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# International Journal of Sudan Research

**Has the **revolution** that  
broke out in the republic  
of Sudan achieved its  
desired goals?**



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# Abstract

## Purpose

The aim of this research is to study and analyse the results of the Sudanese revolution, and try to answer the following question: has the revolution that broke out in the Republic of Sudan in 2018 achieved its desired goals?

## Design/methodology/approach

The basic research methods adopted in the paper are factor analysis and an historical method in combination with institutional analysis.

## Findings

The paper discovered the importance of the revolution achieving its desired goals so as not to cause an explosion of chaos, which may lead to the return of the military to power in Sudan.

## Originality/value

The approach and the results are original and valuable in the evaluation and analysis of the results of the Sudanese revolution.

## Research implications

More work must be done to improve the economic situation of the citizens and to provide for the necessities of life, together with the necessary legal amendments and the conduct of trials for the leaders of the former regime without delay.

## Keywords

**Sudan, Khartoum, revolutionaries, Omar al-Bashir, National Congress Party, Sovereign Council, Rapid Support Forces, Sudan Professionals Association, Sudan Armed Forces, Transitional Military Council, Forces for Freedom and Change.**





## Introduction

The history of Sudan is full of popular uprisings and revolutions, from the October Revolution that broke out in 1964 to the December Revolution of 2019. Sudan is therefore considered at the forefront of Arab and African countries rising up and paving the way for the concept of revolution against military regimes. The first revolution in the history of Sudan was the October Revolution of 1964 that overthrew the rule of President General Ibrahim Abboud. General Abboud was in power from November 1958 until his fall in the year of the October Revolution. His assumption of power was the result of a coup that was, in fact, the army's assumption of power from then Prime Minister Abdullah Khalil, when disagreements within his party and with other parties intensified. The period of General Ibrahim Abboud's rule included many events that had a great impact on the reality of Sudanese politics, as he suspended the constitution and political parties. During his reign, the South Sudan crisis worsened, which is evident in the south's rejection of any approach to Arabise and Islamise the sector. All these policies and political escalations were enough to lead to the generation of the October Revolution. That revolution put the government under great pressure, forcing Lieutenant General Abboud to hand over power peacefully, and a transitional government was formed, leading Sudan to the second civil rule according to the will of the people and their aspirations towards a homeland governed by a civilian government (Berridge, 2016).



We must also shed light on another revolution, no less important than the October Revolution. That revolution is the April Revolution of 1985 that overthrew another military regime, that of Field Marshal Jaafar Muhammad al-Nimeiri, who ruled from May 1969 in a military coup against the government of the Prime Minister, Sir Khatim al-Khalifah, until April 1969. His reign was also characterised by instability of political conditions and the collapse of economic conditions; all these reasons led to the movement and uprising of the Sudanese streets. This resulted in the handover of power by Field Marshal Abd al-Rahman Swar al-Dahab, who was then Minister of Defense, to lead the transitional period that followed the third civil rule of Sudan (El-Affendi, 2012).



The last democracy, civilian rule, was wiped out by the government of the National Congress Party (the Muslim Brotherhood) as a result of the coup of June 1989. This coup was led by Colonel Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir, orchestrated by the godfather, Dr Hassan Al-Turabi, leader of the Muslim Brotherhood at the time. This period did not witness political and economic stability and armed rebellions increased in the Darfur region, the Nuba Mountains, and the Blue Nile. The problems of South Sudan worsened, which led to its secession from the North in 2011. This period of rule was accompanied by many protests against the situation. The most recent uprising was in December 2018 and demanded the departure of the regime led by Field

Marshal Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir; this was due to the deterioration of the economic situation and the uncharacteristic decline of the Sudanese currency against the US dollar, the accompanying shortage of the basics for living, fuel and ATMs. There was also a problem with cash in banks in various states of Sudan (Bellucci, 2000).

