Civil-Military Relations and Sudan's Treacherous Path to Democracy

By Nathaniel Allen and Luka Kuol

Working Paper Draft as of: February 3, 2020

Introduction

On April 11, 2019, security forces under pressure from a civilian uprising acted to remove Omar Al-Bashir after nearly thirty years in power, ushering in a once-in-a-generation transition of political power and an opportunity to reshape the politics of Sudan. In the year since, civilians and security forces have cooperated to achieve remarkable progress in transforming Sudan from war-torn dictatorship to peaceful democracy. Military-rule has given way to a jointly led Sovereign Council that is promising a series of reforms to drastically reshape the country prior to elections in 2022. Advances have been made in ending conflicts on Sudan's periphery, opening up the real possibility that the country will be completely at peace for only the second time in its 60-year history. The old regime is being dismantled, and the new regime has committed to addressing the goals of Sudanese revolutions of freedom, peace and justice.

Nevertheless, patterns of military intervention and subsequent regime trajectories in Sudan and in Africa more broadly offer uncertain lessons. The remarkable influence of civilians and the Sudanese protest movement, rather than Sudan's main political parties, bears some resemblance to transitions in 1964 and 1985, which resulted in civilian-led, democratic governments. Unfortunately, each of these governments were short-lived, ultimately succumbing to coups in 1969 and 1989 that

were instigated by political parties and backed by security forces.[1] Like the governments that succeeded these coups, security forces maintain significant influence in the current regime and have yet to fully relinquish power.[2] From a broader historical perspective, few African regimes with security forces such as Sudan's, where dictators have divided and relied on tribal, ethnic or religious identity to stack their security forces, have resulted in democracy.[3]

Sudan's path to sustained peace and democracy therefore remains a treacherous one. Sudan's people demand change on a scale commensurate with their sacrifice, but most have yet to see improvement in their everyday lives. Security forces remain ostensibly in control of the government and have the capability to intervene at any time. For a democratic regime to rise, civilians will have to balance the Scylla of elevated popular expectations with the Charybdis of a powerful security apparatus with massive institutional interests at stake. For democracy to be sustained, the security apparatus must be reformed to align its interests with those of the Sudanese people.

The Evolution of Civil-Military Relations in Sudan

Sudan has a long history of military intervention in politics, dating back to the precolonial times, when the Funj sultanate was overthrown in 1774 by a coup led by army leaders. During the colonial period, military officers served as Governor Generals invested with supreme military and civil command.[4] And after independence, Sudan earned the dubious distinction of being the first Sub-

---

[1] Ali, H., "Military Coup as Political Transition: Army and Political Authority in Sudan", *Siyasat Arabia,* Issue No. 24, 2017.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Nathaniel Allen, "Authoritarian Armies and Democratizing States: The Armed Forces and African Transitional Politics," *Democratization* 26, no. 2 (2019): 247–68; Kristen Harkness, "Military Loyalty and the Failure of Democratization in Africa: How Ethnic Armies Shape the Capacity of Presidents to Defy Term Limits," *Democratization* 25, no. 5 (2017): 801–18.
[4] Abdel-Rahim, M., "Changing Patterns of civil-military relations in the Sudan, *Research Paper No. 46,* The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1978.

Saharan African country to suffer a coup d'état when General Ibrahim Abboud seized power at the head of a coalition of senior military leaders and Umma party members in 1958.[5] Since that time, the country has suffered no less than five additional coups and only one instance in which a military government has peacefully left power.

The June 30, 1989 coup that put Al-Bashir to power was the third time in Sudan's post-independence history that a democratically government ended in a military coup, the others being in 1958 and 1969. Each of these coups were instigated by a political party that had been excluded from political power: the Umma party in 1958, the Communists in 1969, and the National Islamist Front, who had sponsored Bashir's coup.[6] To this day, no Sudanese democracy has lasted more than five years.

Bashir was a resilient leader. His tenure was by far the longest of any Sudanese dictator. Security forces stood by him not just in the face of previous episodes of popular unrest, but through international sanctions, interparty splits and civil wars. Under his watch, the Sudanese civil war lost, and the country was split in two.

Why did Sudan's security forces stand by him for so long? Bashir used two common tactics to construct an extremely loyal, repressive security apparatus: ethnic stacking and counterbalancing.

