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Federico Donelli & Altea Pericoli

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## Foreign Aid, Identities and Interests: Qatar and the UAE in Sudan

Federico Donelli <sup>a</sup> and Altea Pericoli <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Università degli Studi di Trieste; <sup>b</sup>Lund University

### ABSTRACT

The entanglement of domestic and geopolitical dynamics with the evolution of the aid strategies of the Gulf States is particularly evident in the Horn of Africa (HOA), where the regional competition for exercising influence has affected the modalities of humanitarian and development interventions. A comparison of the foreign aid given by Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to Sudan in the context of its political and humanitarian crisis during three different periods (2014-17; 2017-19; and post-2019) allows a better understanding of these dynamics. By adopting a neoclassical realist and constructivist approach, it highlights similarities and differences in the domestic factors at play, including the ideological and security dimension, in both donor and recipient countries, as well as their overlapping with the regional and international spheres, which determine aid strategies in terms of the geographical, channel and sectoral allocation of aid resources.

### KEYWORDS

humanitarian aid; Qatar;  
United Arab Emirates; Sudan

In the post-Arab Spring era, there has been a significant increase in political and security interactions between Gulf and East African states. The expansion of the Middle East's geopolitical influence has transformed the Horn of Africa (HOA) into a new arena for competition among external actors. Existing research in this field has focused on security and political issues (Verhoeven 2018; Huliaras and Kalantzakos 2017; Mason and Mabon 2022), rather than on Gulf states' interventions as donors in this region.

Among the HOA countries, Sudan and Somalia have experienced the highest level of interaction with Middle Eastern states over the past 15 years. Sudan represents a case of prolonged humanitarian emergency caused by multiple crises where international and Gulf donors have operated following and developing their strategies and approaches. Against this background, this study addresses two research questions: *What are the main differences between Qatari and United Arab Emirates (UAE) approaches to foreign aid in Sudan, and what is the entanglement of transnational, domestic and international factors that have influenced their strategies?* To address these questions, this article uses the framework of neoclassical realism. Neoclassical realism is an approach to foreign policy analysis that seeks to understand international politics by taking into

**CONTACT** Altea Pericoli  [altea.pericoli@cme.lu.se](mailto:altea.pericoli@cme.lu.se)

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account the nature of the international system, where states' responses are shaped by unit-level factors such as state-society relations, the nature of their domestic political regimes, strategic culture and leader perceptions (Ripsman 2017). Therefore, it is useful for understanding how domestic factors in both donor and recipient countries, including the elite decision-making process and geopolitical contexts, have influenced aid allocation and strategies in different periods. Moreover, it considers transnational elements, including the role played by political Islam in elites' perceptions, through a constructivist approach that is useful for unpacking the ideological component in the analysis of foreign aid.

The three periods considered in this study are: (i) from 2014<sup>1</sup> to 2017, which includes the aftermath of the Arab uprising and the Omar al-Bashir presidency in Sudan; (ii) from 2017 to 2019, the period beginning with Qatari blockade until the end of the al-Bashir presidency; and (iii) the post-2019 period, which aims to understand the evolution of aid allocation by these two Gulf states during Sudan's political and humanitarian crisis.

The article analyses the trends in Qatari and UAE foreign aid to Sudan by attempting to understand the determinants of the three states' decisions and the characteristics of their approaches. It argues that the internal dynamics of recipient and donor countries, together with external geopolitical changes, affect aid strategies in terms of flow, geographical allocation at the micro level (different areas in the same country), as well as donors' sectoral and channel preferences. The selection of Qatar and the UAE as donor cases for comparative analysis is based on two main reasons. First, they present different approaches in terms of foreign policy in the HOA and Sudan, in particular considering Qatar's trait of autonomy in foreign policy decisions and the UAE's security requirement in the HOA. These two elements are visible if we consider the changing geopolitical dynamics in the period after the Arab Spring, during the Gulf crisis and post-2019 with the end of al-Bashir's rule and the al-Ula "solidarity and stability" agreement of January 2021, through which the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) called for restoring full diplomatic relations with Qatar after the blockade. The agreement started a new phase in the relationship among the GCC states that, however, continued to pursue their respective agendas in terms of foreign policy and foreign aid. Indeed, the second reason is related to the increasing competition between Qatar and the UAE in the HOA after the Arab Spring, and more clearly, after the Gulf crisis in 2017.

Considering their different strategies in terms of foreign policy, the article posits that these diverging approaches are reflected in the implementation of aid toward Sudan. The two countries' different institutional aid structures, together with internal and external dynamics, determine their 'way of working' as donors in terms of sectoral (humanitarian vs development aid) and channel (bilateral, multilateral, state-based charities, international non-governmental organisations [INGOs]) allocation of resources.

In sum, the study of foreign aid policies can contribute to a better understanding of the foreign policy of the Gulf States in the HOA, explaining the presence of Qatar and the UAE in Sudan through the lenses of foreign aid assistance and the consequent allocation of resources, as well as their regional competition.

The analysis is based on data from the Qatar Fund for Development and the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) Annual Reports, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Financial Tracking Service and

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<sup>1</sup>The analysis starts from 2014, due to the data availability in terms of aid flow.

annual reports of different organisations, such as Qatar Charity, Qatar Red Crescent Society and Emirates Red Crescent Society. The aid analysis is based on data available from international databases and the institutional annual reports of the two countries, and does not consider funds that are not officially reported.

The article proceeds as follows: the first section elaborates on the analysis of foreign aid through the lens of neoclassical realism, followed by a description of the context of Sudan from 2014 to 2022. The third and fourth sections analyse the aid provided by Qatar and the UAE to Sudan respectively, in the context of each country's institutional aid structure. In the last section, the research compares Qatari and Emirati foreign aid policies, tracing their features back to the parameters considered. The article concludes with some broader considerations that go beyond the case study.