The Sudanese experience in January 2019 was unique in breaking the barrier of fear among the masses. It was agreed that the revolutionaries would gather in a specific place, so that the march within neighbourhoods would begin with a call for passers-by not to be afraid and join the growing crowd. People breaking free of the barrier of fear regarding rebelling against the ruling regimes (fear caused by government oppression and the corrupt elite), is one of the most important reasons for the success of revolutions. This is because an uprising would help reduce the level of corruption and tyranny, and expand the circles of freedom in all its forms, albeit in a limited way. It also keeps the hand on the trigger. Breaking the barrier of fear among the people should give them more determination to complete the rally and not worry about what would happen when the march was over. Authoritarian regimes are only brought down by shaking the security system, causing tyrants to lose control over residential and vital communities. This would not occur unless the fear barrier is broken by the rebels who feel safe when they control a region; this feeling would be liable to escalate until the rule of the tyrant is broken (Sakbani, 2015).

Ackerman and Krueger (1994) believe that civil resistance is not only a political and social phenomenon that operates under different circumstances, it is also a human course of action taken by hundreds of thousands of people, whose skills in engaging in these conflicts greatly influence outcomes. They also describe how these skills and conditions interact to achieve results in conflicts driven by non-violent strategies.

This paper uses the knowledge contained in book monographs in English and Arabic. These books describe different views and cover different periods and aspects of Sudan's predicament described in this paper. Among these items are books referring to a political marketplace framework or describing social life, as well as those addressing economic and political issues: they concern both the

current situation and the historical outline. At this point, a brief review of this literature is key in terms of key factors of success or failure of civil resistance. Collier and Sambanis (2005) state that economic aspects seem to be the leading explanation for the origin of most civil resistance, and the higher the income of a given country or region, the lower the risk of rebellion. In addition, it is necessary to mention the distinctive political and ethological conceptions of researchers known primarily from Sudanese politics analysis, in particular the British researcher Tim Niblock (1985). From many Western researchers who started writing about Sudanese revolutionary dynamics, outstanding scholars include an excellent British expert of Sudan, in particular conflicts in this country, anthropologist Alex de Waal (2019). He is the only European expert who can look at Sudan's predicament through





the eyes of the Sudanese; he was therefore eagerly seen in the group of negotiators, also by the government side.

Particular attention is also paid to the work of Paul Williams (2011), a well-known specialist in international relations and security issues. This work provided important theoretical inspiration relating to the genesis and determinants of wars waged in Sudan. Williams (2011) tries to give a comprehensive answer to the question about the cause of Sub-Saharan Africa: the book adheres to generally recognised paradigms. As it is impossible on African soil to apply the classic definition of the Clausewitz war, Williams (2011) assumes that war is a set of factors that lead to an increase in tension between two groups, to manifest the open aggression of one, leading to an active attack that faces defence. Describing bloody conflicts, he wonders why African wars are such a mixture of pre-modern barbarism (an example of massacres carried out by Janjaweed), and modern technologies (air bombardment by government aviation). He asks what factors cause them. Using a comparative method, Williams (2011) analyses selected cases from the slaughter in Darfur to the ecological catastrophe in the Niger Delta. He examines their political contexts, discovers the key elements for them and analyses the international actions undertaken, aimed at bringing about a lasting peace. To a large extent, his conclusions coincide with this paper, as Williams' main source of crises is the failure of African authoritarian governments based on Western-style bureaucracy. By making unfavourable allocations of resources



(exactly as the governments in Sudan prefer, preferring nilocentric development), such authority leads to an economic crisis; this then becomes the cause of protests and demands for changes in the economically ineffective political system.

This paper goes on to the issues related to sovereignty and self-determination, noting that it is related to ethnicity and boils down to poorly conducted or unfinished decolonisation, giving the example of South Sudan. In this paper, the case of West Sudan, or Darfur, which was a separate state in the pre-colonial period, can also be considered as badly decolonised. From the point of view of this paper, Williams's (2011) reflections on international responses to wars in Africa are also interesting, involving attempts to build





an international security system, including diplomatic initiatives, peace operations, and humanitarian and development aid programmes. This draws attention to the inability to build such a system with African forces (as demonstrated by the attempt by the African Union in Darfur) due to financial weakness and mutual conflict of African countries. That is why Williams (2011) sees the necessity for support from Western countries and organisations. In this case, however, he notices that Western diplomatic missions are usually late, which is why he rightly recommends that the African forces focus their efforts on the aid of the African forces.

