



Analysis of Sudan's Post-Reformation Conflict 2019: Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) vs Rapid Support Forces (RSF)

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the analysis of the post-reform 2019 Sudanese conflict between the Sudanese military or Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) against Sudanese paramilitaries or Rapid Support Forces (RSF). This research uses qualitative research methods through a juridical study approach to international humanitarian law. This law is a set of rules governing the law of armed conflict, armed conflict is divided into two: international armed conflict and non-international armed conflict. The conflict between the SAF and RSF is included in non-international armed conflicts. Based on ACLED data, this armed conflict has a major impact on aspects of life such as: civilians are fatalities; health facilities are not functioning; children who are unable to access education; until logistical access is disrupted. Thus, this conflict requires conflict resolution efforts using the multi-track diplomacy (MTD) method using the second track using non-state actors as mediators to build the game. Through the United Nations which encouraged the United States and Saudi Arabia as mediators who produced the Jeddah declaration.

Keyword:

Armed Conflict, Conflict Resolution.,

Rapid Support Forces (RSF), Sudan

Armed Forces (SAF).

INTRODUCTION

Humans are described as *homo conflictus*, which means beings who are always involved in conflict (Bahari, 2019). Conflict is a conflict or incompatibility between several parties, individuals, groups, or organizations (Glasl, 2002). Conflict is also described as a relationship between two or more parties who have incompatible goals (Fisher, 2001). The phenomenon of conflict is closely related to violence. This violent conflict has also occurred over time and occurred in various countries throughout the world, including Sudan. Since

its independence in 1956, Sudan has had a long history of conflict. Starting from conflicts caused by ethnic tensions, religious disputes, and resource competition (Sawant, 1998).

The Sudanese conflict continued to develop until, in 2009, a referendum emerged from southern Sudan to separate itself and form an independent state. This referendum was held in 2011 with a result of 97.58% of 3,947,676 voters who wanted southern Sudan to be independent from Sudan. Thus, South Sudan officially became a new country on July 9, 2011, with the official name Republic of South Sudan (Cahyanti, 2017). In addition to the conflict that led to the separation of the Sudan–South Sudan region, Sudan has also experienced more than fifteen military coups. Until the final coup in 2019, which succeeded in overthrowing President Omar al-Bashir, who had been in power for 30 years. He gained power through a military coup in 1898 by overthrowing the democratically elected government (CNN, 2021).

The coup was carried out in 2019, and an interim government of civil-military collaboration led by Abdalla Hamdoug was formed. This government was intended to prepare efforts for the democratization of Sudan in 2022. However, in October 2021, Abdalla Hamdoug's government was couped by the Sudanese Military or Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) led by Abdul Fattah al-Burhan in collaboration with Paramilitary or Rapid support troops. Support Forces (RSF) led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Al-Jazeera, 2019). Even though the SAF and RSF have collaborated to overthrow Abdalla Hamdoug's power, on April 15, 2023, the RSF launched an attack on the capital city of Khartoum, occupied the Presidential Palace, and attempted to take control of Khartoum's international airport. The RSF attack then led to fighting with the Sudanese military/SAF, resulting in civil war (CNN, 2023).

The conflict between the SAF and RSF arose because of the differences in interests and objectives between the two powers. Although both are under the authority of the new Sudanese government, the SAF and RSF have different backgrounds and often have different views on dealing with political and security situations. This conflict reflects power competition and the efforts of each power to secure its position in a country that has just undergone major changes. Therefore, it is important to carry out an analysis of this conflict to be able to understand the dynamics involved and find appropriate solutions to stop this alarming situation.