At one point or another, most African governments have relied on some form of ethnic stacking – or the recruitment and promotion of security forces on the basis of ethnicity rather than merit – as an instrument of military loyalty.[7] By excluding members of out-groups and privileging

---

[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Nathaniel Allen, 'Authoritarian Armies'; Kristen Harkness, *When Soldiers Rebel: Ethnic Armies and Political Instability in Africa* (Cambridge University Press, 2018); Kristen A. Harkness, 'The Ethnic Army and the State Explaining Coup Traps and the Difficulties of Democratization in Africa', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 60.4 (2016), 587–616; Paul Lorenzo Johnson and Ches Thurber, 'The Security-Force Ethnicity (SFE) Project: Introducing a New Dataset', *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 2017, 0738894217709012.

co-ethnics, ethnic stacking has been shown to increase the loyalty[8] and repressiveness[9] of the forces that are stacked, but also to provoke coups[10] and other forms of resistance[11] amongst members of excluded groups.

Ethnic stacking tactics have a history in Sudan. The officer corps of Sudan's military has long been dominated by Arab, and particularly northern, 'riverain Arab' or Muslim Jellaba tribes, which account for only five percent of Sudan's population. The dominance of northern officers within Sudan's military dates back to colonial times, when the British created an indigenous officer corps of upper and middle class Arabic-speaking cadets, preventing many southerners from joining.[12] In June 2000, a document known as the 'Black Book' was published accusing Sudan's leaders of "blatant favoritism of the Northern regions" documenting how since Sudanese independence, a majority of Sudan's senior political and military leaders hailed from the north.[13]

Bashir's use of ethnic stacking tactics were distinctive in that he relied not only on riverain officers as his basis of support within the Sudanese military, but religious and tribal identity more broadly to promote and recruit soldiers across an array of security force institutions.[14] Two thirds of the Revolutionary Command Council that lead the country in the aftermath of the 1989 coup were northern military officers, who then remained in government after the Council was disbanded

---

[8] Harkness, "Military Loyalty and the Failure of Democratization in Africa:."
[9] Theodore McLauchlin, "Loyalty Strategies and Military Defection in Rebellion," *Comparative Politics* 42, no. 3 (2010): 333–50; Hicham Bou Nassif, "Generals and Autocrats: How Coup-Proofing Predetermined the Military Elite's Behavior in the Arab Spring," *Political Science Quarterly (Wiley-Blackwell)* 130, no. 2 (June 2015): 245–75, https://doi.org/10.1002/polq.12324.
[10] Harkness, "The Ethnic Army and the State\"; Harkness, *When Soldiers Rebel: Ethnic Armies and Political Instability in Africa*.
[11] Philip Roessler, *Ethnic Politics and State Power in Africa: The Logic of the Coup-Civil War Trap* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).
[12] Helen Chapin Metz, *Sudan: A Country Study*, vol. 550 (Government Printing Office, 2015), 310.
[13] Seekers of Truth and Justice, *The Black Book: Imbalance of Power and Wealth in Sudan*, trans. Osman El Tom (Justice and Equality Movement, 2000), http://www.sudanjem.com/sudan-alt/english/books/blackbook_part1/book_part1.asp.htm.
[14] Nathaniel Allen, "Interrogating Ethnic Stacking: The Uses and Abuses of Security Force Ethnicity in Sudan," *Civil Wars* 0, no. 0 (November 27, 2019): 1–23.

in 1990.[15] At the same time, Bashir relied on his affiliation with the National Islamist Front, the Islamist political party that instigated the coup, to purge the military of thousands of non-Islamist officers, up to two thirds of its men.[16] And across numerous other parallel security forces and other militia groups, the regime exploited tribal or Arab ties in order to gain recruits.

