

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

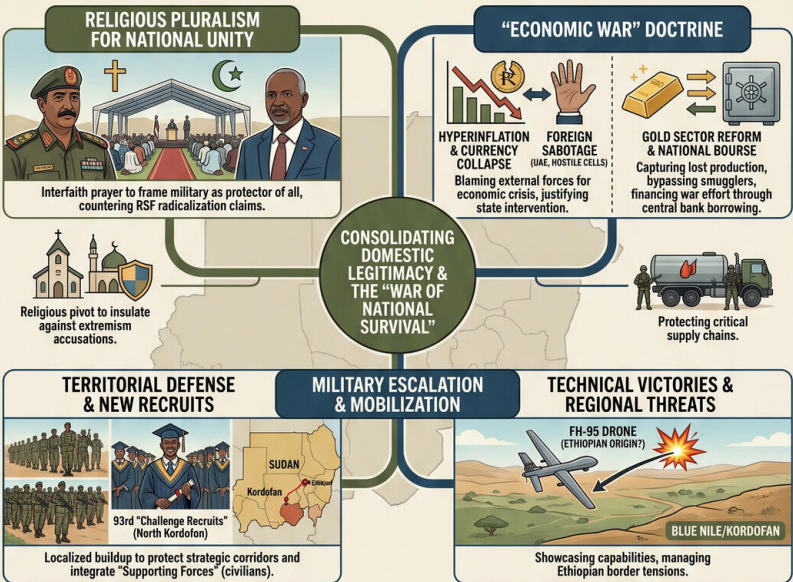
SUDAN

SEPTEMBER 20, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

SUDAN'S MILITARY GOVERNANCE HARDENS AS THE STATE WEAPONIZES "ECONOMIC WAR" NARRATIVES AND MOBILIZES CIVIL SOCIETY

REPORT SYNTHESIS: SEPTEMBER 20, 2026



MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS & GOVERNANCE TOPICS



DEEP DIVE: TRENDS, RISKS & FUTURE OUTLOOK



RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

PUBLIC SECTOR: Demand independent monitors for gold; open diplomatic channels with Addis Ababa; leverage SAF narrative for aid access.
PRIVATE SECTOR: Gold Bourse high-risk opportunity, factor in armed escorts for supply chains; focus agribusiness on stable regions with redundancy plans.
LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP: Gold Bourse regulations, Education Policy for new academic year, Formalization of "Civil Support Forces".

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DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The Sudanese state media apparatus on September 20, 2026, focused heavily on consolidating domestic legitimacy through a triad of military, religious, and economic narratives. The leadership of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, is aggressively attempting to shift public perception from a state of emergency to a sustainable "war of national survival." Key to this effort was a high-profile interfaith prayer event held in Khartoum, signaling a strategic use of religious pluralism to bolster national unity against the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and their perceived external backers. This symbolic event, attended by both Burhan and Deputy Chairman Malik Agar, sought to frame the military as the sole guarantor of safety for all Sudanese, including religious minorities.

Simultaneously, the administration is operationalizing a new "economic war"

doctrine. Finance Minister Jibril Ibrahim explicitly framed Sudan's hyperinflation and currency collapse not as systemic failures, but as targeted sabotage by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and "hostile international cells." This narrative serves a dual purpose: it externalizes blame for the catastrophic drop in living standards while justifying increased state intervention in the gold sector and critical supply chains. Militarily, the focus has shifted to the Kordofan region, where the SAF is showcasing newly trained recruit batches and claiming technical victories, such as the downing of high-altitude reconnaissance drones allegedly originating from Ethiopian territory.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Consolidation of the Domestic Information Front

- General al-Burhan engaged in a marathon four-hour closed-door session with prominent journalists in Omdurman to synchronize the [nationalist narrative](#) and address internal military-political fractures.
- State media emphasized that the "Fourth Estate" is being drafted into the "Battle of Dignity" to counter RSF disinformation and psychological operations [targeting military morale](#).
- Analysts highlighted a shift from "traditional" military reporting to a "comprehensive national mobilization" posture, urging citizens to see themselves as [soldiers in waiting](#).