The conflict between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) that occurred in 2019 presents a conflict in aspects of humanitarian law. First, this conflict creates conflicts in protecting human rights. It was reported that both sides engaged in attacks on civilians, rape, and arbitrary detention. Such actions violate humanitarian laws that protect human life and dignity in conflict situations. Second, there are conflicts in protecting humanitarian facilities. During these conflicts, medical facilities and humanitarian aid are often targeted for attacks. In fact, according to humanitarian law, medical facilities and humanitarian assistance must remain neutral and protected in conflict situations to provide necessary assistance to war victims. Third, there are contradictions in upholding justice and accountability. The conflict also involves serious human rights violations, including killings and enforced disappearances. However, it is difficult to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of such violations due to the lack of cooperation and transparency of the parties involved in this conflict. Conflict resolution efforts that do not involve accountability and justice will only lead to deadlock and violate the principles of humanitarian law.

The resolution of the 2019 Post-Reformation Conflict between SAF and RSF also faces challenges in fulfilling justice and accountability. To ensure respect for humanitarian law and end injustice, perpetrators of human rights violations must be brought to justice and held accountable. However, the systematic existence of impunity and its lack in Sudan's justice system has hampered court proceedings and victim recovery. Therefore, efforts to achieve sustainable conflict resolution based on humanitarian law must be supported by

effective examination, prosecution, and recovery of victims. Based on the background above, this article will analyze the conflict between the SAF and the RSF in Sudan using an international humanitarian law perspective and an analysis of conflict resolution efforts using *multi-track diplomacy*.

METHODS

This study used qualitative research methods. The qualitative research method is a research method used to describe, explore, and understand the meaning that several individuals or groups of people ascribe to current social or humanitarian phenomena (Cresswell, 2016). This research uses a juridical-normative approach, a research method using library law studies that examine library materials or secondary data obtained by researchers (Mahmudji, 2003). The scope of this research will be carried out by drawing on legal principles, which are carried out on written positive law. This research is based on international humanitarian law to analyze the conflicts between the SAF and the RSF in post-reform Sudan.

Data was collected by searching for sources and constructing them from various sources such as books, journals, and existing research in library research. The result is that qualitative research is carried out with a research design where the findings are not obtained through statistical procedures or in the form of calculations but rather aims to reveal phenomena holistically-contextually by collecting data from natural settings and using researchers as key instruments. Researchers use qualitative research to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied. This research needs to understand in detail how the conflict occurred in Sudan in 2019, Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) vs Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

Qualitative research has a descriptive nature and tends to use an inductive approach to analysis, so that processes and meanings based on the subject's perspective are more emphasized in this qualitative research. Data obtained from observation and documentation data collection techniques are then processed using data analysis techniques, Miles, Huberman dan Saldana (2014) namely analyzing the data in three steps: data condensation, presenting the data (data display), and drawing conclusions or verification (conclusion drawing and verification). Data condensation refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming data.

In the data condensation stage, researchers will identify and collect data related to the conflict that occurred in Sudan in 2019, Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) vs Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Data collected may include regulations, policy documents, and reports related to the initiative. After the data is collected, the researcher will present the data systematically and structured. In the context of this research, it is presented in the form of tables, graphs or matrices to visualize the conflict that occurred in Sudan in 2019. Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) vs Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The final stage of this analysis method involves drawing conclusions or verifying the data that has been presented. Researchers will analyze the suitability of the conflict that occurred in Sudan in 2019 Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) vs Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The results of this analysis are useful for evaluating the success of the policy and providing answers to research questions. By applying this analytical method, research on the conflict that occurred in Sudan in 2019, Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) vs Rapid Support Forces (RSF) can produce a deeper understanding of the resolution of the conflict that occurred.