In fact, one of the central civil-military developments during Bashir's rule was the weakening of Sudan's regular military and the creation of powerful parallel security forces and militias. In one sense, these groups complemented Sudan's regular armed forces by serving as comparatively cheap sources of recruits for the numerous wars that Sudan fought during Bashir's rule.[17] The more powerful of these forces, such as the Popular Defense Forces and the Rapid Support Forces,[18] counterbalanced the influence of the regular military.[19]

The result was to create a security apparatus that was complex, factionalized, and repressive. Tribally mobilized militia helped keep Sudan in a nearly constant state of war, preventing the formation of political groups that drew on constituencies outside of Khartoum from mounting a challenge to Bashir. Bound by ties of tribal and ethnic kinship to Bashir but in a state of rivalry with one another, for most of Bashir's reign the leaders of Sudan's security forces were in no position to overthrow him. The regime suffered from only one documented coup attempt in early 1990, several months after Al-Bashir seized power and before he really had a chance to establish himself.[20]

---

[15] Seekers of Truth and Justice, *The Black Book*.; Julie Flint and Alex De Waal, *Darfur: A New History of a Long War* (Zed Books, 2008), 17.
[16] Roland Marchal, "Eléments d'une Sociologie Du Front National Islamique Soudanais. Les Etudes Du CERI" (Paris: Centres d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales, 1995), 25.
[17] Alex de Waal, "Counter-Insurgency on the Cheap," *Review of African Political Economy* 31, no. 102 (2004): 716–25.
[18] Jago Salmon and Emily Walmsley, *A Paramilitary Revolution: The Popular Defence Forces* (Citeseer, 2007).
[19] Erica De Bruin, "Preventing Coups d'état: How Counterbalancing Works," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 62, no. 7 (August 1, 2018): 1433–58.
[20] Reuters, "Sudan Reports Blocking a Coup and Arresting over 30 Officers," *The New York Times*, April 24, 1990, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/1990/04/24/world/sudan-reports-blocking-a-coup-and-arresting-over-30-officers.html.

Then came the coup of April 14, 2019, removing Bashir from office after nearly 30 years in office. Why, after establishing the longest-running regime in Sudan's history, did security forces finally decide to overthrow him?

Civil-Military Relations and the Demise of Al-Bashir

The security apparatus that Al-Bashir constructed during his tenure was brutal and quite effectively coup-proofed. But it was not invulnerable. The professed loyalty to Bashir among the senior ranks of the security apparatus and their previous brutality against threats to his rule did not mean that it would remain loyal under any circumstances. A rare but not unheard of series of events, most closely resembling Sudan's 1985 Revolution, led to a collective decision by the security apparatus to remove him from office.

First was the scale and scope of the economic crisis. The security apparatus remained loyal to Bashir through similar crises before, but never one that really cut at the heart of the economics underpinning the regime. After South Sudanese independence in 2011, the government's income from oil revenues shrank by 75%, Sudan to devalued its currency, and inflation increased by 70 percent.[21] The Sudanese economy shrank in 2018, and is expected to shrink again in 2019.

Second, the intensity and organization of these protests, which began in earnest in December 2018 when the price of bread tripled. Only twice in Sudan's history had civil society mobilized on such a scale.[22] Moreover, protestors in Sudan were large, peaceful,[23] well-organized and

---

[21] Agence Press Francaise (AFP), "Sudan Protests Biggest Threat yet to Bashir: Analysts," *France 24*, January 4, 2019, https://www.france24.com/en/20190104-sudan-protests-biggest-threat-yet-bashir-analysts.
[22] Willow Berrige, "Sudan Uprising III: What 1964 and 1985 Tell Us about Today's Protests," *African Arguments* (blog), January 7, 2019, https://africanarguments.org/2019/01/07/sudan-protests-learn-1964-1985/.
[23] Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (Columbia University Press, 2012).

led,[24] well-connected through social media and represented a broad range of Sudanese society; particularly women,[25] each critical factors in determining the success of such movements. They were extremely savvy in their dealings with the armed forces. They assumed, rightly, that all security forces were not predisposed to act antagonistically toward them, and deliberately targeted sit-ins and protests in front of military headquarters in an attempt to get the armed forces on their side.[26]

Together, these two factors would be enough to rattle the security apparatus of any country in the world, and perhaps cause some abandon their support for the regime. But they may not have been enough.

A final, and underappreciated factor might have been that, in factionalizing Sudan's security forces, Bashir laid the seeds of his own destruction. The comparative scholarship has shown that while counterbalancing is an effective coup-proofing mechanism,[27] it can inhibit unity in the face of popular protest, especially if there are incentives for some members of security forces to side with some members of the opposition or cleavages along ethnic lines.[28] In particular, rank and file soldiers appear more likely to repress or commit violence against those with whom they do not share a co-ethnicity.

