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Cross-border conflict drivers/breaks across Sudan, Egypt, and Jordan

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10. 02. 2017

Question

What is the evidence base on cross-border conflict drivers/breaks that exist across Sudan, Egypt, and Jordan?

Contents

1. Overview

Conflict drivers/breaks often affect multiple countries simultaneously. Moreover, conflict drivers such as violent extremism; migration; and goods trafficking are often interlinked (Browne, 2013, p. 1). Migration and trafficking often follow the same geographical routes through multiple countries, and can also involve weapons smuggling for extremist groups. Moreover, extremists' movements across borders can frequently interact with trafficking for profit (Browne, 2013, p. 1).

This report provides an overview of the evidence on cross-border conflict drivers/breaks along the Sudan - Egypt - Jordan route. As the evidence base linking these countries together is very limited, this report also includes literature that addresses conflict/drivers breaks that occur in just some of the countries covered in this report. The majority of the literature uncovered while undertaking research for this report looks at potential conflict drivers in the countries considered, rather than at conflict breaks.

The following are some of the key conflict drivers/ breaks in Sudan, Egypt, and Jordan identified in the literature:

- **Migration**: There is a significant evidence base on migration in Sudan, Egypt, and Jordan. The nature of the literature is diverse, ranging from opinion pieces to more

rigorous empirical research by organisations like the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat and the North African Mixed Migration Task Force (NAMMTF). The latter are generally based on fieldwork and combine quantitative and qualitative data.

- **Religious extremism:** There is a considerable body of literature on religious extremism in the countries considered in this report. However, much of the writing on this topic consists of opinion pieces and conjecture rather than rigorous research. This is especially the case when looking at the literature on extremist groups like the Islamic State (IS).

- **Economic marginalisation and state repression:** The literature on economic marginalisation and state repression links these issues both to protest movements and to violent extremism. It focuses largely on the Egyptian and Sudanese contexts.

- **Natural resources:** There is some evidence to suggest that water scarcity is a potential driver of conflict in all the countries covered in this report. The literature focuses largely on how Egypt and Sudan respectively have reacted to Ethiopia's building of a dam on the Blue Nile. One article suggests that increased cooperation over the Nile waters could also constitute a form of conflict prevention.

- **Drugs:** One literature review suggests that cannabis may be being smuggled from Sudan and Chad to Egypt. However the research undertaken for this report has not uncovered any further evidence on drug smuggling along the Sudan – Egypt – Jordan route.

- **Trade:** There is very little literature on trade between the countries considered in this report.

- **Arms**: The research undertaken for this report has not uncovered any literature or evidence that there are arms flows along the Sudan – Egypt - Jordan route.

The literature considered in this review was largely gender-blind. Where gender is addressed it is generally in the context of women's experiences of migration.

2. Conflict drivers/breaks

There are a number of conflict drivers/ breaks that affect all of the countries considered in this report. However, the extent to which they affect each location varies and the research undertaken for this report has not uncovered any evidence linking these factors along the Sudan – Egypt – Jordan route. Evidence on conflict drivers/ breaks that affect at least two of the countries considered have therefore also been included in this report.

Migration

There is a significant body of literature on the impact of migration in Sudan, Egypt, and Jordan. This literature addresses both forced and voluntary migration, as well as human trafficking and people smuggling.

A rapid fragility and migration assessment of Sudan produced by GSDRC summarises the journeys faced by migrants originating from Sudan, passing through Sudan, and arriving in Sudan (Strachan, 2016). This includes the journey on to Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula. It also provides an overview of the drivers of fragility and migration in Sudan. Similarly, a workshop report on human trafficking in conflict briefly addresses the migrant journey from Sudan to Egypt,

noting that migrants along this route may have been targeted for organ harvesting (Cockayne & Summers, 2016, p. 11).