Especially in qualitative research, there are research subjects and objects that will be the focus of researchers to answer research questions. In this study, the research subject is the conflict that occurred in Sudan in 2019, Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) vs Rapid Support Forces (RSF). New findings regarding research objects will be supported by data collection techniques in the form of searching for relevant data sources through books, journals and existing research. The data validity test used is Credibility (Internal Validity) carried out by

searching and selecting relevant data sources, Transferability (External Validity) carried out by generalizing similar findings and arranging them in a conceptual framework, Dependability (Reliability) carried out by asking for responses/opinions from academics and Confirmability (Objectivity) is carried out by recording every fact and finding that is relevant to the conflict in Sudan.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Armed Conflict in Post-Reform Sudan: SAF vs RSF

International Humanitarian Law is a set of rules whose purpose is to limit the humanitarian impact of armed conflict. International Humanitarian Law, often referred to as the law of armed conflict or the law of war (*jus in bello*), aims to limit the tools and methods of warfare used by the parties involved in the conflict. This law also guarantees humanitarian protection for people who are not or are no longer directly involved in armed conflict (Melzer, 2009).

International Humanitarian Law contains provisions relating to tools and methods in an armed conflict or war as well as the protection of people and objects in the hands of belligerent parties. When an armed conflict occurs, all actions taken in connection with the conflict must be by the provisions stipulated in International Humanitarian Law. The opposite applies, where international humanitarian law does not apply to confrontations between States that do not constitute armed conflict, or internal disturbances and tensions that occur such as riots, isolated and sporadic acts of violence, and similar actions that do not constitute armed conflict (Additional Regulation II, Article 1 paragraph (2)).

Armed conflict is a conflict accompanied by the use of force by the armed forces of each party to subdue the opponent and establish terms of peace unilaterally (Istanto, 1998). In international humanitarian law, armed conflict is divided into three (Suryokumoro, 2020), namely:

1. International armed conflict or *International Armed Conflict* (IAC) that occurs between countries (*inter-state*).
2. Non-international armed conflict or *Non-International Armed Conflict* (NIAC) is an armed conflict that occurs and is not an international armed conflict.
3. Domestic Tensions.

(Melzer, 2009) emphasizes the significant differences between international and non-international armed conflicts. This difference relates to the threshold of violence required for a situation to be considered an armed conflict. The principle of *Jus ad bellum* prohibits the use of force between States, the use of force in war can be considered lawful to declare war intentions as well as in creating a situation of international armed conflict, which is regulated by international humanitarian law.

The opposite applies, where in internal areas the state can use force against groups or individuals for law enforcement purposes; and the use of force by groups against government authorities in general remains a matter of national criminal law. This results in a threshold of violence that triggers non-international armed conflict. Thus, it is significantly higher in international humanitarian law than the threshold for international armed conflict.

Another important point in the distinction between international and non-international armed conflict is that the position taken by many States to equate the two types of armed conflict can be seen as granting international status to armed opposition groups and therefore can weaken state sovereignty and encourage an uprising that threatens integration. nation. Thus, this law can be applied when in situations described as internal disturbances and tensions where opponents use weapons and armed conflict occurs within them, a country has the right to use armed forces in order to restore public order and national security. An example of this situation could be an armed separatist movement.

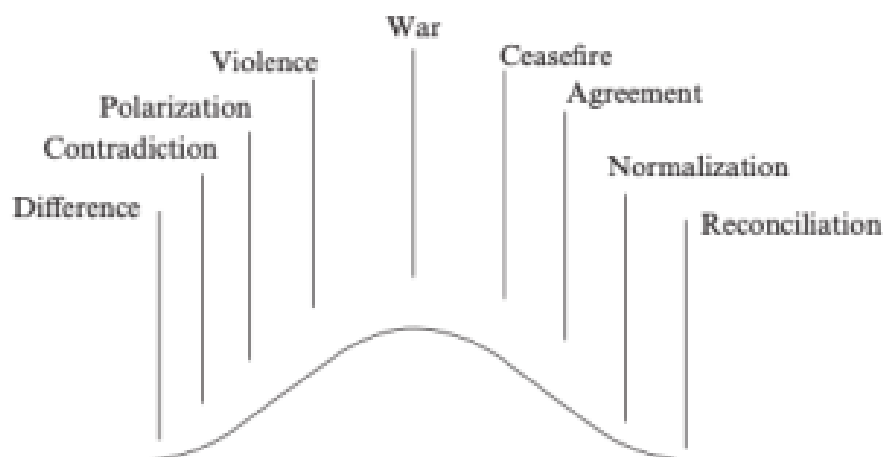
The conflict that occurred in Sudan after the 2021 Reformation between the Sudanese Military or Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudanese Paramilitary or Rapid Support Forces (RSF) is classified as a non-international armed conflict or Non-International Armed Conflict (NIAC). The reason is that both of them are still part of Sudan. In line with the ICRC's explanation which explains that non-international armed conflict (NIAC) is a confrontation in the territorial environment of a country between official armed forces (military) and unidentified armed groups or various armed groups (ICRC, 2001).