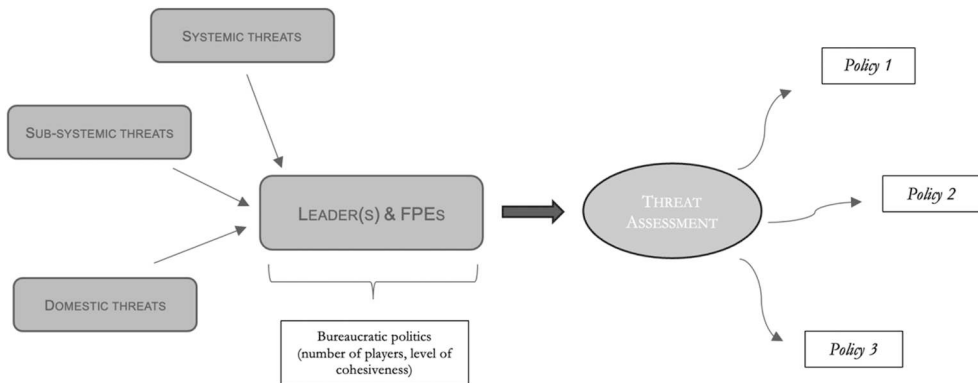
### **Domestic environment, regional competition: foreign aid through the lens of neoclassical realism**

Neoclassical realism typically focuses on interstate competition rather than cooperation (Ripsman 2017) and extends the neorealist approach by emphasising the role of the international system in shaping the constraints and opportunities for states' foreign policy actions. In contrast to neorealism, neoclassical realism addresses the complex relationship between systemic variables and external outcomes for states. In other words, unlike neorealism, neoclassical realism recognises state agency. It retains an eclectic nature that allows for the consideration of domestic variables such as perceptions, ideology, public opinion and political culture, in conjunction with external inputs (Foulon and Meibauer 2020). Among the intervening variables that neoclassical realism identifies are the perceptions of leaders. According to neoclassical realists, leaders do not always respond rationally to external stimuli. While they may correctly perceive the threats and incentives of the international system, they may fall into traps and mental shortcuts that lead them to make suboptimal or irrational decisions (Lobell 2018).

This interpretive framework is particularly useful for this article, as it sheds light on the factors that compel regional powers to intervene beyond their established regional order and foster increased interaction across different regional spaces. Scholars have increasingly emphasised the need to examine foreign policy decision-making processes within Middle Eastern states to understand their regional strategy (Salloukh 1996; Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2014; Darwich and Kaarbo 2019). The interplay between international and domestic dimensions, often referred to as "intermestic" (Korany 2013), is an enduring variable in the political and security dynamics of the Middle East (Lynch 2016). The influence of the international system on state behaviour, coupled with regional/global threats and fluid alliances, produces effects comparable to those seen in situations of clear and imminent threats. These circumstances often present a spectrum of state policy options, rather than a single optimal policy dictated by international circumstances (Ripsman 2017). The prevailing uncertainty about both threats and alliances deepens strategic competition not only within the region but also beyond its borders. In contrast to the previous decade, during which many scholars and analysts spoke of a 'new Cold War' characterised by strong sectarian divisions, the period from 2011 onwards resulted in a regional system of "fragmented multipolarity" (Hinnebusch 2016).

These developments are the result of systemic and regional factors that have changed the nature of the Middle Eastern order. The Obama administration's strategic shift (pivot to Asia) and gradual disengagement from the region, coupled with the instability resulting from the 2011 protests and various civil conflicts, have diminished the influence of once-prominent states such as Egypt, Syria and Iraq. These states have become subject to the influence of other regional actors such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), the UAE and Qatar, making the regional system more susceptible to geopolitical competition. At the same time, Middle Eastern players have expanded the boundaries of their competition into new areas such as the HOA. Structural factors have made the HOA a particularly receptive environment. Institutional fragility, centralised leadership, patronage networks, economic weakness and numerous intra- and interstate conflicts have provided a suitable milieu for the increasing involvement of Middle Eastern actors. As a result, Middle Eastern actors have extended their power and influence in the HOA. This expansion has turned the most vulnerable states, particularly Sudan and Somalia, into objects of contention.

The features of neoclassical realism useful in this specific case study are related to (i) the external environment and the related projection of powers by these two Gulf States and (ii) the elite decision-making process, in which policy-makers' choices respond to external pressures filtered through 'transmission belts' at the domestic level (Juneau 2015). Despite the relevance of the geopolitical dynamics, the intervening variables at the unit level interact with the external dimension and define the ways the latter is interpreted and acted upon and the level of threat assessed. Threat assessment determines the behaviour of different states in response to the same international stimuli by shaping the geopolitical contours within which they conduct their foreign policy (Foulon 2015). According to the model developed by neoclassical realism, threat assessment is nested and layered. Three distinct levels can be identified: systemic, subsystemic and domestic (Lobell 2009). Their boundaries are blurred and often intertwined (Cooper 2003). Bureaucratic politics often drives defining the threat and developing policies to address it. As a result, threat assessments and subsequent policy actions are determined by the number of actors involved in the foreign policy decision-making process and the degree of cohesion among them (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Threat assessment chart.

In the case of the UAE, this is translated into the prioritisation of security and bilateral and development aid interventions in the central government of Sudan, to secure the Red Sea and maintain its presence in the HOA. For Qatar, the threat assessment from the Arab Spring onwards drove the elite to prioritise autonomy in terms of foreign aid and foreign policy in comparison to other Gulf States. This explains the allocation of resources in opposition-held areas in Syria (Pericoli 2023), in Gaza through the collaboration with Hamas' institutions and in Darfur, in the Sudanese case, through humanitarian interventions and state-based charities, as the empirical analysis will show. In this framework, Qatar's relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood movements represents a pragmatic and strategic exercise of this autonomy.

Therefore, as described by Javier Bordòn and Eyad Alrefai (2023) in their analysis of Saudi Arabia's aid, on the one hand, the primary driver of aid policy reflects the realist notion of relative power, both at the regional and international levels. On the other hand, the domestic context and the decision-making process add a constructivist dimension to the patterns and details of aid, as the prevailing perceptions and priorities amongst the ruling elite condition how states make sense of their external environment. Moreover, at this level, the institutional structure of aid influences its parameters in terms of sectoral and channel allocation of resources.

## The case of Sudan

Theoretically, Sudan can be classified as an insulator state, located at the intersection of different security complexes without being inherently part of any of them. According to Barry Buzan's and Ole Wæver's (2003, 40-1) Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), an insulator state is wedged between two or more complexes, as opposed to a buffer state that exists within a regional complex with robust security patterns. The insulator's location exposes it to energies and spillover effects from the surrounding subcomplex peripheries. Situated between two or more regional complexes or subcomplexes, the insulator can withstand pressure effects, creating a zone of relative indifference with a low level of security interdependence. However, a factor not addressed by Buzan and Wæver is that if these countries are institutionally, economically and politically fragile, they may lose their insulating qualities and become both conductors and gateways. While challenging Buzan and Wæver's theoretical framework is beyond the scope of this article, it does acknowledge a weakness in the static definition of the insulator state, which is difficult to apply to an ever-changing reality. This study argues that Sudan exemplifies this dynamic nature due to its geo-strategic location and recent domestic developments. Sudan sits between two main regions or sub-complexes characterised by higher levels of instability and conflict, extending from the eastern shores of the Red Sea to the Atlantic Ocean. Sudan is a transitional state not only horizontally, between the Sahel sub-complex and the Red Sea, but also vertically, serving as a corridor for migratory flows between the Mediterranean and sub-Saharan Africa. These arcs of fragility are linked by similar trends, including political instability, the effects of climate change, poverty, food insecurity, intra- and interstate wars, population displacement, transnational crime and the rise of jihadist groups. In essence, Sudan is emerging as a critical crossroads for future geostrategic balances.

