aid, development, and peace-building.
- Ensure risk sharing between actors (government, civil society, and private sector) and joint ownership for development programmes.
- Establish Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) frameworks to strengthen accountability and reduce corruption risks.

## Empower Local Networks and Communities

- Build the capacity of the local networks and humanitarian actors and recognise that they play a significant role in the recovery process.
- Enhance the role of local actors by integrating the participatory approach for the decision-making process.

## Strengthen Regional Co-operation

- Strengthen regional collaboration with Egypt, IGAD, and the African Union on recovery and development programmes.
- Centralise the role of Sudan in development strategies to enhance its negotiating power in strategic partnerships.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research highlights the role of global partnership in post-conflict scenarios and the importance of balancing risk and potential. The analysis demonstrates that sustainable recovery requires sequential priorities, resilience strategies, smart climate-smart investments, and long-term, comprehensive partnerships that go beyond the narrow timeframe of Agenda 2030. Overall, Sudan's experience offers valuable lessons for rethinking global partnerships.

## REFERENCES

- Carew-Reid, J. (1994): *Rapid assessment of the environmental impacts of disasters*. Bangkok: Asian Disaster Preparedness Center.
- Chase-Dunn, C.K. (1989): *Global Formation: Structures of the World-Economy*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Folke, C. (2006): Resilience: The Emergence of a Perspective for Social–Ecological Systems Analyses. *Global environmental change*, Vol. 16, No. 3, pp.253-267.
- Holling, C.S. (1973): Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems. *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*, Vol. 4, pp.1-23.
- IEG, World Bank Group (2023): *Independent Evaluation of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.
- International Crisis Group (2024): *Ten challenges for the UN in 2024-2025*. Special Briefing No. 12. Available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/b012-ten-challenges-un-2024-2025.pdf> Accessed: 20 November 2025.
- International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) (1980): *World Conservation Strategy: Living Resource Conservation for Sustainable Development*. In collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Available at: <https://portals.iucn.org/library/efiles/documents/wcs-004.pdf> 77pp.
- IPCC (2023): *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, adaptation and vulnerability*. Chapter 9: Water. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/chapter/chapter-9/> Accessed: 20 November 2025.
- Joseph, J. (2013): Resilience as embedded neoliberalism: A governmentality approach. *Resilience: International Policies, Practices and Discourses*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 38-52.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



15 LIFE ON LAND



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS





Open Knowledge Repository, World Bank (2025): Sudan Economic Update: STARS Trust Fund Documentation.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2012): *International support to post-conflict transition: Rethinking policy, changing practice*. DAC Guidelines and Reference Series. Paris: OECD Publishing. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264168336-en> Accessed: 19 November 2025.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2025): *States of Fragility 2025*, OECD Publishing, Paris. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1787/81982370-en>

Pfisterer, S. and Van Tulder, R. (2020): Navigating governance tensions to enhance the impact of partnerships with the private sector for the SDGs. *Sustainability*, Vol. 13, No. 1, p.111. Available at: <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/13/1/111> Accessed: 19 November 2025.

Reuters (2025): Reports on Sudan Humanitarian and Food Security Crisis. Available at <https://reuters.com>

Shannon, T. (1989): *An Introduction to the World-System Perspective*. Westview Press.

Wallerstein, I. (1974): *The Modern World-System III Capitalist agriculture and the origins of the European world-economy in the sixteenth century*. New York: Academic press

World Bank (2025): Sudan Economic Update. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org>

World Food Programme (WFP) (2025): World Food Programme Reports on Sudan. Available at: <https://www.wfp.org>

## BIOGRAPHY



**Dr Inshrah Mohamed Khalil Sharif** is a Sudanese Consultant, Academic, and Capacity-Building Specialist with extensive experience in strategic development, peace-building, and institutional strengthening in fragile contexts. She holds a PhD in Strategic and Security Studies from the

Higher Academy for Strategic and Security Studies (Sudan), where her research examined the role of global partnerships in achieving sustainable development goals (2014-2030). Dr Sharif is the Founder and former General Manager of Reyada for Capacity Building, Studies & Consultations; this holds ECOSOC consultative status and has partnered with UNICEF, UNDP, and the EU on governance, human rights, and women's empowerment initiatives. She is also a member of the Board of Directors of Addition Disaster Assistance and Development Organization (ADD), and currently serves as a Consultant at Future Selection (Cairo, Egypt). She is a part-time lecturer at the National Ribat University, Faculty of Environmental Science and Disaster Risk Management.