Williams's (2011) ultimate conclusion is also crucial, that the key issue in understanding the causes of conflicts in Africa is to become aware of the weaknesses of African countries.

Weaknesses, it seems, not so much military as bureaucratic, and the ability to influence their society through a propaganda and educational system. The authorities of these countries cannot cope even with small-scale conflicts, because ethnic and religious contexts are quickly used to mobilise them, which leads to their escalation. Williams (2011) rightly indicates, however, that these factors appear only during the course of a given conflict and they are not the cause. This weakness of African governments (which is a consequence of their countries' economic weakness) leads to the use of repression at every step, because they see this as the only way to maintain peace.

It is also worth distinguishing Sudanese researchers, whose work greatly contributes to the understanding of many contexts, especially cultural ones. One of the most



eminent Sudanese political scientists, Professor Atta El-Battahani (2002), who lectures at the Faculty of Political Sciences at the University of Khartoum, and Mohamed Suliman (2004) from Northern Darfur. This last author, belonging to the Zaghawa ethnic group, is an extremely insightful witness to the events in Darfur; these were a personal tragedy for him as he lost several members of his family during the conflict. Among the Sudanese who write, Suliman is one of the leading prosecutors, attributing genocide to the Sudanese government and its supporters.

In December 2018, protests erupted in Sudan due to the high price of bread. However, this quickly turned into a massive popular revolution that overthrew President Omar al-Bashir, who himself took power as a result of a coup of officers linked to the Muslim Brotherhood in 1989. For about 30 years, he managed to preserve the authoritarian regime with the extended powers of the security services, especially internal intelligence and tribal militias (Magdy, 2020).

The main drivers of this popular revolution were the Sudanese youth and women, who demonstrated unrivalled courage and resilience. Demonstrators in many regions of Sudan and in the capital, Khartoum, opposed the policies of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) in general, but in particular they strongly criticised the widespread financial and administrative corruption in the country, and the favouritism and control of all economic institutions by members of the families of influential figures of the ruling party

(NCP). This was combined with a rejection of the policy of perpetuating tribal divisions and marginalisation of certain ethnic groups (Sheikh, 2019). The intensity of demonstrations was preserved thanks to coordination with the Sudanese Professionals Caucus (the Union of Lawyers, Doctors, and Lecturers) and later with what is known as the forces of the Declaration of Freedom and Change. In addition to the Sudanese Professionals Caucus, these included a large number of traditional Sudanese political parties, such as the Umma Party, the Federal Democratic Party, the Communist Party, and a multitude of movements.



Armed forces signed a joint document called the Declaration of Freedom and Change; this supported the revolution and aimed to overthrow the national conference system. This resulted in negotiations with the Transitional Military Council that assumed power in Sudan after the fall of the al-Bashir regime and the defunct Salvation Government, and the signing of what is known as the Constitutional Declaration. This resulted in the formation of a sovereign council composed of military and civilian personnel and a rotating presidency (Radio Dabanga, 2019).

Sudanese who live abroad also played an important and prominent role in the success of this revolution. They did this by putting pressure on Western countries and international institutions to adopt a position in support of the Sudanese revolution. As a result, the appointment of the Sudanese Prime Minister, Abdullah Hamdok, to the transitional government and a large number of his ministers to the new transitional government, included Sudanese cadres from abroad, for example the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Finance who lived in the United States of America (Medani and Aziz, 2019).







## Methodology



In order to implement the plans described above, research methods and techniques appropriate to the science of politics were used. In this case, the basic research methods adopted in the operation are factor analysis and the historical method in combination with the institutional analysis that seem to best serve the study of the revolution that broke out in the Republic of Sudan in 2019. First, these include a review of available literature, both national (Sudanese in Arabic) as well as foreign, including Internet material in English and in Polish. Second, there was an analysis of existing sources published by newspapers,

international organisations, statistics, and other materials. In addition, quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative techniques were used as well as experts' observations, interviews, and opinions. It should be emphasised that the interviews and discussions were conducted with activists from the opposition and experts in Sudanese affairs inside and outside Sudan, as well as with foreign experts who specialise in Sudanese issues. The subject of the study was the main indicators related to the current formation of society and the family at the community level in Sudan after the revolution (Box-Steffensmeier et al., 2010).