Military Escalation and Territorial Defense

- The 93rd batch of "Challenge Recruits" graduated in Um Rawaba, North Kordofan, signaling a localized buildup to protect the strategically vital [El Obeid-Khartoum corridor](#).
- Air defenses successfully neutralized a sophisticated FH-95 "strategic drone" in the [Kili area of Blue Nile](#), which officials claim entered from Ethiopian airspace.
- Local mobilization in Geisan (Blue Nile) and North Kordofan continues to expand, with civilians being organized into [supporting forces](#) for the 5th Infantry "Haggana" Division.

State Intervention in the Gold and Currency Markets

- Finance Minister Ibrahim announced plans to establish a national gold exchange (bourse) to capture the 80% of production currently lost to [informal smuggling networks](#).
- The government admitted to borrowing from the central bank to fund the war effort, while simultaneously blaming the UAE for [engineered currency depreciation](#).

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization

- The SAF is successfully integrating "Supporting Forces" (civilian volunteers) into its operational command, particularly in North Kordofan where they are touted as a [resilient shield](#) against RSF incursions.

- Military analysts claim the SAF has transitioned from "positional defense" to "maneuver warfare" in the western sectors, utilizing [new tactical patterns](#) to clear RSF pockets in urban outskirts.

Leadership Dynamics & Governance

- The public appearance of Burhan and Malik Agar at a Christian prayer meeting serves to counter RSF claims of SAF Islamist radicalization, projecting an image of [inclusive statehood](#).
- Internal debates among pro-SAF elites suggest tension over the "Sudan-Sudan Dialogue" initiative, with calls for the state to directly [sponsor these talks](#) rather than allowing third-party NGOs to lead.

Macroeconomics & Food Security

- Agricultural production in Sennar and Gedaref is being framed as a "strategic victory," with claims that Sudan will not face famine despite [disrupted supply chains](#).
- The government is attempting to implement a "fixed-price" regime for essential commodities in White Nile State to curb [war profiteering](#).

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Religious Pivot

A significant shift is occurring in how the SAF portrays its ideological core. By prominently featuring Christian leaders praying for the army, the state is attempting to insulate itself from international accusations that it is a front for Islamic extremists. This "Interfaith Solidarity" theme is being used to characterize the RSF as an [irreligious](#).

[mercenary force](#) that destroys both mosques and churches, thereby unifying Sudan's diverse social fabric under the military banner.

Bureaucratic Displacement

Despite the fall of Khartoum as a functional civilian capital, the government is showcasing its ability to maintain administrative functions. The move of major banking headquarters back to [Omdurman and Khartoum North](#) is a critical signal of "normalization." Similarly, the Ministry of Higher Education's insistence on opening university admissions for the [2026-2027 academic year](#) is a deliberate psychological operation to convince the populace that the state remains a permanent fixture, regardless of the front lines.

Externalization of Economic Failure

There is an escalating rhetorical offensive against the UAE. Finance Minister Ibrahim and various analysts are no longer just accusing the UAE of arming the RSF, but of actively managing a [currency attack](#) intended to provoke an internal uprising against the SAF. This shifts the focus from the military's inability to manage the economy to a narrative of "economic resistance."

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

Social Cohesion and Civil Resilience

- The "Warid" blood donation initiative, led by medical students, demonstrates a high degree of [youth mobilization](#) in support of the war effort, contradicting narratives of widespread student disaffection.

Resilience

Amid

- Civilians in Blue Nile State express severe distress over displacement and loss of harvests, yet their rhetoric remains [tightly aligned](#) with the SAF's "one army, one people" slogan.