Like donor countries, Sudan's foreign policy decisions can be seen as a response to perceived threats. Unlike the UAE and Qatar, where power is highly personalised, Sudan had multiple factions within the foreign policy elite (FPE). In addition to President al-Bashir and his inner circle, there was his National Congress Party (NCP) and the security apparatus represented by the Sudan National Army (SNA) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary group. Through the years, based on their respective interests and perceptions, each stakeholder proposed different threat assessments. Strong internal divisions led to inconsistent policies and a period of high instability. As a result, the internal cohesion of the Sudanese threat assessment process crumbled over time.

2011 was a turning point in Sudan's political affairs. The long wave of Arab uprisings in North African countries and the referendum that enshrined South Sudan's independence severely hindered Sudan's stability. Soon, al-Bashir's regime's perceived threat was further heightened by growing regional instability in Lybia and South Sudan as well as with the Egyptian counterrevolution. Al-Bashir's circle was also concerned about the country's deteriorating economic conditions under sanctions. Beginning in 2014, the Sudanese leader decided to exploit regional competition to extract resources and consolidate his domestic power. However, al-Bashir's attempt proved insufficient to keep him at the helm. Since 2018, the country has experienced several key defining events, including a regime change (2019) after months of protests in which women and youth played leading roles (Berridge *et al.* 2022). Subsequently, a complex political transition period began, supported by the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. However, the military takeover in 2021 (although this period is not covered in this study) plunged the country into political and civil unrest that continues to this day (2024).

### **2014-17**

In the 2014-17 period, political turmoil, economic troubles, social malaise and unresolved crises in Darfur contributed to the country's fragility. Continued instability made Sudan susceptible to significant external meddling in its internal affairs and new asymmetrical dependency relations. Although the influence of Middle Eastern players was not new in Sudan, its political fate had never been strongly determined by regional power competition, as was the case in the post-Arab Spring era.

In the intensely competitive regional environment that unfolded after the Arab uprisings, the Sudanese regime aimed to leverage rivalries among Middle Eastern actors to its advantage. On the one hand, it exploited the KSA and UAE's perception of threat and encirclement from Iranian influence in the Red Sea. On the other hand, it revitalised the Islamist character of the ruling NCP to enhance relations with Qatar and Turkey, particularly following the arrest of Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi. Consequently, al-Bashir attempted to maintain a balance between these two factions, which promoted alternative and conflicting regional configurations after the 2011 uprisings. While Turkey and Qatar sought to reshape the regional order by supporting political Islamist movements, the KSA and the UAE sought to restore the pre-2011 *status quo* (Bishku 2022).

From the perspective of the UAE and KSA, Tehran's relations with Khartoum and Asmara gained strategic importance with the onset of the Yemeni civil war in 2015. The UAE and KSA's perceptions of being surrounded by Iranian proxies were exacerbated by the Houthi takeover of Sanaa. Consequently, it became imperative for the two Gulf monarchies to disrupt the supply lines from the African shore of the Red Sea. The interventionist approach of the two monarchies led to the initiation of military operations in Yemen (Operation Restoring Hope) and the deepening of political and financial ties with Sudan and Eritrea. Khartoum severed ties with Iran and sent around 10,000 troops to Yemen to join the Saudi-led coalition. As compensation for its participation in the Yemeni conflict, Sudan received direct payments into the national treasury, subsidies for commodities and payment of the salaries for the military personnel involved (*Africa Confidential* 2012).

In parallel, the foreign policies of Qatar and Turkey were increasingly influenced by the identity dimension (Başkan 2016; Donelli 2020b). Both states sought to influence the regional order by supporting the rise of Islamist movements aligned with the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood. Al-Bashir accommodated their aspirations to expand their influence in the HOA by reviving political and economic ties and emphasising ideological affinities. As a result of these dynamics, both Turkey and Qatar escalated their interest and involvement in Sudanese affairs during this period.

## 2017-19

The intense rivalry between Qatar and the two Gulf monarchies, particularly the UAE, gained momentum in the summer of 2017, notably after the rift within the GCC. Following a long series of tensions that began in 2011, the so-called Arab Quartet (KSA, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt) decided to impose an embargo on Qatar. Among other reasons for the blockade, the UAE and KSA cited the ambiguous relationship with Iran and, above all, the promotion of political Islam movements in the region (MacDonald 2021).

The blockade caused a political rift within the GCC that began to heal in 2021. The rivalry between Qatar and the UAE intensified and transcended traditional regional boundaries. The Emirates perceived the rise of political Islam in the HOA as a threat to their national stability. Sudan and Somalia became the main arena in which the two small kingdoms competed for influence and this can be observed in the allocation of aid resources in terms of humanitarian aid and bilateral allocation of funds.

Initially, Sudan decided to remain neutral despite pressure from many quarters. To force al-Bashir to align with their positions, the UAE increased the injection of money into the Sudanese economy by demanding the sidelining of Islamists from the government. In 2018 alone, the UAE is estimated to have invested about USD 7 billion into Sudan's economy (Abbas 2018). Qatar countered the Emirati efforts with the same financial tool and in March 2018 extended a USD 2 billion loan to Sudan (Ibid).

Al-Bashir's dangerous balancing act had two immediate results. On the one hand, it convinced the UAE and KSA that the Sudanese president was untrustworthy and should be removed (Gallopini 2020). On the other hand, it exacerbated tensions within the regime's power circle and his position began to weaken. As mentioned, the Sudanese president had built his regime on three pillars: the NCP, the army (SAF), and the

paramilitary militia (RSF). He had consistently fomented rivalries between the three to maintain control. At the end of 2018, however, the SAF and RSF, backed by the UAE and KSA, began plotting to oust him. The UAE halted fuel deliveries to Sudan, triggering a cascading effect. Confronted with foreign currency shortages and overwhelming debt, al-Bashir was compelled to reduce bread subsidies, leading to street protests.

On 11 April 2019, widespread protests prompted the intervention of the security services, leading to the arrest of al-Bashir and the establishment of the Transitional Military Council (TMC) to govern the country. The most prominent members of the TMC were two key figures: General al-Burhan, the top officer of the SAF, and Commander Hemedti, the leader of the RSF. Both military leaders had developed excellent relations with the two Gulf monarchies during their service in Yemen. In particular, Hemedti had forged a close connection with the UAE, through which he established a channel to transfer Sudanese gold to Dubai (Rakipoğlu 2021).

