

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

SUDAN

FEBRUARY 17, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

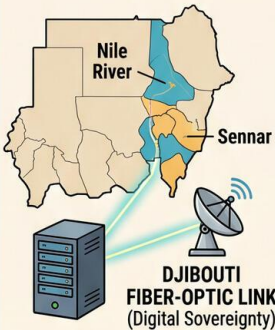
SUDAN'S STRATEGIC COUNTER-MEASURES: PROMOTING SELF-SUFFICIENCY & 'POPULAR RESISTANCE' (FEB 2026 REPORT)

State-led narrative of national resilience against RSF insurgency. Shifts towards industrial localization and a 'total-war' social contract to project sovereign control.

MILITARY & SOCIAL MOBILIZATION: The 'Popular Resistance' Contract



ECONOMIC & INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY: 'Made in Sudan' & Infrastructure



DIPLOMATIC POSTURE & FUTURE OUTLOOK: Calculated Defiance & Risks



CONCLUSION: A high-stakes strategy of consolidation and self-reliance, masking internal fragility with symbolic successes while navigating a hostile multipolar environment. The path forward relies on sustained industrial output and maintaining fragile alliances.

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SUDAN PROMOTES INDUSTRIAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND "POPULAR RESISTANCE" AS STRATEGIC COUNTER-MEASURES TO RSF INSURGENCY

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

State-controlled Sudanese media on February 17, 2026, projected a coordinated narrative of **national resilience and economic recovery**, centered on the "Made in Sudan" initiative and the institutionalization of the "Popular Resistance" (**Muqawama Sha'biya**). The broadcast highlights a strategic shift toward industrial localization, particularly in Nile River and Sennar states, aimed at insulating the domestic economy from import shocks and wartime disruptions. By showcasing advanced date and mango processing facilities and new iron manufacturing plants, the government is attempting to signal to both domestic and international audiences that the state maintains **sovereign control** over key economic corridors despite the ongoing conflict.

On the military and social fronts, the government is increasingly leveraging civilian

mobilization to augment its conventional forces. The "Popular Resistance" is being framed as a **total-war social contract**, where women handle logistics and food security while men join the front lines. This internal cohesion is being paired with an aggressive diplomatic offensive. Sudanese officials at the Munich Security Conference and the African Union Summit are actively rejecting international attempts to mediate between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), characterizing the latter exclusively as a foreign-backed terrorist militia. The Sudanese posture is one of **calculated defiance**, betting on a trilateral alignment with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and a transactional relationship with the United States to secure its long-term stability.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Institutionalization of the "Popular Resistance" (**Muqawama Sha'biya**)

- The government has formalized the role of civilian volunteers, dividing responsibilities into [combat roles for men and logistics and food security for women](#).
- Military leaders, including General Abdulla Ali Al-Tarif, are actively integrating these civilian units into the national defense structure, particularly in [Sennar and White Nile states](#).
- State media reports a shift in public sentiment, claiming the resistance is a [voluntary response to RSF atrocities](#) rather than a state mandate.

Strategic Industrial Localization and the "Made in Sudan" Campaign

- Sudan is prioritizing the processing of raw agricultural goods into value-added exports to [boost foreign currency reserves](#).
- Nile River State has emerged as a heavy industry hub, opening [large-scale iron and plastic manufacturing plants](#) to support reconstruction efforts.
- The "Made in Sudan" exhibition in Khartoum is being used as a platform to demonstrate [urban resilience](#) and the return of domestic commercial life.

Diplomatic Hardline and Rejection of Equivalence

- Sudanese diplomats at the Munich Security Conference have set [stringent conditions for ceasefires](#), demanding the total withdrawal of RSF from civilian areas.
- The government is aggressively lobbying the UN and AU to [label the RSF as a terrorist organization](#), citing widespread sexual violence and slavery.
- A new "trilateral" diplomatic focus seeks to solidify support from [Egypt and Saudi Arabia](#) while engaging with the U.S. under a counter-terrorism framework.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization

- The transition to a "total war" footing is evidenced by the [militarization of social structures](#), where patriotic poetry and media programs are used to recruit for the Popular Resistance.

- Elite tribal leaders, such as Musa Hilal, have publicly realigned with the SAF, [denouncing the RSF leadership](#) and claiming the militia is on the verge of internal collapse.

