

What Next after Sudan Changes Guards at the Crossroad?

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As reported October 25 by the reputable state media, [Al Arabiya](#), Sudanese army and a cross-section of its population have returned, expressing dissatisfaction about the government. What is really at stake all these years is closely linked to the level of development and the living standard of the majority among the estimated 45 million population.

According to the El Sharq TV channel, two of Sudan’s three mobile operators have actually stopped providing services, so during the day people experienced communication problems. According to several media sources, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok together with other officials have been arrested, taken to an unknown location. The leaders of many political parties called for preventing a coup in the country.

UN Secretary-General, **António Guterres**, the African Union and other regional and international organizations have routinely condemned the undemocratic forced change in Sudan. In a statement posted on Twitter, the Secretary-General said that “there must be full respect for the constitutional charter to protect the hard-won political transition.” “The UN will continue to stand with the people of Sudan,” Guterres assured.

Head of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission Sudan ([UNITAMS](#)), also [released a statement](#), declaring that the arrests of the Prime Minister, government officials and other politicians are “unacceptable.”

“I call on the security forces to immediately release those who have been unlawfully detained or placed under house arrest”, **Volker Perthes** said. “It is the responsibility of these forces to ensure the security and wellbeing of people in their custody.”

The UNITAMS chief, who acts as a Special Representative of the Secretary-General, urged everyone involved to exercise the utmost restraint. “All parties must immediately return to dialogue and engage in good faith to restore the constitutional order,” Perthes concluded.

Some unrests began sweeping the country following Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok's meeting with head of Sudan's Sovereign Council Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. The ministers of communication, information, finance and industries were among those in custody. Sudanese people took to the streets following calls by the main opposition movement, the Forces of Freedom and Change. The crisis between the Sudanese military and civilian forces has been going on for several weeks.

In about-turn development, **Abdel Fattah al-Burhan**, a general chairing the Sovereign Council of Sudan, announced in a televised address that general elections would be held in July 2023. The general declared a state of emergency in Sudan, dissolved both the country's government and the Sovereign Council and suspended a number of articles of the Constitutional Declaration, which was signed by Sudan's military and civilian forces in 2019 for a three-year transition period.

Besides the search for peaceful political pathways, Sudanese authorities need to address the deep-seated economic deficiencies and tackle common problems (basic infrastructure) facing people in micro levels of the society. This also relates many African countries. Sudan, located in the northeast Africa, shares borders with Egypt, Libya, Chad, Ethiopia and South Sudan. It is blessed with huge oil reserves and marine resources. The Blue and White Nile rivers meet in the capital city Khartoum to form the bid Nile, which flows northwards through Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea.

While Sudan is encircled by these seven countries mentioned above, it also has to northeast a huge sea, which could be harnessed for the further development of the economy. Revenues could be used to engage in economic diversification projects, thus creating employment for the youth. It is third-largest country in Africa, and the third-largest in the Arab world by area before the secession of South Sudan in 2011.

Over the years, damming the water resources for economy has not taken off the ground. The main purpose of the dam will be the generation of electricity. Its dimensions make it the largest contemporary hydropower project for the region in Africa.

In terms of political developments in Sudan, **Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir** came to power in June 1989. During several years of his administration, Sudan's economy was largely shattered due to political tyranny, deep-seated corruption and poor policies. Al-Bashir held power for more than 30 years, refused to step down, resulting in the convergence of opposition groups to form a united coalition. The government retaliated by arresting more than 800 opposition figures and thousands of protesters, according to the Human Rights Watch.

Many people died because Al-Bashir ordered security forces to disperse the sit-in peaceful demonstrators using tear gas and live ammunition in what is known as the Khartoum massacre, resulting in Sudan's suspension from the African Union. Eventually, Omar al-Bashir was gone. Sudan opened a new political chapter with Prime Minister, **Abdalla Hamdok**, a 62-year-old economist who worked previously for the UN Economic Commission for Africa.

Significantly, it is highly expected that his working experience at the UN Economic Commission for Africa must necessarily reflect on performance, and resultantly have a positive impact on the level of sustainable development that connects the daily lives of the

population.

With the new administration, Sudan still faces formidable economic problems, and its growth still a little (snail step) rise from a very low level of per capita output. In practical terms, it is desperate for foreign support and one surest way was to get to a donors conference held in Berlin, Germany. The donors' conference was to provide a lifeline to the ongoing transition, alongside Sudan's own efforts. It is worth to say that increased international political and financial assistance remain paramount, it was a progressive step for Sudan.

The goal was to also raise enough funds to kick-start social protection programs by the World Bank and the Sudanese Government that could help Sudanese families in need. The partners supported the International Monetary Fund to open up Sudan's road towards debt relief. Some 50 countries and international organizations pledged more than \$1.8 billion, while the World Bank Group offered a grant of \$400 million.

"This conference opened a new chapter in the cooperation between Sudan and the international community to rebuild the country," **German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas** said at that time during video conference co-organized by Germany with Sudan, the European Union and the United Nations.

Berlin promised to make investments in areas such as water, food security and education. Germany has urged the Sudanese government to invest in human rights. Germany said that it would contribute €150 million (\$168 million) in aid to the sub-Saharan nation of Sudan.

Undoubtedly, Abdalla Hamdok described that conference as "unprecedented" and said it laid a "solid foundation for us moving forward" at least in the subsequent years. Sudan's new transitional government has sought to repair the country's international standing, but it still faces daunting economic challenges, and its growth was still a rise from a very low level of per capita output. It continues to experience troubled relationship with many of its neighbors, and especially over oil reserves with South Sudan.

Currently, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is working hand in hand with Khartoum government to implement sound macroeconomic policies. Agricultural production remains Sudan's most-important sector, employing 80 percent of the workforce but most farms remain rain-fed and susceptible to drought. Instability, adverse weather and weak world-agricultural prices ensures that much of the population will remain at or below the poverty line for years.

Right from Sahel to the Maghreb and to northeast Africa are witnessing instability. In the Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia) thousands dying daily. Peter Fabricius, Research Consultant from the South Africa's Institute for Security Studies (ISS), noted quite recently in his article headlined - African Coups Are Making A Come Back - that from 18 August 2020, four coups have occurred. Two happened in Mali (August 2020 and May 2021), one in Chad (May 2021) and one in Guinea last month.

He further pointed out "what might help prevent that would be better responses from African Union, regional bodies, and international partners to coups and other forms of unconstitutional change of government."

Perhaps the root causes of coups run too deep within a country for any external actor to

influence much. But to the extent that they can, the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) should use their power preventively, focusing more on sanctioning 'unconstitutional preservation of power' and other undemocratic behavior to try to pre-empt coups, suggested Fabricius.

But late October 2021 political-military and cross-section of the civilian unrest are interconnected, both politics and economy. Sudan is rich with natural resources, as it has oil reserves. Despite that, Sudan still faced formidable economic problems. Worse is production practices including agriculture are rudimentary. There has not been efforts, at least, to modernize agriculture to the growing population.

There is still a huge increase in unemployment, and perhaps it is absolutely necessary to make attempts at minimizing social contradictions and economic disparities, unquestionably and of course, these two – politics and economy questions are inseparable. These are some of the issues the government has to address seriously, in order to maintain sustainable peace and long-term stability in Sudan and set that as an admirable example in Africa.

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***Kester Kenn Klomegah**, who worked previously with Inter Press Service (IPS), is now a frequent and passionate contributor to Global Research. As a versatile researcher, he believes that everyone deserves equal access to quality and trustworthy media reports.*

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