Elite and Intellectual Alignment

- High-level journalists are openly debating the merits of the 2019 transition, with some describing the coalition between the military and civilian politicians as a [failed experiment](#) that prioritized party interests over the state.
- There is a growing consensus among pro-state elites that the "political club" of the past 60 years has failed, and a [new patriotic vanguard](#) must be formed around the military.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

Regional Threat Vectors

- The downing of a drone in Blue Nile has brought the [Ethiopian border](#) into sharp focus. Officials are walking a fine line, signaling to Addis Ababa that they are aware of the incursions without declaring open hostilities.
- Egypt continues to be framed as the "strategic depth" for Sudan, with praise for Cairo's refusal to [engage the RSF](#) diplomatically.

Defiance of International Pressure

- The Burhan administration is increasingly dismissive of US-led diplomatic initiatives, characterizing the "Quad" as [biased toward the UAE](#) and disconnected from the ground reality of SAF victories.

- Sudanese officials are leveraging UN reports on RSF atrocities to justify their [refusal to negotiate](#) with "terrorists."

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Sudan's economy is in a state of high-intensity wartime management. The Finance Ministry reports a drastic increase in spending—primarily for military procurement and humanitarian aid—which is being financed through a combination of domestic gold revenue and central bank borrowing. The inflation rate remains unstated but is acknowledged as a "weapon of war" by the state.

Key Economic Vectors

- **Gold Sector Reform:** Plans for a national bourse are underway to bypass smugglers and secure [hard currency](#) for the state treasury.
- **Agricultural Output:** The SAF claims to have secured 4.5 million acres in Blue Nile and 4 million acres in Sennar for [essential crops](#) like sorghum and sesame.
- **Currency Volatility:** The Ministry of Finance identifies UAE-linked "speculation cells" as the primary drivers of the [Sudanese Pound's collapse](#).
- **Supply Chain Protection:** The military is now providing armed escorts for [commercial fuel convoys](#) in North Kordofan to prevent RSF looting.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The military hierarchy appears to be consolidating, with a focus on promoting officers who demonstrate success in

integrating civilian militias (Supporting Forces).

- **Major General Siddiq al-Jaili Abdurrahman:** As Commander of the 5th Infantry Division (Haggana), he has emerged as a key figure in the [Kordofan resistance](#), managing the graduation of massive recruit batches.
- **Jibril Ibrahim:** Despite the economic crisis, his position as Finance Minister appears secure as he pivots to an [aggressive "economic defense" posture](#).
- **Othman Mirghani:** Though an independent journalist, his appointment to head the "Sudan-Sudan Dialogue" preparatory committee signifies his role as a [bridge-builder](#) for the military.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The editorial hierarchy of the day's broadcasts was dominated by **Internal Solidarity** and **Military Technical Supremacy**. The lead stories focused on the interfaith prayer event and the drone shoot-down, intended to project an image of a capable, inclusive state. Economic hardships were framed not as news of suffering, but as news of "resilience" and "thwarted plots."

Buried Stories: Detailed reports on the humanitarian conditions in RSF-held areas of Darfur were minimized, focusing instead on the military's preparations to [reclaim the region](#). The specific impact of the drone shoot-down on relations with Ethiopia was avoided in favor of general patriotic fervor.

Conspicuous Omissions: There was a total absence of discussion regarding any potential for a negotiated ceasefire in the short term. The broadcast also omitted details on the

specific origin of the fuel being imported, despite discussions on [fuel subsidies](#).

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The subtext of the day's coverage paints a picture of a Sudan that feels increasingly isolated from the Western diplomatic core but empowered by its tactical military successes and its alliance with Egypt. The framing of neighbors is strictly transactional or defensive.

COUNTRIES

- **United Arab Emirates:** Portrayed as a "malign financier" and the architect of Sudan's economic misery. "The party financing this movement has stipulated that no Islamic power remain in the post-Salvation period" [according to analysts](#).
- **Ethiopia:** Framed as a passive-aggressive neighbor whose territory is being used to launch [hostile reconnaissance](#).
- **Egypt:** Depicted as a "faithful ally" that provides refuge and maintains [strategic boundaries](#) against the RSF.