There is strong evidence that Bashir's counterbalancing techniques created rivalries between intelligence services and militia groups more committed to authoritarianism and a somewhat more professional regular army, whose recruits were broadly representative of Sudanese society and

---

[24] Sharon Nepstad and Clifford Bob, "When Do Leaders Matter? Hypotheses on Leadership Dynamics in Social Movements," *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (February 1, 2006): 1–22, https://doi.org/10.17813/maiq.11.1.013313600164m727.
[25] Sharan Grewal, "Military Defection During Localized Protests: The Case of Tataouine," *International Studies Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (June 1, 2019): 259–69, https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqz003; Holger Albrecht, Aurel Croissant, and Fred H. Lawson, *Armies and Insurgencies in the Arab Spring* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).
[26] Kaamil Ahmed, "The Year That Changed Sudan Began with a Matchstick," *Middle East Eye*, December 19, 2019, http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/sudan-protests-year-changed-history-matchstick.
[27] De Bruin, "Preventing Coups d'état."
[28] Julian Morency-LaFlamme, "A Question of Trust: Military Defection During Regime Crises in Benin and Togo," *Democratization* 25, no. 3 (2018): 464–80.

hesitated to be used as instruments of mass repression. Immediately before Bashir's April ouster, soldiers from the regular army "took the side of the demonstrators, turning from a menacing presence into a protective force" that defended protestors from attacks by the police and the intelligence services.[29] After Bashir left office, the militias were able to crack only after regular forces were deployed outside of Khartoum. There were widespread reports that security forces feared a broader civil war if Bashir were to remain in office.

There is agreement among scholars that, above all else, militaries tend to act in their institutional interests.[30] And perhaps the most sacred institutional interest of all is to avoid fighting fellow officers.[31] Though we may never know the full story behind the events leading up to Bashir's removal, a plausible summation of the causes for his removal, in line with much the existing scholarship on civil-relations, is as follows: a combination of economic crisis and mass popular protests placed extreme pressure on Sudan's security forces, rendering Bashir a political liability. Where the senior leaders and key militia groups remained loyal to Bashir personally, reports of widespread defection among the middle and lower ranks made them fear further unrest. The best chance security forces had to preserve their institutions and prevent an internecine conflict lay with his removal.

The Sovereign Council: A Post-Transition Innovation in Civil-Military Relations?

---

[29] Ahmed, "The Year That Changed Sudan Began with a Matchstick."
[30] Eric A. Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice Hall College Div, 1976); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Harvard University Press, 1957).
[31] Barbara Geddes, "What Do We Know About Democratization After Twenty Years?," *Annual Review of Political Science* 2, no. 1 (1999): 115–44; Naunihal Singh, *Seizing Power: The Strategic Logic of Military Coups* (JHU Press, 2014).

The fall of a dictator does not foreordain the establishment of a democratic government. While the demise of Al Bashir was in hindsight predictable, the odds of sustained democracy are not in Sudan's favor.[32] Nevertheless, the creation of the Sovereign Council is a remarkable achievement and, as the product of a genuine compromise between security forces and civilians, represents Sudan's best hope for a stable, popularly supported political settlement.

In Sudanese politics, Bashir's exit most closely resembles that of Jafaar Numeiri in 1985, when a general strike and weeks of demonstrations over the country's political and economic situation led the military to oust him. It is the only other coup in Sudan's history not to have instigated by political parties, but as a result of a popular uprising.[33] The result of the coup was a brief period of military dictatorship, followed by a democracy that was ended, ironically, when Bashir seized power in 1989. If Sudan's history is any guide, then, the transition may well result in a democracy, but with highly uncertain long-term survival prospects. It is worth noting that none of Sudan's democracies (1956-1958, 1964-1969, 1986-1989) have endured longer than five years.

A broader historical perspective also suggests caution. Few African countries have established democracy in the aftermath of rule by a personalist dictator with a security apparatus as powerful and ethnically fragmented as Sudan's. According to recent research, of the 40 such African dictatorships, only four have been succeeded by a democratic form of government.[34] More typically, mass popular protests are repressed, and, if the regime leaves power, it is replaced with another dictatorship.