## The questionnaire

The questionnaire contained 21 general questions and was designed to chart the course of the Sudanese revolution. The questions were organised into three thematic groups. The first examined the context and motives of the Sudanese revolution and the extent to which its goals have been achieved. The second focused on the impact on the citizens' lives, especially the economic impact. The questions from the third group covered many aspects related to policy responses and influencing geopolitical

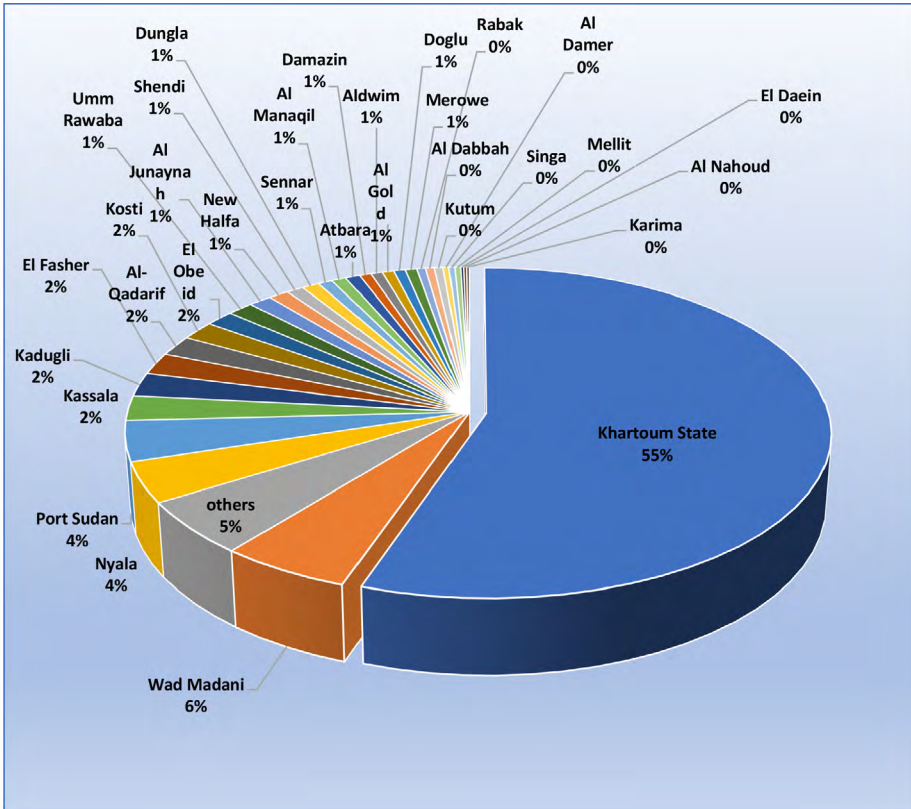
factors. The questionnaire combined open-ended and multiple-choice questions with predefined answers that allowed respondents to choose and rank among several options, or to be graded on a scale of "very low" to "very high". For these questions, an optional space was provided to clarify the answer. This open portion is of great importance for a survey of this type as it contributes to the improvement of the interpretation of its overall results and provides additional valuable material (Piedmont, 2007).

## Survey sample

To conduct the survey, about 652 people were randomly selected from 33 regions or cities from all parts of Sudan. They received an invitation to participate in the survey by email or multiple social media using Google questionnaires. More than 60% participated in the revolution in the same area in which they lived, while 50% participated in the demonstrations in front of the General Command of the Sudanese Armed Forces in Khartoum. Geographical distribution, educational level, gender balance, and age group were the reference criteria for choosing individuals. In addition to the people inside Sudan, a number of people from outside Sudan also participated (Cochran, 1950).

Concerning the distribution by geographical origin, Figure 1 shows that 55% came from Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, and 45% from other Sudanese regions. This is due to several reasons. First, a large percentage of the population of Sudan live in the capital.