LEADERS

- **Abdel Fattah al-Burhan:** Portrayed as a stoic, paternal figure who is "recaptured for the nation" [by the media](#), moving away from his previous image as a compromise-seeker.
- **Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti):** Characterized as a "mercenary" and a "tool of foreign powers" whose [political project is collapsing](#).

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

The state is actively seeding a "Meta-Narrative of Restoration." Every story—from the graduation of recruits in Um Rawaba to the opening of a [heart surgery center in Kassala](#)—is stitched together to prove that the "Sudanese State" is immortal and the RSF is a transient phenomenon. There is a clear delta between the reality of hyperinflation and the state's claim that ["Sudan will not go hungry."](#) The "economic war" narrative is a sophisticated tool to pre-emptively delegitimize any protests against rising food costs by labeling them as pro-UAE subversion.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Regional Flare-up:** If drone incursions from Ethiopian territory continue, the SAF may authorize "hot pursuit" strikes, potentially drawing Ethiopia [deeper into the conflict](#).
- **Economic Nationalization:** Expect the state to take a much harder line on the gold sector, potentially forcibly [closing informal markets](#) to funnel production into the planned national bourse.
- **Political Recalibration:** The "Sudan-Sudan Dialogue" will likely result in a new "Charter of Honor" that permanently bars the RSF and its political affiliates (Taqaddum) from [future governance](#).

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Intensified SAF offensive in North Kordofan following the graduation of the 93rd batch. A likely increase in state-controlled "markets of reduced

prices" in [White Nile and Nile River States](#) to manage public anger.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): Completion of the "Haggana" offensive to secure the western supply lines. The formal launch of the [Gold Bourse](#), aimed at stabilizing the currency through state-managed exports.

Long Term (1-5 Years): A structural shift in the Sudanese military, moving toward a hybrid model that institutionalizes civilian "Supporting Forces" as a permanent [territorial guard](#), effectively ending the era of a strictly professional, centralized army.

RISK ASSESSMENT

- **Economic Collapse through Gold Disruption:** The attempt to nationalize gold may backfire, driving production deeper underground and cutting off the state's primary [source of hard currency](#). **Triggers:** Failure of the Gold Bourse to offer competitive prices. **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Extreme. **Mitigations:** Offering tax incentives for artisanal miners who sell to the state.
- **Cross-Border Conflict with Ethiopia:** Military responses to drones could trigger a conventional border war. **Triggers:** An SAF strike inside Ethiopian territory targeting [drone launch sites](#). **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Severe. **Mitigations:** High-level military-to-military hotlines mediated by Egypt.
- **Famine in Besieged Enclaves:** Despite SAF claims of abundance, Kordofan and Darfur remain at risk of acute starvation. **Triggers:** RSF targeting of [fuel convoys](#). **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Extreme. **Mitigations:** Armed military protection for all humanitarian and commercial logistics.

- **Fragmentation of the SAF Alliance:** Tensions between the professional army and the various "Supporting Forces" could lead to localized clashes. **Triggers:** Disagreements over [post-war integration](#) or pay. **Likelihood:** Low. **Impact:** High. **Mitigations:** Immediate formalization of the legal status of volunteer forces.
- **Failure of Interfaith Legitimacy:** If SAF-linked militias are seen targeting religious minorities, the current "pluralism" campaign will collapse. **Triggers:** Documented abuses by [volunteer battalions](#). **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Moderate (International). **Mitigations:** Strict military police oversight of irregular units.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

The state media presents a highly sanitized version of the conflict. A full risk assessment is hindered by the following missing information:

- The exact financial health of the Central Bank of Sudan, beyond the admission of ["borrowing from the system."](#)
- The specific origin and model of the FH-95 drone, which would confirm the [technical level](#) of foreign intervention.
- Independent verification of the harvest yields in Gedaref and Sennar, given the [potential for agricultural disruption](#) by fighting.
- The status of the 2,000 martyrs allegedly buried [within the General Command](#) grounds and how this affects military morale.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

The "Potemkin State" Hypothesis: The flurry of administrative activity (university admissions, bank openings, agricultural festivals) is not a sign of state strength, but a desperate, low-cost psychological operation to mask the reality that the central government has lost control of its [macroeconomic levers](#). If the Gold Bourse fails to launch or the currency hits a new low, the "economic war" excuse will no longer be enough to prevent urban unrest in SAF-held port cities.

Black Swan Event: The "Supporting Forces" in Kordofan, once fully trained and armed, may decide to pursue their own regional interests rather than taking orders from Khartoum, leading to the "Libyanization" of Sudan where the SAF becomes just one of [many competing warlord factions](#) in the West.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- The international community must demand independent monitors for the [Sudanese gold sector](#) to ensure revenue is not purely financing weapon procurement.
- Diplomatic channels should be opened specifically between **Khartoum and Addis Ababa** to address the [reconnaissance drone issue](#) before it escalates into conventional warfare.
- Aid organizations should leverage the SAF's "inclusive statehood" narrative to gain better access to [religious minority enclaves](#).

For Private Sector/Investors:

- The proposed **Gold Bourse** represents a high-risk, high-reward opportunity; investors should monitor [regulatory changes](#) in metal export laws closely.
- Supply chain managers must factor in **armed military escorts** as a permanent cost of doing business in Sudan for the [foreseeable future](#).
- Agribusiness firms should look at **Gedaref and Blue Nile** as the only stable hubs for production, but must maintain [redundancy plans](#) due to potential border incursions.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Policy focus has shifted toward economic centralization and wartime social control.

- **Gold Bourse Regulations:** New legal frameworks are being finalized to [centralize all gold sales](#) and mandate state oversight of artisanal mining sites.
- **Education Policy:** A new directive to open admissions for the [2026-2027 academic year](#) despite active conflict in several university zones.
- **Administrative Law:** The formalization of "Civil Support Forces" as an [official auxiliary branch](#) of the Ministry of Defense.

KEY STORIES

- **Interfaith Prayer for Sudan:** General al-Burhan and Malik Agar joined Christian leaders at the [Khartoum International Fair](#) to pray for peace and national unity.
- **Strategic Drone Downed:** An FH-95 reconnaissance drone was shot down over the [Blue Nile region](#) after entering from Ethiopian airspace.

- **Kordofan Recruitment Batch:** The 93rd batch of recruits, named the "Challenge Batch," graduated in Um Rawaba to [secure North Kordofan](#).
- **Economic War Discourse:** Finance Minister Ibrahim held a "Economy on the Open" symposium to address the [currency crisis](#) and blame foreign sabotage.
- **University Admission Launch:** The Ministry of Higher Education announced the start of electronic applications for [national universities](#) for the upcoming year.
- **Blood Donation Drive:** Medical students launched the "Warid" campaign in Khartoum and Omdurman to [supply military hospitals](#).
- **Agricultural Pests Controlled:** The Sennar state government launched a [pesticide spraying campaign](#) via aircraft to protect the sesame harvest.
- **Heart Surgery Center in Kassala:** A new specialized cardiac center was inaugurated to serve [displaced citizens](#) in the eastern state.
- **Omdurman Normalization:** The Bank of the Country and other financial institutions announced their [return to operations](#) in the liberated areas of Omdurman.
- **Kordofan University Resilience:** Faculty and students at Kordofan University declared the institution [fully operational](#) despite being near the front lines.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Today's Media Trends is a public interest experiment in applying deep thematic trend analysis to television news coverage from around the world to explore how responsibly applied advanced AI can help journalists and

scholars better understand the overarching trends, themes and patterns of our global world.

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

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

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

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