---

[32] Nathaniel Allen and Sharan Grewal, "Can Sudan's Military Be Convinced to Support Democracy?" *War on the Rocks*, June 25, 2019, https://warontherocks.com/2019/06/can-sudans-military-be-convinced-to-support-democracy/.
[33] Abdel-Rahim, "Changing Patterns"
[34] Allen, "Authoritarian Armies and Democratizing States."

That much of the security apparatus remains committed to ensuring the military's continued political influence was evident in the aftermath of Bashir's removal, when over a 100 protestors were massacred by security forces. Civilian protestors and opposition groups responded to the crack down with savvy and resolve. Protestors called a general strike and, on June 30th, weeks after the massacre, tens of thousands of citizens once again gathered in front of military headquarters, banging drums and calling for civilians rule.[35] At the same time, they worked to strike a bargain that failed to establish a transition process that is genuinely civilian-led but probably extracted the most that security forces were willing to concede.

The result, the jointly led Sovereign Council, defies categorization as either a civilian or a military government, and is a unique arrangement that civilians hope may serve as a model for future transitions in difficult contexts. It is supposed to oversee the country as it prepares for elections in 2022, and is composed of five military officers and six civilian leaders who are broadly representative of the opposition and the regions of Sudan. The military will be nominally in charge for 21 months, with civilians for another twenty, prior to elections. It oversees a caretaker government composed mainly of civilian technocrats except ministers of defense and interior, which are nominated by the military leadership.

The current government is led by Dr. Abdullah Hamdok, an economist with previous experience working with the United Nations and the African Development Bank. He has embarked on an ambitious reform program that would complete reshape Sudan, including its civil-military relations and to work towards realization of the objectives of Sudanese Revolution of freedom, peace and justice. In the near term, the regime has set its sights on ending Sudan's economic crisis with aid packages from other countries, reforms, and removal from the State Department's State

---

[35] Declan Walsh, "Bouncing Back From Crackdown, Protesters Surge Through Sudan's Streets," *The New York Times*, June 30, 2019, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/30/world/africa/sudan-protest-hamdan.html.

Sponsors of terrorism list, which has exposed Sudan's government to crippling sanctions. Central to the government's reform efforts are to end civil wars on the periphery, which would free up significant resources. In recent remarks in Washington, DC, Hamdok promised not only to reduce the amount that the government spends on defense, which consumes a significant portion of Sudan's GDP, but also to undertake reforms that would rebuild Sudan's army from the ground up, making it a truly national institution that is representative of society.[36]

Civil-Military Relations and the Future of Sudan's Transition

In dismantling certain elements of the former regime and making genuine efforts to end Sudan's longstanding civil wars, the Sovereign Council can already boast some remarkable successes. Yet the influence of security forces, particularly the RSF, looms heavy over the revolution. Do security forces genuinely wish to see a peaceful, democratic transition in Sudan? Or are they merely biding their time?

Broadly speaking, we believe that Sudan faces three potential scenarios going forward. In the first scenario, the experiment in joint civil-military governance is a success, leading to a peaceful democratic government. Strong popular support for the revolution ensures that security forces keep their end of the bargain. Civilians are handed control of the interim government in May 2021, and preside over an open, free and fair election at the end of 2022. During its time in power, the Sovereign Council and Civilian Cabinet end the civil wars in the Blue Nile, South Kordofan and Darfur and jump-start the economy by reducing corruption, reducing security sector spending and through better management of the natural resource sector. They are helped by regional and

[36] Atlantic Council, *Navigating Sudan's Transition: A Conversation with Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok* (Washington, D.C., 2019), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46BHYKp2AyE.

international actors, who lift sanctions, relieve debt, and invest in Sudan's economy. The militias are demobilized, the size of the army shrinks, and for the first time in its history, security forces are nationally representative at all levels and in all ranks. Buoyed by a popular mandate, the government that takes power in 2022 takes further measures to civilian control over the military, choosing a civilian defense minister and ensuring that the security sector's finances are controlled by the state.