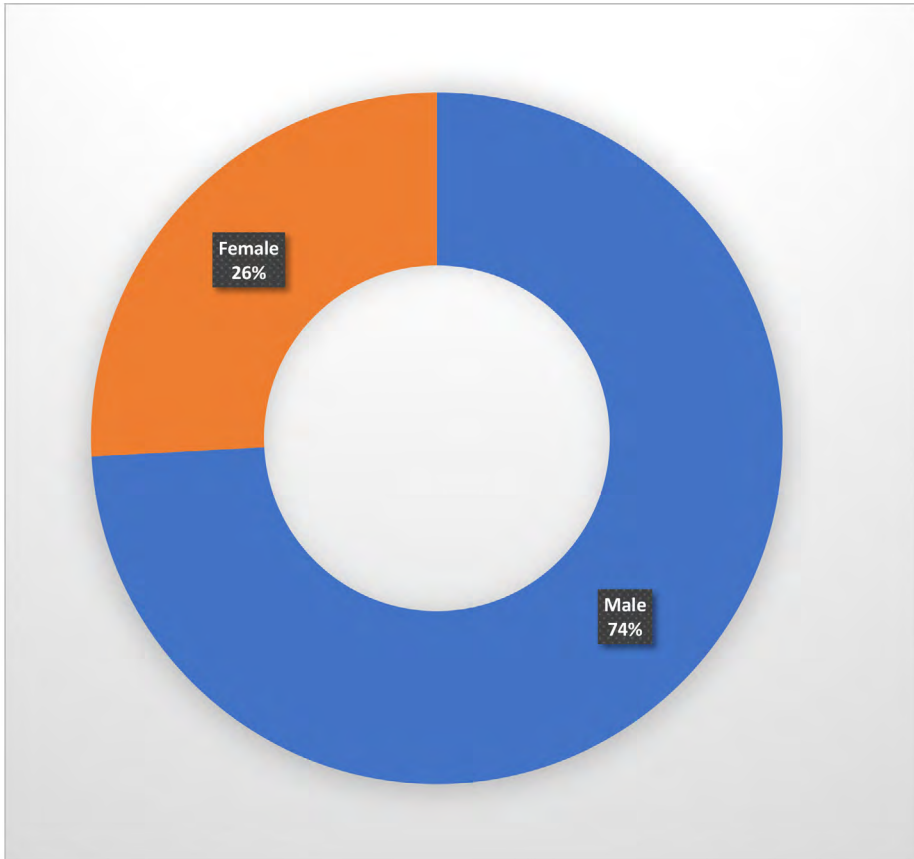
Second, most of the educated class that participated in the revolution live in Khartoum. Third, a lack of good access to the Internet in other regions of Sudan also resulted in a small number of participants from those areas in this questionnaire, which was conducted online using Google questionnaires; however, we can say that the results of the questionnaire can form a basis for our conclusions (Casey, 2016).



**Figure 1: Distribution of responses by geographical origin**

Source: Devised by author from questionnaire data

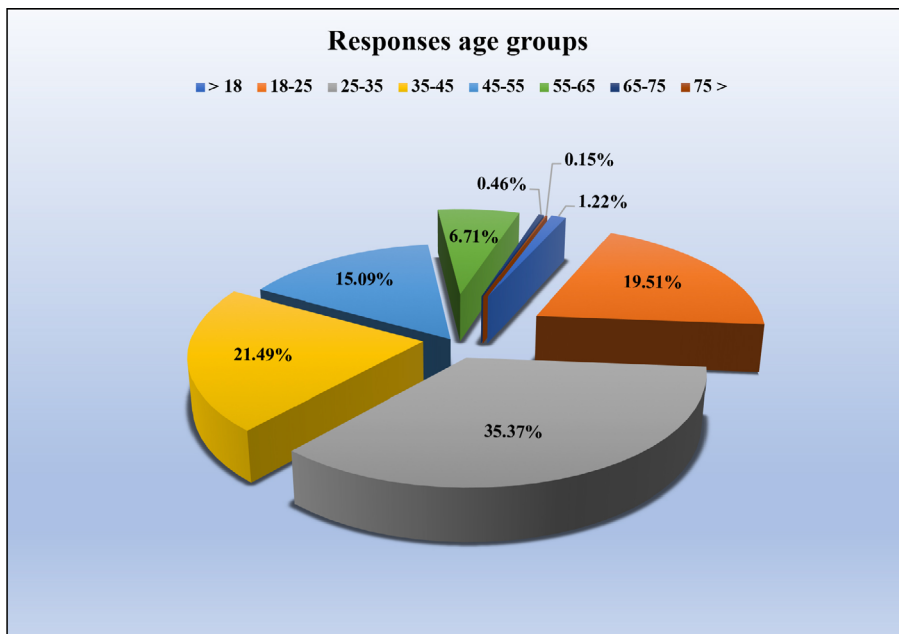
Most of those who participated in this questionnaire were male (74%). Figure 2 indicates that despite the strong participation of Sudanese women in the revolution, their participation in political decisions is still somewhat weak; this is due to several cultural factors and the control of men in Sudanese society so far over joint Sudanese decisions. This paper sees that the participation of women in this questionnaire was weak, and in a noticeable way; more study is needed on its causes (Ahmed Abdel Aziz, 2020).