There are several characteristics of NIAC based on Additional Protocol II of 1977 (Suryokumoro 2020), including:

1. the conflict occurs in the territory of the major participating parties;
2. the rebel forces are subordinate to the responsible party;
3. rebel forces occupy part of the rebel country;
4. rebel forces are capable of carrying out military operations regularly and continuously;
5. rebel forces are capable of implementing international law.

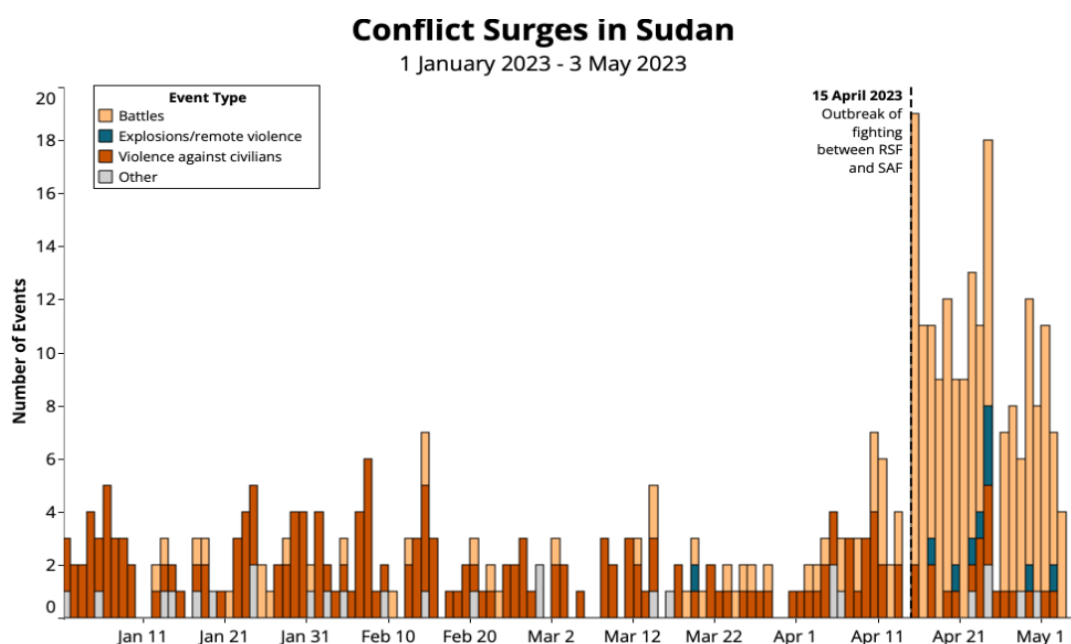
The stages of conflict escalation occur starting from difference, contradiction, polarization, violence, war, ceasefire, agreement, normalization, and reconciliation. Conflict begins with differences that arise from certain parties which develop into a social phenomenon in the emergence of latent contradictory problems and encourage the formation of polarization between parties in conflict. This will trigger armed conflict, such as what happened in Sudan, which is currently at the violence stage and escalates to a higher phase or its peak, namely war. On April 15, 2023, fighting erupted in Sudan between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) commanded by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) commanded by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo. This conflict broke out because the SAF controlled the Sudanese government after the 2021 coup which was assisted by the RSF, then the SAF failed to agree on a plan to integrate the RSF into the official Sudanese military.