A NAMTF report (2015) provides a very comprehensive description of the journeys undertaken by migrants from the Horn of Africa traveling to the Middle East and North Africa, and onwards to Europe. In addition to documenting routes taken by migrants it also looks at the existing legal frameworks for mixed migration in each of the countries that migrants pass through, and it looks at the problem of human trafficking. The report notes that while the problem appears to have decreased in the Sinai Peninsula, it has increased on the Sudan – Eritrea border (NAMTF, 2015, p. 37). The report is based on fieldwork in a number of countries, including Sudan and Egypt. However, it does not cover Jordan. The NAMTF or Mixed Migration Hub (MHub) also publishes monthly mixed migration trends bulletins, which provide up-to-date statistics on migrants passing through North Africa, including Sudanese migrants in Egypt.[1] The Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS) has also produced a number of reports describing key migration routes and highlighting the effective closure of the route from the Horn of Africa to Israel via Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula, due to a crackdown on illegal immigration in Israel. Like the NAMTF report, these reports note that this has also resulted in a significant reduction in human trafficking incidents in the Sinai Peninsula, although they still occur (see for example RMMS, 2016 and RMMS, 2015). This suggests that older reports (pre- 2013) on this issue are likely to be outdated. However, a policy brief by the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime suggests that trafficking in the Sinai Peninsula continues on the route to and from Jordan (to Libya) and that there is potential for this to increase (The Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, 2015). The policy brief also highlights the involvement of IS in human trafficking in the Sinai Peninsula and the potential for them to actively seek to increase the refugee population in the area for their own financial gain (Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, 2015, p. 8).

A policy-oriented Carnegie Endowment report discusses the impact of the presence of a large number of refugees In Jordan, noting that the significant influx of Syrian refugees 'has pushed Jordanian coping mechanisms and financial and infrastructural capacities to the limit,' especially given the country's experiences with the earlier Iraqi refugee crisis caused by the 2003 U.S.-led invasion and the civil war that followed (Yahya, 2015, p. 11). Similarly, a research report by the Morocco based OCP Policy Center also provides a detailed assessment of the impact of large numbers of refugees on Jordanian infrastructure, economy, and social dynamics (Dadush & Niebuhr, 2016). It notes that while Jordan has received a large number of refugees, Sudan, a less developed country, has received many more (Dadush & Niebuhr, 2016). Another policy-oriented report published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace also looks at the challenges Jordan is facing to the large numbers of Syrian refugees it is hosting (Francis, 2015). However, the report also discusses the positive economic impact the sizeable refugee population is having. It notes that increased public investment in response to the influx of refugees, as well as the consumption of Syrian refugees has contributed to economic growth in Jordan (Francis, 2015, p. 14).

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[1] http://www.mixedmigrationhub.org

Violent extremism

There is a significant body of literature on the Islamic State (IS) and its activities in Egypt, Sinai and Jordan. However, much of this literature is not evidence-based. Rather it consists of opinion pieces and conjecture. It is largely produced by European and North American think tanks. There is considerable overlap between the literature on religious extremism and the literature on economic marginalisation and state repression discussed below. A policy brief by the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime highlights the crime – terror nexus in the Trans-Sahara (including Egypt and the Sinai peninsula) (2015, p. 8). The brief also links migrant flows to violent extremism, noting that the movement of people through the Trans-Sahara region is a potential recruiting ground or cover for the movement of foreign fighters[2] (Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, 2015, p.8)**.**

Foreign fighters

A comprehensive desk-based study on foreign fighters by the security analysis firm, The Soufan Group, finds that all of the countries in this report are sources of foreign fighters. However, these foreign fighters are generally heading to conflict zones like Syria and Iraq and as such they constitute a driver of conflict in their destination countries rather than in the countries considered in this report (The Soufan Group, 2015). The report includes the caveat that it is extremely difficult to find accurate numbers on foreign fighters (The Soufan Group, 2015, p. 5). The research undertaken for this report did not uncover any evidence of foreign fighters operating in Sudan, Egypt, or Jordan.

Economic marginalisation and state repression

Cachalia (2015) provides a brief overview of the rise of IS and other violent extremist groups in the Sinai Peninsula arguing that this, and the consequent rise in terrorist attacks, is largely due to state repression and economic marginalisation.

An Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) conflict trends report, based on quantitative conflict location and events data, provides limited information on politically and economically motivated violent protests in Sudan and Egypt, although it does not highlight any links between protest movements in the two countries (ACLED, 2016). The rapid fragility and migration assessment for Sudan mentioned in the section on migration also looks at political and economic exclusion in Sudan as a driver of fragility. It summarises the evidence on exclusion on the basis of ethnicity and language, as well as on disparities between states within Sudan in terms of economic, social and cultural rights (Strachan, 2016). It also summarises the literature on discrimination faced by internally displaced persons in Sudan (Strachan, 2016).

Natural resources

The research undertaken for this report did not uncover any literature directly addressing natural resources as a cross-border conflict driver/break between all the countries considered in this

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[2] Individuals who travel overseas to fight for extremist groups.

report. However, there are a few articles addressing water and gold mining as potential conflict drivers/breaks between or within some of the countries covered in this report.

Water

An Institute for Security Studies (ISS) opinion piece briefly discusses the potential both for conflict and for increased cooperation and conflict prevention between some of the Nile riparian states, including Egypt and Sudan, over the Nile waters. However, it does not provide an in-depth analysis and it is not evidence-based (Tadesse, 2012). An opinion piece in the Economist addresses the same issue, noting that Sudan initially sided with Egypt over Ethiopia's controversial construction of a dam on the Blue Nile, but later changed sides when it realised that it stood to benefit from the dam's construction (Economist, 2016). The online Environment, Conflict and Cooperation Platform also highlights the potential for tensions arising from Egypt's interest in the newly independent South Sudan's wetland area called the Sudd, which it views as a potential source of additional water.[3] Water issues are also discussed in Woodward's analysis of the relationship between Egypt and Sudan in the context of South Sudan's independence (2010). It is important to note that this paper pre-dates South Sudan's independence from Sudan.

There is also a small body of literature on water as a potential driver of conflict in Jordan. However, the dispute is not with Egypt or Sudan, but rather with Israel (Haddadin, 2014).

Gold

There is some literature on gold mining as a driver of conflict in North Darfur, for example Tubiana's 2015 article in Foreign Affairs magazine. This largely consists of articles in current affairs magazines and blog posts, rather than of rigorous evidence-based academic research.

There have also been tensions between Egypt and Sudan over gold mines in the disputed Hala'ib triangle between the two countries. However, this issue appears to be limited to the border between the two countries – there is no evidence to suggest that gold mining is a driver or potential driver of conflict in the rest of Egypt or in Jordan. The evidence base on this potential driver of conflict is largely limited to news articles and opinion pieces.

Drugs

A GSDRC report on border insecurity in North Africa includes a brief mention of cannabis smuggling, stating that one of the routes used is through Chad and Sudan to Egypt (Browne, 2013, p. 5). However, while drug smuggling is potentially a problem in all of the countries and territories looked at in this report, this research has not uncovered any evidence on the issue in the context of the Sudan-Egypt -Jordan route.

Trade

Woodward's analysis of the relationship between Egypt and Sudan in the context of South Sudan's independence touches on trade between the two countries, noting that this is not significant and that both countries have many more important trading partners (2010, p. 15). It is

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[3] https://library.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/dispute-over-water-nile-basin

important to note that this paper pre-dates South Sudan's independence from Sudan. In addition, a quantitative working paper published by the Egypt-based Economic Research Forum, looks at the potential for increased trade between Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia (Ebaidalla, 2015).

Arms

While arms flows are potentially a problem in some of the countries and territories looked at in this report, this research has not uncovered any evidence on the issue in the context of the Sudan-Egypt Jordan route.

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Key websites

MHub (Mixed Migration Hub):
http://www.mixedmigrationhub.org

RMMS (Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat):
http://www.mixedmigrationhub.org

Small Arms Survey:
http://www.smallarmssurvey.org

ECC Platform (Environment, Conflict and Cooperation Platform):
https://www.ecc-platform.org

Suggested citation

Strachan, A.L. (2017). *Cross border drivers of conflict.* K4D Helpdesk Report. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

About this report