



CRISIS IN SUDAN:

Pathways to Stability

Executive Summary

This policy brief highlights the dynamic political history of Sudan under the recently deposed president, Omar al-Bashir, up until the current political transition in the country. The brief proffers various options for long-term stability and peace in the country. The militarization of Sudan's politics; the United States of America (USA) sanctions and the United Nations (UN) embargoes; the conflict in Darfur from 2003-present; the national economic crisis; and the long-running sectarian tensions, have destabilized Sudan. With Omar al-Bashir deposed and the country transiting tentatively to democratic rule, the long-term peace-building and democratization experiments in the country would benefit from demilitarization of politics – constitutional, legal, institutional, economic, and diplomatic reforms – and comprehensive and inclusive peace agreements with armed groups. Democratization, inclusivity, accountability and economic development will safeguard peace.

Introduction

The 1989 coup which brought Omar al-Bashir to power spelt far-reaching ramifications on the social, political, economic, and diplomatic history of Sudan. Bashir fused military-security and political institutions, and oversaw legislations that limited the political space. Having been propped up by Islamist forces led by Hassan al Turabi, the new government

showed tolerance for 'fundamentalist' or 'Islamist groups' ranging from the Muslim Brotherhood to al Qaida. Thus, the US imposed sanctions on Sudan in 1993 and 1997 for 'sponsoring terrorism' and destabilizing neighboring countries.

Al-Bashir's Islamic Arab-majority government systematically marginalized the native African ethnic minorities. Such state policies led to armed rebellion by the native African ethnic groups around Nuba Mountains, Darfur, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan areas, in what became the "Darfur conflict" of 2003. Following the outrageous violation of human rights in Darfur, the UN imposed further sanctions and embargoes on Sudan in 2005, but the injustices committed during the conflict, and resultant humanitarian conditions, remain unaddressed.

On the other hand, the country's economy shrunk in the two decades of US-sanctions, with the inflation rate hitting 55 per cent. This economic crisis exploded late in 2018, manifesting in shortage of basic commodities such as food, fuel, and cash in Sudanese banks. These shortages translated into a rising cost of life leading to anti-government protests, which led to the military deposing Bashir on April 11, 2019. Transition talks between the ruling Transitional Military Council (TMC) and the protesters movement (Forces for Freedom and Change – FFC) have yielded in a transitional



power-sharing peace agreement between the two parties, short of enough guarantees for lasting peace and stability.

Key Findings

The powerful role of the Military in Sudan politics

Since the military coup of 1989, the military and the National Intelligence Security Service (NISS) have played a central role in ensuring regime security. The Rapid Support Forces (RSF), formerly the Janjaweed joined the ranks of state defence. Acemoglu *et al* (2010) observe that a more powerful military is more effective in preventing transitions to democracy. They add that for democratic transition to take off, greater concessions to the military are either made or the risk of military take-over is run.

United States' sanctions have had destabilizing economic effect on Sudan

Sudan was put under US sanctions in 1993 and 1997, which have lasted two decades. Peksen and Son (2015) observe that sanctions in 65 to 95 per cent of the time do not succeed in achieving their intended goals, and are counterproductive in advancing human rights, democracy, and press freedom, which is evident in Bashir's 30 years of autocratic rule. They further add that target governments respond to foreign pressure by altering their spending priorities,

shifting public resources to security and defence budgets for suppressive rule, and to its supporters in the civil service, politics, police and military to maintain their loyalty structure.

In what might explain the Sudanese 'revolution' against Bashir's government, Peksen and Son (2015) hold that economic coercion causes more economic pressure on the citizenry with growing poverty, unemployment and income inequality, leading to violent actions at societal and individual level.

Instability in Darfur, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan regions injures lasting peace

Even though United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) has brought the hostilities in Darfur to a significant low, humanitarian conditions remain deplorable, that the meaning of peace is essentially undermined. More than two million people remain displaced and lack access to basic needs. Hostility between government and rebel forces is still experienced around Jebel Marra region, with volatility still rife in South Kordofan and Blue Nile regions. The peace negotiations (Doha process) between government and armed groups have halted since the uprising.

According to International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies (IFRCRC) (2015), a non-international armed conflict only ceases when a peaceful settlement is

reached. IFRCRC maintains that "such conflicts are often of a fluctuating nature, typified by temporary lulls in the armed violence or instability in the level of organization of the non-State party to the conflict. If these factors are automatically considered as signalling the end of a non-international armed conflict, this could lead to a premature conclusion" (p.10). IFRCRC suggests that unless there is complete cessation of all hostilities, beyond the risk of resumption, a non-international armed conflict is not likely to end.

Comprehensive peace agreements will provide crucial guarantees

"Discrimination and exclusion from decision-making is a core driver of conflict. Initiatives to expand inclusion have been prone to criticism by incumbent elites as externally driven, which can undermine their legitimacy and validate resistance" (Yousuf, 2018, p.4). Thus, Yousuf suggests accommodation of explicit guarantees in peace agreements, legislation, and constitutional and political arrangements for inclusion, protects the process from the resistance of incumbent elites and should be accorded proper enforcement mechanisms.

Nilsson and Söderberg (2011) observe that armed actors and key power holders, capable of destabilizing a process should be included, as it increases the likelihood for reaching and sustaining peace. This, they

opine, ensures wide support for a peace process and incentivizes actors against returning to violence due to its power-distributional effect.

Conclusion

The crisis in Sudan is a toxic mix of the legacy of two decades of sanctions on the economy, three decades of military centrality in politics, decades of civil wars which led to the secession of South Sudan, and the instability of Darfur, Blue Nile, and Southern Kordofan regions, and exclusionary approaches to peace and power.

Recommendations

To weather the crisis and restore the country's long lost peace and stability; domestic, regional and international players should:

- Pursue inclusive peace processes, establish guarantees for inclusion constitutionally, legally and politically. This implies accommodating women, youth, and various armed groups or the Sudanese Revolutionary Front, in transitional and post-transition political arrangements.
- Stabilize the Darfur, Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan regions, with more deployment of UNAMID in Jebel Marra, alongside humanitarian assistance, resettlement, justice and reconciliation programs.
- Extend fiscal stabilization assistance, foreign investment, export-promotion arrangements, and humanitarian and development aid to Sudan, to help reverse the inflationary effects of decades-long sanctions, provide short-time relief with food and medical supplies, and reset the economy on economic growth path, for greater income and employment creation.
- Undertake constitutional, legal, and institutional (judiciary, executive, security sector, and institutions for economic management) reforms necessary to open up the political space for popular participation, political accountability, inclusion and rule of law.
- Demilitarize Sudanese politics and make security agencies subordinate to civilian authority. A part of the Rapid Support Forces should be integrated with the regular national army, while the rest should be demobilized, decommissioned and re-integrated back into the society.
- Support and ensure local commitment to the implementation of the transitional peace agreement between the TMC and FFC.

Sources

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