

SUDANESE LIMBO IN THE TRANSITION PERIOD

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 Analysis

Sudanese uprising and its aftermath military's involvement into politics by coup d'état remind us pendulum model which African scholar Ali Mazrui imagined a condition for post-colonial African state. Mazrui described African state in a situation moving on the polars of two important pendulums: tiding between military led-government and civilian government; and between single-party system and multi-party system. When we look at the political history of Sudan after 1956 Mazrui's explanation sheds some light on a vicious circle that repeat itself perfectly. For that it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that history is recurring in Sudan.

The protests that started in the last days of 2018 finally reached an important turn on Thursday, April 11th 2019. By besieging the presidential palace, the army seized the control of the government in the early hours of the day. Omar Al-Bashir, who has been in power for 30 years,

finally admitted defeat and resigned. Because of these latest developments, an era officially came to an end in Sudan. Without a doubt, the developments that took place after December 19th were determinant in the process.

The protests initially started in Atbara, a city in the north of Sudan, on December 19th 2018 due to an abnormal rise in the price of bread. However, the protests spread over the country, turned political and people started to demand for the resignation of Omar Al-Bashir. The government responded the protest with force, and claiming that Israel played a role in the uprising and then pointed their finger to the communist groups. Civilian casualties only turned the protests to grow even bigger. And this had led human rights movements such as the Human Rights Watch (HRW) to condemn the violence against the peaceful protestors by publishing various reports.



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Realizing that he had to do something to protect his power, Omar Al-Bashir organized openings and support rallies by visiting various cities of the country. However, his efforts weren't enough to put an end to the ongoing protests. The people of Sudan could not accept the forced entrances to houses, torture on people and the fact that security forces under the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) used real bullets to disperse the protestors. Al-Bashir's soft diplomacy on the people he hurt simply did not work.

The Sudanese Professional Association (SPA) as the organizer of the protests was able to bring together the entire anti-regime groups and parties under the same roof. SPA successfully united Sufi-based political parties, such as the National Umma Party, which represents the Islamic wing of the country, with political figures such as Mu'tamar Al-Sudani, which have secular ideologies under "The Declaration of Freedom and Change". All of these different groups were united under the principles of forcing Omar Al-Bashir to resign, founding a transitional government with the leadership of an impartial and trustworthy leader and transitioning the country into a democratic order.

Omar Al-Bashir still tried to take some precautions following the developments, he discharged the whole government, claiming that they were unable to put an end to the protests and he also declared martial law for one year. Al-Bashir founded the new government with people whom he trusts and those with military reputations; he conferred the position of chairperson of the party to Ahmad Haroun. Even with the implications that Al-Bashir won't be able to participate in the upcoming elections once his period of office ends in 2020, and despite the harsh punishments on the unauthorized protests and marches, the protests continued. In the meantime, the parliament reduced the duration

of the martial law to 6 months. The protestors, who used the "freedom, justice and peace" slogan didn't refrain from mentioning the cases of corruptions that were carried out by people most of whom were in office. After four months of grueling developments, Sudan finally reached a significant³ turning point in history.

The main goal of the protests, strikes and sit-in protests that were carried out under the "Declaration of Freedom and Change", was to force president Omar Al-Bashir to resign and to call for the transition the government into a participatory one. The protestors, who previously organized the protests separately in various locations for the last 4 months, decided to unite when they started a sit-in protest in front of the Ministry of Justice of Sudan on April 6th, 2019. This tactic was interpreted that the protests organizers and the anti-government army group are somehow related. During the sit-in protests in which lots of people participated, the people and the army appeared to be at peace with one another. This is evident because even when the police under the NISS tried to disperse the crowd three times they failed due to the army's

response to the attempts. This partial intimacy between the people and the army then led to several fights on a small scale that took place between the army and the security units that were connected to the intelligence services. In the events that have been taking place since April 6th, 21 people (5 of which were soldiers) lost their lives.

After fights between groups that happened since April 6th, some government officials

indicated the dispersion of protests by making harsh statements on the issue; where it was announced that a protest was to be organized by the supporters of Al-Bashir. Following the news about buses carrying armed forces from outside of Khartoum were caught in the city borders, combats started to take place in the country after

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midnight. The news on TV and radio stations of how the army sieged the presidential palace on April 11th at 06.30 changed the whole situation in the country.

It seems that an era had come to an end in Sudan with this military action. The events that happened in Sudan are similar with the ones that took place in 1964 and 1985. The intense public protests that started due to the economic problems ended single party military administrations of Ibrahim Abboud in 1964 and Gaafar Nimeiry in 1985 and later paved the way for civilian governments under multi-party system. It is almost like a historical *deja vu* is taking place in Sudan. In the new term, the transitional government will shape the politics. However, the platforms and political formations

of the protests demand for the administration to turn into a civil administration as soon as possible via transitional road map. So far, the dialogue taken place between new military council and civil actors have not produced a solution. Mazrui's pendulum is on its way tiding once again. It seems that the outcome of the dialogue process and military council's final decision to deliver the power to civilian hand are main determinants today.

At this point, it is paramount to provide order in the country in the shortest term before any kind of disorder or a civil war breaks out. All actors in Sudan need to make moves with great caution in such a period of time when many Arab countries are experiencing various civil wars.