## 2019-22

The coup allowed the UAE and KSA to cement their ties with Sudan. Within days, the two monarchies sanctioned USD 3 billion in direct aid to the TMC to address the economic crisis (Walsh 2019a). While the UAE and KSA initially wanted to maintain power within the TMC, widespread condemnation following the violent dispersal of the permanent sit-in in Khartoum forced the TMC to enter into a power-sharing agreement with civilians (Walsh 2019b). Nevertheless, the support of the two monarchies played a key role in shaping the power dynamics with the civilian components grouped in the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC). Despite establishing a civil-military transitional government, the military components (SAF, RSF) within it maintained an asymmetrical relationship with the civilians thanks to the financial and diplomatic support provided by the UAE and KSA (Kurtz 2024).

In the aftermath of al-Bashir's fall, the Sudanese public sought a radical change in the country's institutions. At the same time, they were irritated by the meddling of the UAE and KSA. Nonetheless, the TMC was able to maintain a strong position through control of key ministries and the leadership of the Sovereign Council formed by an agreement with the FFC (Donelli and Dentice 2020). Indeed, the constitutional declaration reflected the balance of power in favour of the SAF and RSF. Following the establishment of the Sovereign Council, support from the UAE and KSA continued. Throughout the second half of 2019, the two countries provided USD 200 million in monthly cash and commodity subsidies to bolster Sudan's finances (De Waal 2019). In return, Khartoum took a clear position in the GCC's internal power struggle by supporting the blockade of Qatar. As a result, Sudan's relations with Doha cooled. Despite the need for funding, the new government rejected an offer to send a delegation to Qatar in exchange for USD 1 billion in funding. Simultaneously, Khartoum froze several projects involving Qatar and Turkey, including the USD 4 billion project to renovate the port of Saukin, where a Turkish naval outpost was planned to be built (*The New Arab* 2018). Internally, the TMC excluded the NCP from the new government. Representatives of Islamist movements were marginalised from political life and the RSF or SAF confiscated their assets.

Between 2019 and 2020, the KSA took a step back, allowing the UAE to enhance its influence inside the country. The Emirates promoted the figure of Hemedti internally

and internationally, sidelining al-Burhan and civilian components (Donelli 2020a). The RSF leader played a leading role in peace negotiations with rebel groups from Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan, facilitated rapprochement with Israel, and managed the country's economic policy. Emirati and KSA financial flows to the generals enabled them to postpone the transition to a civilian government and regain full control of the country with another coup in the fall of 2021 (Kurtz 2024). The UAE's special relationship with Hemedti, however, fuelled the SAF's distrust of the RSF. The rivalry between al-Burhan and Hemedti gradually grew. Tensions finally erupted in the spring of 2023 with the outbreak of armed conflict between the two military factions. The ascent of Hemedti further constrained Qatar's room for manoeuvre. In less than a year following the fall of al-Bashir, Qatar had lost its primary political ally in the country. Nonetheless, Doha persisted in investing in humanitarian aid, especially in Darfur, to maintain its presence in the country and respond to one of the worst humanitarian crises of the last decades (Pericoli and Donelli 2024).

### ***Perspectives and perceptions from the UAE and Qatar***

Against this background, it becomes clear that the constant interplay between international and domestic variables determined Qatar's and the UAE's decisions to become more involved in Sudanese affairs. Especially in the case of the two Gulf monarchies, this two-level game has revolved around their leaders' perceptions and ambitions. Following 2011, international and regional dynamics shaped a restrictive external strategic environment: that is, an environment that, as perceived by the actors, is characterised by imminent threats and opportunities (Ripsman *et al.* 2016).

From Qatar's perspective, the Arab uprisings presented an opportunity to increase its regional influence and emerge from the shadow of more powerful neighbours such as KSA. Before the 2011 Arab uprisings, Qatar had already embarked on a proactive foreign policy aimed at increasing its international profile and regional autonomy *vis-à-vis* powerful neighbours such as the KSA and the UAE (Khatib 2013). Sudan was one of the contexts where Qatari policymakers were able to increase their influence between 2008 and 2017, thanks to foreign aid and the Islamist network. In particular, ideological affinities and financial considerations made Sudan a viable target in line with Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani's regional ambitions. In the face of the Saudi-led blockade, the strengthening of ties with al-Bashir's regime was seen by Doha as a necessity to avoid isolation. With the change of regime, the rise of the army forced Qatar to reassess its strategy in Sudan, adopting a more low-profile approach by targeting the population rather than the Sudanese elites. As a result, after 2019, Qatar directed most of its aid to Darfur communities, which reinforced a trend that began in 2014.

On the other hand, the UAE, and to some extent the KSA, perceived the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in the region as an imminent threat to their stability. The expansion of regional competition beyond the traditional borders increased the strategic importance of the HOA. Sudan, due to its geographical location and identity ties with regional Islamist movements, became a major target of a proactive Emirati policy. Consequently, the prospect of Sudanese alignment with Qatar was seen as an existential threat. Initially, the UAE and the KSA exploited Sudan's financial fragility to distance it from Iran. Later, they saw an opportunity in the popular protests to encourage a

regime change. Mohamed bin Zayed, then the *de-facto* ruler of Abu Dhabi, saw al-Bashir's ambiguous stance and search for support in Qatar as a threat to the UAE's regional plans and domestic stability.

The neoclassical realist analytical framework is thus particularly well suited to analysing and understanding the foreign policy and aid decisions of Qatar and the UAE. Indeed, it is evident how external stimuli determine the strategies that states adopt to improve their security (Taliaferro 2006), but the tools and tactics that states use to implement these strategies are influenced by intervening variables at the national level, such as: (i) leaders' beliefs or perceptions; (ii) the strategic culture of the country; (iii) state-society relations; and (iv) domestic institutions (Kitchen 2010; Götz 2021; Cannon and Donelli 2023).