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) noted that in the period 15 April – 1 May, there was a seven-fold increase in clashes compared to the previous same time period. In the first week of the conflict, clashes increased by more than 1600% compared to weekly data for the previous year. In addition, 750 fatalities have been reported since the outbreak of the conflict (ACLED, 2023).



Source : (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall, 2011)

Figure 1. Level of Escalation of Conflict



Source: *The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)*

Figure 2. Conflict Surgeons in Sudan

Based on data released by ACLED, since 15 April 2023 armed conflict between the SAF and RSF has accounted for more than 70% of all recorded political violence events in Sudan. The armed conflict between the SAF and the RSF took the form of air attacks and shooting incidents targeting military and civilian infrastructure, including hospitals. SAF counterattacks through airstrikes have hit RSF bases in several areas, including the Kafouri area in Bahri, Omdurman, and several other areas in Khartoum (ACLED, 2023).

In the armed conflict that occurred in Sudan after the 2021 Reformation, many civilians who were affected by the conflict were trapped in the vortex of the conflict and even became direct targets during clashes between the two sides. The impact of armed conflict on cases including incidents of sexual and gender-based violence (Debre 2023). ACLED data shows that during the armed conflict in Sudan, there were 22 incidents of attacks that affected civilians. The Sudanese Doctors Syndicate recorded that there were approximately 400 civilian casualties due to the armed conflict which occurred 70% of the time in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum (ACLED, 2023).

This armed conflict further causes huge losses covering all aspects of life, starting from violence targeting civilians which results in civilian casualties; then there was looting of humanitarian facilities in Ag Geneina; *Médecins Sans Frontiers* (MSF) and most clinics and pharmacies are not functioning due to violence. It was recorded that 61% of health facilities in Khartoum were closed and only 16% of health facilities were working, making it difficult for residents to get access to health. Apart from health, access to logistics such as food, clean water and fuel is becoming scarce. Communication and the internet are also hampered by damaged infrastructure. Based on UNICEF data, this armed conflict also has an impact on children, such as difficulty in accessing education and even fatalities (ACLED, 2023).

The fighting was sparked by a dispute over the final framework agreement agreed with the Central Council of the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) on 5 December 2022, under the auspices of the international Quartet. However, the conflict between Burhan and Hemetti emerged more broadly due to the shift in the balance of power between the army and the RSF. This framework agreement essentially removed the military leadership's control over the civilian bureaucracy and, more importantly, the RSF. Although the RSF would eventually be disbanded and integrated into the country's armed forces, the agreement did not set a timetable for integration. Additionally, the agreement prohibits the military from engaging in

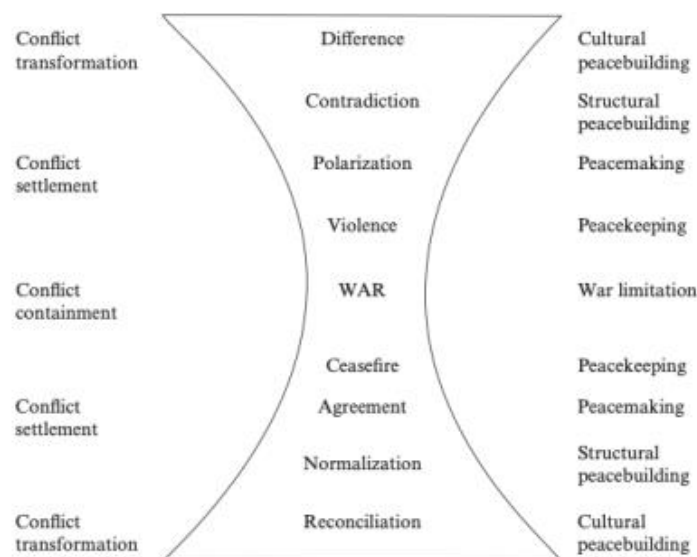
commercial activities unrelated to the defense industry, but remains silent regarding the RSF's concerns over gold mining, which, according to UN reports, generated \$4.6 billion in export revenues from 2010 to 2014 (Aljazeera, 2023).