In another scenario, the transition to a democratically elected government occurs, but the military remains powerful. Efforts to dismantle the deep state create losers in the public service and security sector, who agitate to revive the former regime. The interim government negotiates an end to the civil wars, but pockets of discontent and resistance remain, and does not succeed in fully disarming or demobilizing Sudan's many militias. Because of continued corruption and fear about empowering the wrong actors, the international community does completely ease sanctions or forgive Sudan's debt. The economy grows modestly but not enough to satisfy the street. Taking advantage of popular discontent, the former elite create a new political party, co-opt some of the revolution's key supporters, and get strong political and financial backing from security forces to tilt the electoral playing field towards it. Though elections are ostensibly free and fair, the government that emerges is only marginally better than the previous, and remains beholden to security forces, who play a significant role behind the scenes. The military justifies its continued political influence and financial muscle by continuing to instigate conflicts.

In a final scenario, amidst exhaustion over the inability of authorities to address the country's issues or in responding to an effort by civilians to dramatically curtail the military's influence, security forces end Sudan's experiment in civilian governance. With Sudan's civil authorities overthrown, security forces organize an election that is neither free nor fair to rubber stamp the personalist rule of an officer who portrays himself as a populist standing up for Sudan's long-

oppressed periphery. The peace agreements with rebel groups not yet concluded, this officer becomes a leader much like Bashir before him, stoking regional, tribal and ethnic divides to stay in power. They appoint associates and co-ethnics to lead Sudan's army, whose influence is held in check by militia groups whose finances and business interests remain under their personal control.

We judge neither of these three scenarios to be totally improbable, but the latter two to be most likely if Sudan is not supported by the international community. Had security forces been broadly on board with drastic reforms to the security sector, they would have ceded political influence to civilians entirely. Security forces have strong personal, financial, and institutional interests at stake, and, to a large extent, time on their side. They will continue to press for their interests long after the international community's attention turns away from Sudan, and may benefit from widespread popular disillusionment with the revolution.

The future of civil-military relations in Sudan rests on the all-important questions: what kind of political settlement will security forces accept, and how can it be reconciled with their interests?

Conclusions

To maximize the chances of a peaceful transition, diminish the military's political influence and minimize the chance of an intervention by security forces in Sudan, several recommendations are in order.

First, the international community and key regional actors must rally behind the current government by relieving debt and lifting sanctions. There is a risk that security forces have been waiting for the lifting of sanctions, which will be challenging to re-impose, before intervening. This is a risk that the international community should take, particularly if it makes clear a seizure of power

by security forces or actors closely aligned with them will put ties at risk. Sudan needs international and regional support to revive its economy and maintain popular support for the revolution.

Second, the interim government should be wary of concentrating control over the security sector in the hands of one actor. Instead, authorities should try to balance the interests of major actors in the security sector – the army, the Rapid Support Forces, and the reformed General Intelligence Service, off one another. They should ensure that, during the transition, at least two separate forces report to civilian heads of state through independent chains of command. Though Bashir was perhaps overly zealous in the degree to which he played security forces off one another, there is good evidence that counterbalancing tactics such as this can reduce the likelihood of a coup.[37]

Third, while seeking to limit the size of the armed forces, the interim government should ensure that the institutional interests of their forces and the soldiers that serve in them are at least partially met. The political influence of security forces should be diminished, but not necessarily through mass purges that will prevent former soldiers from earning a living. Officers or militia leaders could be encouraged to enter politics, for example, but only if they retire from the military or disarm the militias they control.[38] Militias should be disbanded and replaced by a smaller, better, trained, multinational army – but former militia members should be offered retirement packages and opportunities to earn a living comparable to what they would earn as a fighter.

Finally, to encourage the transformation of Sudan's security sector, international actors should offer assistance to support it – but only under the condition that the force that is established

---

[37] De Bruin, "Preventing Coups d'état."
[38] Elwathig Kameir, "Security Arrangements in Sudan: Achilles Heels of Peace and Democratic Transformation - Sudan Tribune: Plural News and Views on Sudan," *Sudan Tribune*, December 9, 2019, https://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article68671.

is apolitical and recruitment is meritocratic, not simply an unwieldy collective of irregular, sectarian forces from a now bygone era. International support for a meritocratic, apolitical, and professional force could further help ensure the loyalty of security forces to a civilian government and invest its soldiers in the success of the revolution.

Only time will tell if the transition in Sudan will live up to the expectations of the Sudanese people. Judging from the remarkable progress of the revolution so far, achieving lasting peace and democracy in Sudan will be a difficult task. But not an impossible one.