Critical Infrastructure Security

- Sudan has established a new fiber-optic link via Djibouti to [secure its digital sovereignty](#) and improve regional telecommunications connectivity.
- The deployment of advanced medical technology, such as [MRI scanners in Kassala](#), is being used to demonstrate government competence in non-conflict zones.

Food & Water Security

- Agricultural research stations in Sennar are focusing on [drought-resistant seeds](#) to ensure harvest yields despite the displacement of farmers.
- The government is leveraging the "Sudan Social Development Organization" to distribute food baskets to [vulnerable populations in White Nile State](#).

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Evolution of the War Economy

Sudan is attempting to move beyond a purely reactive military posture to a sustainable "war economy." By emphasizing the [export of processed goods](#) (like Mijool dates and mango juice) over raw materials, the state seeks to fund the war effort through trade rather than aid. This trend towards **industrial localization** suggests a long-term plan for the state to survive even if major urban centers remain contested. The focus on iron and

plastic production in the North [provides the logistical backbone](#) for both trench warfare and future urban reconstruction.

Diaspora and Social Resilience

Programs like "Go Up" (Nuhout) are specifically targeting the Sudanese diaspora in Egypt, framing their [potential return and business investment](#) as a patriotic duty. This suggests the government is wary of "brain drain" and is attempting to create a narrative of **inevitable recovery** to keep middle-class capital within the Sudanese orbit. The upcoming [Ramadan season](#) is being weaponized as a period of social tightening and communal support, reinforcing the state's legitimacy through traditional religious structures.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

The internal health of the Sudanese state is characterized by an intense **consolidation of power** around the SAF leadership and its civilian supporters. The broad-based support for the Popular Resistance indicates a narrowing of the political middle ground; those not aligned with the army are increasingly framed as traitors or RSF collaborators. However, the reliance on [tribal leaders like Musa Hilal](#) reveals a lingering vulnerability: the state's survival remains partially dependent on fragile ethnic and regional alliances. Institutional decay is being masked by highly publicized "successes" in [reconstructing markets in Sennar](#) and reopening schools, though the scale of these efforts relative to the national crisis remains unclear.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

Sudan portrays the international system as a **hostile arena of meddling interests**, particularly targeting the UAE for its alleged role in backing the RSF. The government is attempting to maneuver within a multipolar environment by [courting the U.S. \(specifically the Trump administration's perceived transactionalism\)](#) while maintaining deep ties with Egypt. The portrayal of the outside world is one of **skepticism toward Western mediation**, which Khartoum views as a stalling tactic for the RSF. By forging [infrastructure alliances with Djibouti](#), Sudan is trying to project a regional posture of a "stable partner" amidst an anarchic Horn of Africa.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Sudan's economic indicators are being repurposed as measures of wartime defiance. The focus has shifted from GDP growth to **self-sufficiency and import substitution**. While the currency remains under immense pressure, the government is focusing on industrial output in protected zones.

- **Agricultural Exports:** Increased focus on [date processing for export](#) to Egypt and regional markets.
- **Industrial Output:** New iron and steel production in [Nile River State](#) to replace imports for construction.
- **Supply Chain Resilience:** New [fiber-optic link to Djibouti](#) to bypass contested terrestrial routes.
- **Inflation & Consumption:** Targeted distribution of [70 food baskets to vulnerable families](#) as a symbolic gesture of state care.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Leadership dynamics are dominated by a "rally around the flag" effect, where former rivals are being brought back into the state fold to present a unified front against the RSF.

- **Musa Hilal:** The return of the Revolutionary Awakening Council leader to the government's side [signals a major blow](#) to RSF recruitment in Darfur.
- **General Abdulla Ali Al-Tarif:** His rising prominence in [overseeing the Popular Resistance](#) indicates a shift toward a more decentralized, militia-heavy command structure.
- **Susan Suleiman:** Her role in promoting [diaspora business initiatives](#) positions her as a key liaison for economic diplomacy.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The network's editorial hierarchy is dominated by **nationalistic reassurance**. The lead stories consistently focus on the "Made in Sudan" exhibition and military visits to "cleared" areas, creating a narrative of momentum. Buried stories include the actual casualties of the conflict and the extent of territory still held by the RSF in Darfur. The tone is highly emotional, utilizing [patriotic poetry and testimonials](#) from victims of RSF violence to justify the state's total-war footing. Conspicuous omissions include any detailed reporting on the domestic inflation rate or the internal fractures within the SAF command structure.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The broadcast frames the conflict as a struggle between a legitimate, civilized state

and a chaotic, foreign-backed barbarian force. This dichotomy is supported by specific portrayals of regional actors.