The loss of army control over the RSF is a real threat, made even more dangerous by the current alliance of convenience between the Central Council of the FFC and the RSF: the Central Council uses the RSF to minimize the army's control over the political process, while the RSF uses the council to buy time to delay its integration into the armed forces. Meanwhile, Hemetti had increased the number of troops under his command to around 100,000 fighters and equipped them with small arms, artillery, and armored vehicles. Given this situation, the military argued that the RSF needed to be immediately subdued while the RSF still held the reins of power and had not handed over power to civilians (Aljazeera, 2023).

Efforts to Resolution Sudan's Armed Conflict Post-Reformation 2021

Conflict resolution is an effort to transform relationships related to finding a way out of a conflict phenomenon. Conflict resolution has a difference in treatment of the root problems of conflict with conflict resolution as handling (*settlement*) of conflict by force (*coercion*) or using bargaining (*bargaining*) or negotiation (*negotiation*) (Burton, 1990).

Fisher explained that conflict resolution is an effort to deal with the causes of conflict and an effort to build new relationships that can last a long time between opposing groups (Fisher, 2001). In conflict resolution efforts, mediation can be used. Mediation is a form of third-party intervention to resolve a conflict. Mediation aims to bring the conflict to an agreement that can be accepted by both parties in conflict and is committed to agreeing on the results of the mediation. The Sudanese conflict continues to experience escalation which requires joint handling and resolution.

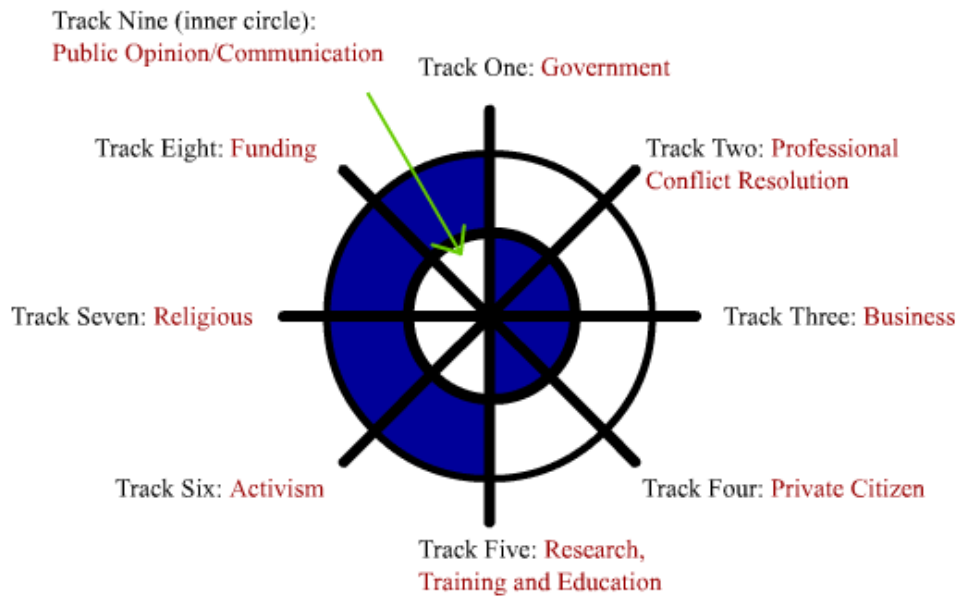


Source : (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall, 2011)

Figure 3. Hourglass Model as a Conflict Resolution Effort

Rambostham dan Woodhouse (1999) Conflict resolution can be carried out using the hourglass model which is a representation of a way to narrow the political space which causes conflict to escalate and widen the lower political space as in the hourglass model. This model is an attempt to describe contingency and complementarity, where contingency refers to the nature and phase of a conflict, while complementarity is a combination of appropriate responses by working together to try to resolve a conflict. Specifically, conflict resolution that can be carried out through mediation efforts can be carried out through *multi-track*

diplomacy. *Multi Track Diplomacy* (MTD) is a conceptual framework designed in such a way as to reflect activities aimed at realizing peace (McDonald, 1996).