### **Qatar's aid to Sudan: 2014-22**

Before analysing the aid flow to Sudan, some considerations as to the institutional dimension of aid in Qatar are in order. The institutional dimension related to the aid system in Qatar appears centralised in its policy elaboration and implementation level. The Department of International Cooperation and the Minister of State for International Cooperation are part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which is responsible for elaborating the policy directions of foreign aid strategies described in the Qatari National Vision 2030 and the Third National Development Strategy (2024-30). In 2002, the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) was created to take over the executive competence of the International Development Department and develop a strategic component for Qatari aid. The QFFD became the public development institution committed to allocating the governmental budget for projects in line with the main strategy in four main sectors: education, health, economic empowerment and humanitarian response. In 2014, to better coordinate the policy and the implementation level, the State of Qatar created the Regulatory Authority for Charitable Activities (RACA). The Authority is charged with developing, supporting, encouraging, regulating and supervising charitable activities carried out by charities in Qatar. At the implementation level, Qatar Charity and Qatar Red Crescent Society are the two main charities that are operating in third countries. They operate through governmental and private funds but their flow of funds to third countries requires the prior approval of the RACA. Therefore, the aid system is centralised at a policy and implementation level.

In 2011, observing the evolution of aid in Sudan, Qatar began earmarking bilateral and multilateral assistance for the reconstruction and development of Darfur. After a decade of conflict and displacement, the 2011 Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) aimed to strengthen the peace process and lay the groundwork for recovery and reconstruction. Article 31 of the DDPD specifies the far-reaching aims and objectives of a Darfur-driven development plan. These include the need to restore peace, security and social stability; improve government functionality at all levels; strengthen the civil administration; rehabilitate, reconstruct and construct physical, institutional and social infrastructure in post-conflict Darfur; and implement a comprehensive structural reform of health and educational institutions, especially Universities, to transform Darfur into a developed society in terms of technology, industry, agriculture and trade. The Darfur Regional Authority (DRA), the Government of Sudan and the

international community recognised the need for a coordinated and comprehensive strategy for supporting peace and development in the region. Following the provisions of the DDPD, the Darfur Joint Assessment Mission (DJAM) was conducted in the latter part of 2012. Informed by the needs and priorities of communities, identified through comprehensive, consultative workshops in all five Darfur states and the refugee communities in Chad, the Darfur Development Strategy (DDS) was initiated. In this framework, Qatar promoted the Darfur Development and Reconstruction Initiative intending to bring together the international donor community and provide a coordinated response (Darfur Joint Missions Assessment Team *et al.* 2013).

In 2014, Qatar signed a USD 88.5 million (Relief Web 2014) grant agreement with the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund (UNDP), as a main outcome of the Doha Document for peace in Darfur. These funds were allocated to the first pillar of the Darfur Development Strategy for addressing the reconstruction and immediate needs of the population in Darfur. The overall approach was based on three main pillars: *reconstruction, governance-justice-reconciliation and economic recovery*.

Overall, the main strategy of Qatar in this period revolved around the presence of state-based charities, in particular Qatar Red Crescent Society, in Darfur. The exception to this trend was represented by the bilateral disbursement in 2018 by the QFFD to the Sudanese government for implementing the River Nile State Transmission Line Project. Table 1 contains details of the aid flow in the period 2014-22, which will be discussed in the following section.

### **UAE's aid flow to Sudan: 2014-22**

In the UAE, the first governmental agency created for administrating foreign aid – the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD) – was created in 1971. Today it is responsible for financing exclusively development interventions through bilateral channels with soft loans and grants. In 2008, the Cabinet of the UAE created the Office for the Coordination of Foreign Aid (OCFA), signifying the government's commitment to supporting the transformation of the UAE aid sector. OCFA was assigned the responsibility of documenting and coordinating UAE foreign aid, assessing its impact and supporting capacity building in UAE organisations. In 2013, OCFA's mandate evolved, necessitating the creation of the Ministry of International Cooperation and Development (MICAD), which continues the responsibilities of OCFA, in addition to developing the UAE Foreign Assistance Policy. In 2016, MICAD merged with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to become the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MOFAIC). In 2017, the UAE Foreign Assistance Policy was launched to ensure the effectiveness of this assistance. At the coordination level, each emirate has its own Islamic Affairs and Charitable Activities Department, which aims to harmonise the foreign aid policies between the federal government and the emirates. At the implementation level, in 1983 the Emirati Red Crescent – the country's principal humanitarian agency – was created, marking an important milestone for UAE foreign assistance. In the same period (1980-90), the nation's leadership supported the creation of sponsoring aid organisations and charities for each emirate. Compared to Qatar, the decision-making process appears fragmented and managed by different figures within the elite. Foreign aid strategies are the result of a federation (centralised) process elaborated by multiple actors,

**Table 1.** Aid flows from Qatar to Sudan 2014-22.

Year & total disbursement (USD)	Donor	Implementing actor	Geographical allocation	Sectoral allocation	Channel allocation	Funds disbursed (USD)
2014 <b>93 million</b>	Qatar government	QRCS	Sennar State	Emergency shelter	Multilateral – Qatari organisation Multilateral, earmarked UNDP trust fund	100,000
	Qatar government		Central Darfur – West Darfur Darfur	Multi-sector Reconstruction		4.3 million 88.5 million
2015 <b>10 million</b>	Qatar government	QRCS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>West Darfur</li> <li>West Darfur – Central Darfur</li> <li>Central Darfur, West Darfur</li> <li>Sami al-Haj Support Center for Kidney Patients Project - Sinnar City</li> <li>Project furnishing health centre squares in the state of Kassala, Sudan</li> <li>Rehabilitation project and processing Sagady Sudan Hospital</li> </ul>	Coordination and support services – build peace and harmony	Multilateral – Qatari organisation Bilateral	63,862
	Qatar government	QRCS		Early recovery (livelihoods and economic empowerment)		109,357
	Qatar government	Carter Center		Emergency shelter		638,840
	QFFD			Health		342,078
				Agriculture		23,382
				Livelihoods, economic empowerment, health, social cohesion and agriculture		1.2 million
				Agriculture		5.8 million
				Health		2 million
			Project by agricultural mechanisms - Northern Sudan			
			West Darfur and Central Darfur; Northern Sudan; Sinnar; Kassala.			
			Arara, West Darfur			
			Khartoum			
2016 <b>5 million</b>	Qatar government	QRCS	Central Darfur	Early recovery	Multilateral – Qatari organisations	1.1 million
	QFFD	N/A	1 project in Sudan, 8 projects in Darfur			4 million
2017 <b>36 million</b>	Qatar Charity	Qatar Charity	Darfur	Education	Qatari organisations	151,966
	QRCS	QRCS	Darfur	Health, food security		3.2 million
	QFFD	QRCS/Qatar Charity	Darfur	Villages reconstruction for IDPs		32.8 million

