

How Should We Understand the Political Process in Sudan Today and the Experience of the Sudanese-Sudanese Dialogue?

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A few days ago, Sudan's political and military authorities came together and presented a proposal for what they call a "Sudanese-Sudanese dialogue," aimed at reaching the broadest possible front to form a government in partnership with the military forces. This is something the military and Islamists in Sudan take pride in, but it is not a new step in the political reality. It is a recycled tactic that was previously used under Bashir's regime through what was called the "National Dialogue." The forces involved in that process were largely those allied with the military regime, while the revolutionary opposition did not make a significant difference.

Today, a politically oriented committee is being formed with a new propaganda framework. We see figures who once criticized the policies of the authorities, such as Dr. Mohamed Jalal Hashim, Al-Badri, and other intellectuals associated with the authorities, submitting to Al-Burhan's policy, which aims to legitimize military rule. With the clear popular and imperial rejection of the Muslim Brotherhood as an active organization in Sudan, the army has sought to use forces that were previously considered part of the revolution to legitimize and institutionalize its upcoming policies.

The army's position became clear in the statement by its Chief of Staff, Yasser Abdel Rahman Al-Atta, regarding Al-Burhan potentially running for four terms, equivalent to 20 years in power. At the same time, intellectuals close to the authorities are attempting to legitimize the old political system, while imperialist forces are trying to exploit revolutionary positions in accordance with their own agendas.

This leaves many revolutionaries uncertain about what political tactics can preserve the continuity of the revolution and complete its objectives: overthrowing the authoritarian regime and carrying out a social revolution.

The war was a means for the Islamists to return to power after the overwhelming popular rejection they had faced. Their systematic policies of revenge were clear, including in their own speeches, and this is widely acknowledged. But let us look at where they have reached today.

If the Sudanese people, during the December Revolution, rejected the Islamist regime by around 50 percent, then today that rejection may be closer to 80 percent, for several reasons.

Islamist organizations have constructed a political equation that depends on violence to maintain popular support—not only violence carried out by them, but also violence carried out by the Rapid Support Forces. This initially led much of the population to develop a sense of vengeance against the RSF. But over time, and with the emergence of statements in which they claim that they are the “real men” and the strongest force, with no one stronger than them, this sense of vengeance has increasingly been directed toward their own system as a whole.

Many people have consequently returned to the belief that the Islamists were the ones who created the RSF. At this point, the evidence requires little analysis: their own statements are being used as evidence against them.

Today, we have witnessed fierce battles in Kordofan led by the Joint Forces of the armed struggle movements—movements that were previously described as rebel groups. A few days ago, we also witnessed a rapid economic collapse of the Sudanese pound and a dramatic rise in the prices of goods, fuel, and almost everything else. These developments are warning signs of a possible “hunger revolution.”

This time, however, it may not be young people who take to the streets. The very people who belong to the authoritarian system may rise up to dismantle it.

The regime has built a popular base consisting of dependents who survive on the crumbs of power and on false and imaginary privileges. But with millions of Sudanese now armed and militias spread throughout the country, this social layer has become increasingly irrelevant.

Here we can say that the authoritarian system has begun to consume itself.

A fragile class of employees without professional skills, many of whom were appointed because of their political affiliation and through policies of political empowerment in the civil service over decades, now finds itself at the edge of collapse.

The Islamists are attempting to direct this popular anger along ethnic lines, particularly against one of the leaders of the armed movements, Finance Minister Gibril Ibrahim, by reducing the entire economic crisis to his role and directing popular anger toward him. But the problem is that the Justice and Equality Movement, which he leads, constitutes a major part of the current military force on the battlefield.

This places them between the anvil of the Joint Forces and the Juba Peace Agreement on one side, and the hammer of the regime’s own followers on the other.

The system has begun to collapse in reality.

At the same time, the Janjaweed militia is attempting to construct a separate system from the one currently in existence—a state within a state. But this emerging state was effectively stillborn from the beginning. The attempt to build a new social base through replacement, displacement, and the substitution of one population for another is already revealing its consequences on the battlefield.

The recent battles have been merciless. Thousands of soldiers have been sent into suicidal attacks, many of them drawn from communities affected by these campaigns of extermination. The scenes are horrifying.

I believe that retaliatory campaigns and counter-massacres against the Janjaweed may occur as a consequence of what they have done in areas inhabited by indigenous populations. Regardless of the strength of authoritarian institutions, they will not be able to fully control the impulses and actions of soldiers during battles.

The military regime is preparing the conditions for a new dictatorship, perhaps one modeled on the system of Sisi. However, the possibility of an Islamist coup cannot be ruled out, and conflict between the government's allies and the government itself is not beyond possibility.

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