- **Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF):** Portrayed as the **sole guarantor of stability**. Quotes emphasize the army is "taking the initiative" and is ["strong and capable"](#) of liberating all territory.
- **Rapid Support Forces (RSF):** Framed as **illegal terrorists** and "mutineers." They are described as ["collapsing internally"](#) and relying on child soldiers and foreign mercenaries.
- **United Arab Emirates (UAE):** Portrayed as a **hostile meddler**. The subtext of many reports is that the UAE is ["fueling the destruction"](#) of Sudan for its own regional interests.
- **Egypt and Saudi Arabia:** Framed as **principled allies**. They are described as ["strategic partners"](#) in Sudan's stability and brothers in culture and religion.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

Sudan is engaged in a high-intensity **domestic propaganda campaign** to maintain public morale. The "meta-narrative" is one of "Light out of Darkness," where the war is seen as a necessary cleansing process to forge a more self-reliant nation. Narrative seeding is evident in the constant repetition of RSF atrocities, which serves to delegitimize any future political role for the militia. The media "spin" focuses on **symbolic reconstruction**—such as one MRI machine or one date factory—to distract from the likely ground truth of widespread infrastructure collapse and economic paralysis.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **RSF Fragmentation:** The public defection of leaders like Musa Hilal [suggests the RSF may fracture](#) into smaller, less coordinated regional militias in the medium term.
- **Permanent Militarization:** The success of the Popular Resistance [likely means civilian oversight](#) of the military will be non-existent for the next decade, as the army becomes further embedded in social life.
- **Industrial Pivot:** If the Nile River State industrial clusters [succeed in providing basic goods](#), Sudan may become a blueprint for "autarkic war states" in the region.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect a heightened focus on [Ramadan as a mobilization tool](#), with increased state-led distribution of aid to ensure social order during the holy month.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): A likely military push to [reclaim major parts of Khartoum](#), followed by a massive "Made in Sudan" marketing campaign to attract diaspora investment for reconstruction.

Long Term (1-5 Years): Structural realignments in the Horn of Africa, as Sudan moves away from Western-led mediation toward a [trilateral security architecture](#) with Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The current Sudanese strategy, while projecting strength, carries significant

systemic risks that could lead to state collapse or prolonged regional instability.

- **RSF Counter-Escalation:** As the state media pushes the narrative of RSF collapse, the militia may resort to scorched-earth tactics. Triggers: A major SAF victory in Khartoum or El Fasher. Likelihood: High. Impact: Catastrophic civilian displacement. Mitigations: International pressure on RSF backers to limit heavy weapons transfers.
- **Economic Exhaustion:** The "Made in Sudan" campaign may fail to offset the costs of total war. Triggers: Failure of the Nile River iron plants or date exports to reach Egyptian markets. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Hyperinflation and food riots. Mitigations: Emergency trilateral credit lines from Saudi Arabia and Egypt.
- **Popular Resistance Fragmentation:** Armed civilian groups may eventually challenge the SAF for local control. Triggers: A prolonged stalemate or lack of pay for resistance units. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Warlordism and internal civil unrest. Mitigations: Rapid integration of resistance units into the formal police and army structures.
- **Regional Spillover:** Accusations against the UAE could lead to a wider regional diplomatic or proxy conflict. Triggers: Formal Sudanese sanctions or military action against UAE assets. Likelihood: Low. Impact: Regional trade disruption. Mitigations: Saudi-mediated de-escalation between Khartoum and Abu Dhabi.