2018	Qatar Charity QRCS QFFD	Qatar Charity QRCS	Sudan	Emergency shelter, food security, health Health, water sanitation and hygiene (WASH), food security Infrastructure – River Nile State Transmission Line Project	Bilateral (Sudanese government)	342,222 3.2 million 85 million
<b>89 million</b>						
2019	Qatar Charity QRCS	Qatar Charity QRCS		Food security Health		8,215 1.2 million
<b>1 million</b>						
2020	Qatar Charity Qatar Charity Qatar Charity QFFD/ Qatar Charity	Qatar Charity Qatar Charity Qatar Charity Qatar Charity	Khartoum, Ed Dueim (White Nile), North Darfur	Multi-sector Multi-sector Health Health, WASH, food security	Multilateral – earmarked. Plan: Sudan 2020 Multilateral – Qatari organisations	544,811 1.8 million 546,448 10.6 million
<b>13 million</b>						
2021	Qatar Charity Qatar Charity QFFD/ Qatar Charity	Qatar Charity Qatar Charity Qatar Charity + local organs.		Emergency shelter, food security Health/Covid 19		3 million 1.4 million 14 million
<b>18 million</b>						
2022	Start Network Qatar Charity Qatar Charity QRCS	Qatar Charity Qatar Charity Qatar Charity + Save the Children + Start Network QRCS	Darfur	Emergency shelter Emergency shelter, food security, education, health Food security, health, WASH Education, health	Multilateral Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan 2022 Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan 2022	419,999 44.5 million 15.7 million 4.7 million
<b>65 million</b>						

Source: data collected from OCHA FTS (2024a), QFFD (2014-2022), QC (2014-2022) and QRCS (2014-2022) annual reports.

especially among the elite of Abu Dhabi and Dubai. This system has created many actors in the humanitarian and development landscape with financial and implementation roles (that is, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, Emirates Red Crescent, Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation, Dar el Ber Society, Al Maktoum Foundation, among others). Most are linked to key personalities of different emirates, reflecting the fragmentation of policies and priorities in terms of foreign aid.

Observing the data flow of foreign aid to Sudan, the UAE allocates most of its resources to development interventions rather than humanitarian relief. Compared to Qatar, the amount allocated by the UAE in the country is higher in absolute terms, with a peak in funding in 2016, 2019 and 2020 (see [Table 2](#) for details).

In 2019, Sudan underwent a regime change and a transitional period. In response, the UAE multiplied its foreign aid disbursements in 2019 by more than eight times, amounting to USD 543.2 million, compared with 2018. More than half of this aid (54 per cent) was extended as grants to support the country's efforts to achieve stability. As far as the targeted sectors were concerned, over 99 per cent of the UAE's foreign aid disbursements to Sudan in 2019 were devoted to development sectors, including a contribution of USD 250 million to the Central Bank of Sudan, while the remainder was disbursed as humanitarian and charitable aid.

In 2021, however, the total amount provided to Sudan was USD 78.9 million (100 per cent as a grant) with a significant increase in the percentage allocated to humanitarian assistance (27 per cent). The three sectors receiving the most funding were food crop production, social welfare services and emergency health (UAE MOFA Annual Report 2021).

The shift from development to humanitarian interventions could be linked to the strategy of supporting the transitional government in delivering services and maintaining control over different regional states. Moreover, the aid resources and investments in agriculture and food security could potentially be connected with the strategy of transforming Sudan into a 'food supplier'. GRAIN (2024), a small international non-profit organisation, reports that two Emirati firms are farming over 50,000 hectares in the north of the country, with agricultural products being shipped through the Red Sea. At the end of 2022, Sudan signed a preliminary agreement with the UAE's AD Ports Group and Invictus Investment to build and operate the Abu Amama port and economic zone on the Red Sea with a USD 6 billion investment. This project is located about 200 km north of Port Sudan and includes a road to connect the Abu Amama port with the agricultural area of Abu Hamad in Sudan's River Nile state (*Reuters* 2022). After 2021, a new military coup and the continuous instability in the country provoked a reduction of funds by the UAE, as we can see from the primary data in [Table 2](#).

### **Qatari and Emirati aid strategies in Sudan: a comparative analysis**

There are different reasons behind Qatar's and the UAE's foreign aid interventions in Sudan. The general consideration is that Sudan represents a strategic area in the HOA and the region more generally. In the eyes of the two Gulf monarchies, Sudan's geostrategic value is determined by several factors. First, its geographic location. The country is a North-South and East-West link in the so-called Greater Middle East. Another element is its proximity to the two leading regional players: Egypt and Ethiopia. In addition, since

**Table 2.** Aid flows from the UAE to Sudan 2014-22.

Year & total disbursement (USD)	Donor	Implementing actor	Geographical allocation	Sectoral allocation	Channel allocation	Funds disbursed (USD)
2014	UAE government	Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum	Khartoum	Emergency shelter	UAE Embassy	377,075
<b>26 million</b>	UAE government	Humanitarian and Charity	Khartoum	Food security	NGO	136,129
	Emirati Red Crescent	Establishment	Khartoum, al Gazira & White Nile	Health	NGO	112,987
	Dar al Ber Society		Atbara	Agriculture, development - humanitarian		15 million
				Development		3.5 million
2015*	UAE government			Agriculture, general		48.5 million in grant
<b>118 million</b>	Abu Dhabi Fund			programme assistance, education		59.7 million
	Emirati Red Crescent					3.5 million
	Dar al Ber Society					6.4 million
2016*	Abu Dhabi Fund for Development		State of Kassala (Eastern Sudan)			500 million
<b>516 million</b>	Emirati Red Crescent					4.8 million
	Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation					1.32 million
	Dar al Ber Society					9.5 million
2017*	UAE government		Khartoum	Support for the general budget	Bilateral	130.2 million
<b>152 million</b>	Emirati Red Crescent			Social welfare, education, religious sites, orphan support		11.14 million
	Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation					1.3 million
	Dar al Ber Society					9.45 million
2018*	Abu Dhabi Fund for Development			Food security		2.7 million
<b>64 million</b>	UAE government					40 million
	Emirati Red Crescent					10.7 million
	Sharjah Charity Association					3.3 million
	Dar al Ber Society					7.4 million

(Continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Year & total disbursement (USD)	Donor	Implementing actor	Geographical allocation	Sectoral allocation	Channel allocation	Funds disbursed (USD)
2019*	Abu Dhabi Fund for Development					531 million
<b>539 million</b>	Al Maktoum Foundation					2.8 million
	Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation					1.5 million
	Dar al Ber Society					4.1 million
2020	UAE government			Health – Covid 19	Bilateral – Sudanese government	34.4 million
<b>984 million</b>	ADFD			Coordination and support services	Multilateral earmarked – UNHCR	455,000
	International Charity Organisation			Support to the general budget	Bilateral – Sudanese government	936 million
	Sharjah Charity Association					6.7 million
	Al Maktoum Foundation					3.6 million
						2.8 million
2021	UAE government	World Food Programme		Food Security	Multilateral earmarked – Sudan	4.3 million
<b>76 million</b>	UAE government				Humanitarian Response Plan 2021	18.2 million
	Abu Dhabi Fund for Development					26.3 million
	International Charity Organisation					10.7 million
	Emirates Red Crescent					9 million
	Dar Al Ber Society					7.5 million
2022	UAE government	Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation		Food security	Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan 2022	1.2 million
<b>3 million</b>				Health		690,964
				WASH		1.2 million

Note: \*no data available on OCHA FTS (2024b).