Source:(Diamond & McDonald, 1996)

Figure 4. Multitrack Diplomacy

The first track, building official diplomacy through government processes through *policymaking* and *peacebuilding*. The second track, building peace through non-governmental efforts or professional fields which have different mechanisms from the government. The third track is business which has the potential to build peace through providing economic opportunities, international relations, and informal communication channels. Then the terms fourth, fifth and so on tracks emerged due to the increasing difficulty of distinguishing between those run by the official government and those that were unofficial (Emilia, 2013).

Efforts to resolve the armed conflict in Sudan are suitable for using the second MTD Track, which uses non-governmental actors as mediators to resolve this conflict to narrow the political space in the war limitation phase which leads to widening the political space for peacekeeping to cultural peacebuilding. This is suitable because the armed conflict that is taking place is between the official military (SAF) which is currently in control of the government and the paramilitary group (RSF) which is suing the official government. Thus, the best effort is to use a third party as a mediator for conflict resolution.

In this conflict, the non-governmental actor was the UN which sent Martin Griffiths who served as UN Deputy Secretary General for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator (from Port Sudan) or as the person responsible for building peace efforts in Sudan on the UN side (UN, 2023). In efforts to resolve this conflict, the UN encouraged the United States and Saudi Arabia to become mediators in the Sudanese armed conflict between the military and paramilitaries. Both parties (SAF & RSF) agreed to attend the talks in Jeddah. Starting from “pre-negotiation” talks which later resulted in the Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect Civilians in Sudan (Stygant, 2023).

The Jeddah Declaration contains the obligations of the SAF and RSF in accordance with International Humanitarian Law and applicable human rights conventions. This agreement also contains a commitment to a short-term ceasefire, providing humanitarian assistance facilities to seek to end hostilities and build permanent peace (Stygant, 2023). Despite this, in fact armed conflict is still ongoing in Sudan.

Thus, apart from the efforts made by non-governmental organizations, in this case through the United Nations, which encouraged the United States and Saudi Arabia to act as

mediators in the Sudanese conflict, the role of civil society is also important in building peace efforts by organizing civil power to be able to reject the violence that has occurred. takes place in Sudan as a result of the military versus paramilitary conflict in Sudan.

CONCLUSION

The conflict that occurred in Sudan after reform in 2021 between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) or Sudanese military and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) or Sudanese paramilitary is classified as a non-international armed conflict (NIAC). This is because this armed conflict meets the NIAC criteria as stated in Additional Protocol II of 1977. Apart from that, this conflict has an impact on civilians who become casualties. If this conflict is allowed to continue, there will be more civilian casualties.

Thus, it is necessary to make conflict resolution efforts in this armed conflict. The conflict that occurred between the military (SAF) and the paramilitary (RSF) used conflict resolution efforts using the *Multi-Track Diplomacy (MTD)* method, using the second track which uses non-governmental actors as actors who bridge efforts to build peace. The non-governmental actor in efforts to resolve this conflict is the UN encouraging the United States and Saudi Arabia to facilitate the SAF and RSF by holding the Jeddah Declaration which contains the obligations of the SAF and RSF to comply with applicable International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights. To build peace, there is a need for a ceasefire or cessation of violence, but in reality, this declaration has not stopped this conflict, so civil participation is also needed to be able to encourage both parties to stop the conflict because the violence that occurs has an impact on civilians.

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