- **Health Crisis:** The failure to [eradicate malaria and other diseases](#) during the conflict could lead to mass casualties. Triggers: Disruption of vaccine supply chains to White Nile state. Likelihood: High. Impact: Severe loss of life and state delegitimization. Mitigations: UN-backed "health corridors" in conflict-free zones.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The broadcast fails to provide any **unverified casualty data** for the SAF, only focusing on RSF losses, which prevents a true assessment of military attrition.
- There is no mention of the **actual inflation rate** or the black-market exchange rate, which are critical indicators of economic health for ordinary Sudanese.
- The state media ignores the **humanitarian conditions in RSF-held areas**, which is a massive blind spot for regional risk assessment and displacement mapping.
- There is a lack of clarity on the **funding sources** for the new "Made in Sudan" factories, which may be tied to opaque military-commercial interests.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

The Potemkin State Scenario: The show of industrial strength (Made in Sudan) and military resilience is actually a desperate **informational cover** for a regime on the brink of fiscal collapse. The factory openings may be symbolic or low-capacity, used only to prevent elite defection and mass panic among the middle class.

The RSF Long-Game Scenario: The reported internal collapse of the RSF is a **deliberate disinformation trap**. The militia

may be retreating from secondary positions to consolidate around critical energy infrastructure, waiting for the SAF to overextend its forces in a "total war" offensive before striking the regime's heart.

Black Swan Event: A sudden assassination of General Burhan by a hardline element within the SAF or Popular Resistance who feels he is too willing to negotiate, leading to an immediate, multi-factional civil war within the Sudanese government itself.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Security: Re-evaluate the RSF's long-term viability given the realignment of tribal leaders like Musa Hilal.
- Economic: Monitor date and mango export volumes as a proxy for the Sudanese government's foreign exchange capacity.
- Diplomatic: Prepare for a Sudanese rejection of traditional Western-led peace summits in favor of a Riyadh-Cairo focused process.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- Supply Chains: Diversify away from Sudanese raw materials, but watch for opportunities in **processed agricultural exports** if the "Made in Sudan" clusters stabilize.
- Regulatory Compliance: Be aware of the increasing **militarization of business** in Sudan; any venture may be tied to SAF-linked Popular Resistance logistics.
- Capital Allocation: Focus on Nile River State as the most stable economic corridor for any future reconstruction contracts.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Sudanese governance remains centered on executive decrees and military orders, though there is a move toward **institutionalizing wartime policies** through the Nile River and Sennar state governments. The focus is on agricultural modernization and industrial subsidies.

• HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- Sennar Agricultural Research Station briefing on **drought-resistant seed deployment** to ensure national food security.
- Nile River State Governor's press conference on the **opening of iron and plastic factories** and the promotion of localized industry.
- Sudanese Diplomatic Briefing at the AU Summit rejecting **RSF legitimacy** and equating them with foreign-backed terror groups.

KEY STORIES

- **Made in Sudan Exhibition:** Large-scale showcase of domestic products (soap, plastics, processed food) in Khartoum to demonstrate economic resilience.
- **Popular Resistance Institutionalization:** Formal division of labor between men (combat) and women (logistics) in [White Nile and Sennar](#).
- **Musa Hilal's Realignment:** The leader of the Revolutionary Awakening Council [publicly pledges support](#) for the SAF against the RSF.
- **Djibouti Fiber-Optic Link:** Sudan establishes a new [telecom link via Djibouti](#) to secure digital sovereignty.

- **Munich Security Conference Diplomacy:** Sudanese officials set conditions for ceasefires, demanding [total RSF withdrawal](#) from urban areas.
- **Sennar Agricultural Research:** Development and distribution of [improved seeds](#) to displace farmers to maintain food production.
- **Iron Factory Opening:** A major new iron smelting and forming plant [opens in Nile River State](#) to support wartime logistics.
- **Blue Nile University Expansion:** Higher education institutions in the Blue Nile region calling for [specialized programs](#) to support local economic needs.
- **Kassala MRI Deployment:** Introduction of advanced medical imaging to Kassala to [showcase state healthcare competency](#).
- **Ramadan Preparation:** Religious and social mobilization efforts ahead of Ramadan, emphasizing [national unity and prayer](#) for the army.
- **SUDO Food Distribution:** Distribution of [70 humanitarian baskets](#) to people with disabilities in White Nile State.
- **Kadru Meat Brand Export:** Promotion of processed meat exports under the **Kadru brand** to generate foreign currency.
- **Poetry and Patriotism:** Use of poets and actors to [mobilize public support](#) for the Popular Resistance.
- **Anti-UAE Narrative:** A series of reports framing the UAE as a [regional destabilizer](#) and backer of RSF "mercenaries."

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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