Source: data collected from OCHA FTS (2024b) and UAE MOFA Annual Reports (2014-2022).

the 2008 financial crisis, Sudan has played a major role in the Gulf countries' food security development agendas and many Emirati and Qatari companies have invested in acquiring farmland in the fertile provinces along the Nile. Finally, there is the maritime dimension. The Sudanese coastline skirts a stretch of the Red Sea that is relevant to future world trade, particularly the movement of hydrocarbons from the Gulf to Western markets.

In the case of Qatar, aid to Sudan was part of its strategy to become a neutral mediator for the greater region, beyond the response to humanitarian needs. This approach is expressed in finding a resolution to the situation in Darfur in a pragmatic vision of realpolitik (Roberts 2012). The Qatari government's good relations with Sudan during the al-Bashir period and its extensive provision of humanitarian aid to the Darfuri population meant that Qatari policy-makers enjoyed a high level of legitimacy in the eyes of both parties during negotiations to end the conflict in Darfur (Karamalla-Gainballa 2017). Humanitarian interventions in Darfur represent a way to affirm itself as a legitimate actor in political mediation while responding to the humanitarian crisis in the region.

The prioritisation of Sudan among recipient countries by the UAE finds its explanation in the securitisation of the Red Sea. In addition to its geostrategic importance outlined above, Sudan has become particularly relevant to the UAE's security politics for other reasons. After 2011, Abu Dhabi feared the emergence of an Islamist regime ideologically and politically aligned with Qatar and Turkey. Initially, the Emirati concern was that al-Bashir and the NCP elites would form an Islamist bloc with the Muslim Brotherhood, which had fled Egypt (Davidson 2019). After al-Bashir was overthrown, the UAE feared that an Islamist regime would rise from the ashes of the previous regime. The potential proliferation of political Islam has become one of the main perceived threats to the UAE's security as it could undermine the internal political order and legitimacy in the Emirates. The UAE does not derive legitimacy from its association with a particular branch of Islam. Instead, the recognition of Emirati authority is based on the logic of balance between the various Emirates and the tribal dominance of the various royal families (Ledstroup 2019). These elements explain the concentration of foreign aid and help explain Sudan's importance to the Emirati leadership.

In 2022, Sudan's military authorities and two UAE-based companies signed a preliminary agreement (USD 6 billion) for the construction of the Abu Amama port, located on the Red Sea. As reported by *Al Jazeera*: "For the UAE, this large project is part of a wider policy in the Red Sea and Africa, with the Emiratis attempting to expand their sphere of influence and build up a network of strategic outposts, of which Abu Amama would be a critical node" (Cafiero 2023).

Moreover, Sudan's role in the GCC rivalry has evolved in the period under consideration. The end of the al-Bashir era bolstered the relationship between the Saudi-UAE block and Karthoum at Turkey's and Qatar's expense. However, following the al-Ula agreement, the UAE funds decreased while the Qatari commitment in Darfur and through UN channels increased.

Considering the reasons behind the foreign aid interventions and the empirical evidence, three main differences can be identified when comparing the Qatari and UAE aid approaches in Sudan respectively: (i) humanitarian for the former vs. development interventions for the latter; (ii) state-based charities for the former vs. bilateral for the latter; (iii) autonomy for the former vs. security for the latter. These elements have

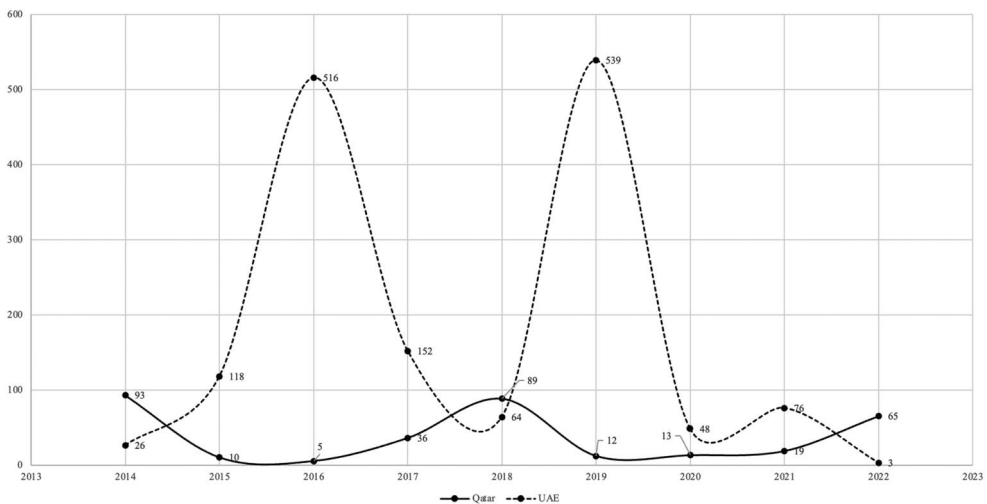
determined, over time, the the geographical allocation to the peripheries (Darfur) in the case of Qatar, or to the central government as in the case of the UAE.

Domestic and regional dynamics, however, can partially explain these three variables. In the first period (2014-17), the UAE increased its resources in Sudan through bilateral and development interventions, while Qatar focused primarily on providing humanitarian assistance in Darfur (Figure 2).

During the GCC crisis (2017-21), the UAE contribution started decreasing in 2017, with a new increase in 2019. In 2018, Qatar significantly increased its efforts in Darfur and allocated USD 85 million in development intervention through bilateral channels, directly to the central government of Sudan. This could be explained as the willingness of the Qatari elite to maintain strong ties with al-Bashir during the GCC crisis through direct support to Khartoum and not only in Darfur.

With the end of the al-Bashir era, the UAE maintained its commitment to bilateral aid to support the new government and expand its influence in the country. Qatar, instead, increased its efforts in the multilateral channel, through its contribution to the Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan (OCHA), strengthening its image as a humanitarian donor in the international community.

The geopolitical dynamics in the three periods explain the different levels of analysis ([i] humanitarian vs. development interventions; [ii] charities vs institutional; [iii] autonomy vs. security). The capacity of Qatar to penetrate the difficult context of Darfur through its organisations, namely Qatar Charity and Qatar Red Crescent Society, made this tiny Gulf State one of the most active humanitarian donors in the region and one of the most important mediators between Darfur and the central government. On the contrary, the UAE put more effort into development and bilateral aid through budget support to ensure the economic stability of the central government and the



**Figure 2.** Qatar's and the UAE's aid to Sudan 2014-22 in USD million. Source: author's elaboration based on the Qatar Fund for Development, the UAE MOFA's annual reports and OCHA FTS.

Note: In 2020, the curve does not include the 936 million provided as support to the general budget (bilateral contribution) by the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development.

transitional government after 2019, in order to protect its economic and security interests in the country.

However, other factors must be considered too: these dynamics also depend on the internal characteristics of the aid system in these two Gulf countries. The centralisation of the decision-making process in Qatar and the financial control of its charities' interventions through the Regulatory Authority of Charitable Activities, allows the country to act through its organisations at the local level, following a single strategic line. In the case of the UAE, the decision-making process in terms of foreign aid is centralised but fragmented in its implementation, as several actors and organisations are able to operate abroad and are affiliated to different elites in the federal states. Indeed, looking at the aid data we can find several organisations operating in the field, that is, Emirati Red Crescent, al Maktoum Foundation, Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation and Dar al Ber Society. However, due to the prevalence of Abu Dhabi and Dubai in the decision-making process of foreign aid and foreign policies, the main contributions come from the UAE government and the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development through bilateral channels and direct support to the Sudanese governmental budget.

Moreover, after 2017, Qatar began donating through multilateral channels and UN agencies, to strengthen its image as a transparent and accountable donor in the international community. This trend emerges also in the case of Sudan, where we can find an increase in multilateral resources from 2020 after the end of the al-Bashir government.

In Sudan, and Darfur in particular, the donor community was pushed to work not only to address the basic humanitarian needs of the civilian population but also to address social justice, governance and economic empowerment following the Darfur Development Strategy. Based on this empirical analysis, Qatari resources were allocated in Darfur to address the first pillar of reconstruction but also agriculture, health, economic empowerment and education. Although Qatar has seen its influence over Khartoum reduced since 2019, it continues to maintain significance as a partner in the eyes of the Sudanese transitional government. This relevance is primarily attributed to Qatar's relationships with the country's peripheries. As a result, Doha has remained a privileged intermediary for several non-state armed groups in Darfur and other Sudanese regional states (Blue Nile, South Kordofan), facilitating talks with authorities in Khartoum. With the assistance of Qatar, the transitional government led by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok Al-Kinani successfully signed the Juba Agreement<sup>2</sup> in 2020. The agreement involved some of the armed groups that had been opposing the Sudanese government. Therefore, Qatar remained in the peripheries but at the same time at the core of mediation efforts, with a reduction of funds in terms of bilateral (Sudanese government) and multilateral aid (UN agencies), and the continuity of interventions implemented by Qatar Charity and QRCS in Darfur and eastern Sudan in terms of humanitarian interventions.

In the case of the UAE, the huge investments in development and bilateral interventions – directly allocated to the budget support of the Sudanese government – underlines its intention to preserve the relationship with the central government, along with the economic

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<sup>2</sup>The Juba Agreement for Peace in Sudan was signed on 3 October 2020 by Sudan's transnational government and by many of the country's warring factions. The aim of the agreement was to end turbulence in conflict-affected states including Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan.

stability of Sudan, to protect its security and economic interests. From 2018, it is possible to observe a slight shift from development to humanitarian interventions, with a significant increase after 2019 with the end of al-Bashir and the beginning of the transitional government. Moreover, since 2018, foreign aid has been allocated exclusively in the form of grants, in contrast to the previous trend of combining concessional loans with grants.

In both cases, the allocation of aid through multilateral channels and UN agencies is quite small, with earmarked contributions to the World Food Programme or OCHA Humanitarian Response Plan. The greatest amount allocated in UN channels was made by Qatar Charity in 2022, with USD 44.5 million in emergency shelter, food security, education and health through the Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan. The limited effort in multilateral channels demonstrates the willingness of these two donors to maintain their strategies in terms of aid allocation in Sudan, taking advantage of their relationships with local authorities in the peripheries, or the political and military elites in the central government.

## Conclusion

Through the lenses of neoclassical realism and constructivism, this research shows the relevance of internal and external dynamics as significant variables in the analysis of humanitarian and development aid allocation in Sudan. In explaining how the UAE and Qatar use foreign aid, intangible and ideational factors such as identities and threat perceptions/assessments are crucial. The internal dynamics in both donor and recipient contexts are entangled with the transnational element of elite relationships and the ideological (and transnational) component of political Islam, as well as the prioritisation of regional security. Additionally, the figure of President al Bashir and Sudan's neutrality during the GCC crisis played a crucial role in the period 2017-19.

Doha's presence in Darfur as a humanitarian actor during and after al-Bashir remained a meaningful element in Qatar's strategy to act as a mediator and donor (rather than a political actor) in the country (Ulrichsen and Cafiero 2023), especially after losing its connection with the Sudanese government. The geographically decentralised and socially diversified approach to aid through its state-based charities allowed Qatar to maintain its presence in Darfur even after the fall of the al-Bashir regime and despite the emerging role of the UAE's support, enabling Doha to play a mediating role in the drafting of the Juba Agreement (Alarabeed 2024).

On the other hand, the UAE prioritised a development-focus and bilateral approach to increase its security and stabilise the Sudanese context. However, with the outbreak of the civil war, the UAE undermined Sudan's democratic transition in order to maintain Sudanese alignment with the Saudi-Emirati block. As one of the major foreign players in the Sudanese war after the fall of President al-Bashir, the UAE supported the country's central bank and invested in agriculture and infrastructural projects.

In conclusion, the behaviours of these two donors present three main differences – (i) humanitarian vs. development interventions; (ii) charities vs. institutional; (iii) autonomy vs. security – that are the result of internal, external and transnational entanglements. Ideological and political factors, together with the domestic aid structures of Qatar and the UAE, are crucial elements to understand the dynamics and trends in their respective aid flow.

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## Notes on contributors

**Federico Donelli** is Assistant Professor of International Relations at Università degli Studi di Trieste, Trieste, Italy. Email: federico.donelli@dispes.units.it

**Altea Pericoli** is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Lund University, Center for Advanced Middle Eastern Studies, Lund, Sweden.

## ORCID

Federico Donelli  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6093-3510>

Altea Pericoli  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4621-9660>

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