**Figure 2: Participation in the questionnaire according to gender**

*Source: DeVised by author from questionnaire data*

Regarding age groups, the survey showed 35% of respondents were aged between 25-35 years old, 20% were between 18-25, while 15% were between 40-55. As is illustrated in Figure 3, the youth sector and the educated and enlightened class in Sudan played an important role in this revolution (Fox, 2020).



**Figure 3: Responses according to age group**

*Source: DeVised by author from questionnaire data*

## Did the Sudanese achieve all the goals of their revolution?

Before embarking on a general survey of the opinions on the Sudanese streets about whether the revolution achieved its goals, a number of expert views in the media or via direct interviews with experts were investigated.

The Sudanese political writer, Abdul Rahman Abdul Salam, in the Sudanese newspaper Al-Sahafa, has made no secret of his concerns about the Sudanese not achieving all the goals of their revolution, and the emergence of very early indications for the counter-revolution since the first period that followed the overthrow of al-Bashir. In his speech, Abd al-Salam presents the most prominent manifestations of the attempts to circumvent the Sudanese revolution, the first



of which is the military council's adherence to power and its failure to allow anyone to reach the leadership of the country or assume sovereign positions. The Internet was cut off for a long time, and the sit-in of the General Command headquarters broke up.

Abdul Salam reviews the most prominent manifestations of the military's victory over the government in the country despite the Sudanese revolution, by dividing the seats in the sovereign council into six for civilians and five for the Military Council; this opened the

way for supporters of the counter-revolution to practise their activities. He believes that the failure to dismantle the previous regime, despite the Sudanese transitional authorities approval of the 'Dismantling the Salvation System' law (which provides for the dissolution of the NCP that was led by al-Bashir, the confiscation of its funds, and the suspension of the political activity of its symbols), is an opportunity to preserve money and real estate, and to remove them from justice. He further added the following:

*'Correcting what has been corrupted in 30 years takes a lot of time. The revolution raised 3 important slogans and achieved freedom, and work is underway in the peace file as it is the basis of justice that forms the third side and is an important demand, and the government of the revolution is proceeding to achieve the goals and aspirations of the Sudanese, but the road is not paved with roses' (Abdul Salam, 2020).*

The well-known political activist and former opponent of the regime of deposed President Omar al-Bashir, Adil Abdelaati, led a campaign called the "Sudan Future Campaign". According to him, the Sudanese revolution has not achieved any of its goals at all. He believes that the Sudanese revolution was doomed to failure because it lacked leadership, and it did not have a clear programme from the beginning. Furthermore, he believes that the gathering of professionals who led the revolution were not originally qualified to lead it, but rather its existence was by chance; in addition, they were not qualified to lead after the success of the revolution. Abdelaati said that the failure to form the

Transitional Legislative Council was also not a mere coincidence. Rather, the legislative awareness of that group that seized power was very weak. Freedom and Change insist that the transitional period be for a period of four years without setting realistic reasons, and without a popular mandate was a desire only to continue in power (Abdelaati, 2020).

The comments of Abdul Salam and Abdelaati fully agree with the results of the survey, as shown in Figure 4, where it can be seen that more than half of the respondents (54%) indicated that the revolution achieved some goals, and only about 38% emphasised that it did not achieve its goals; only 8% of

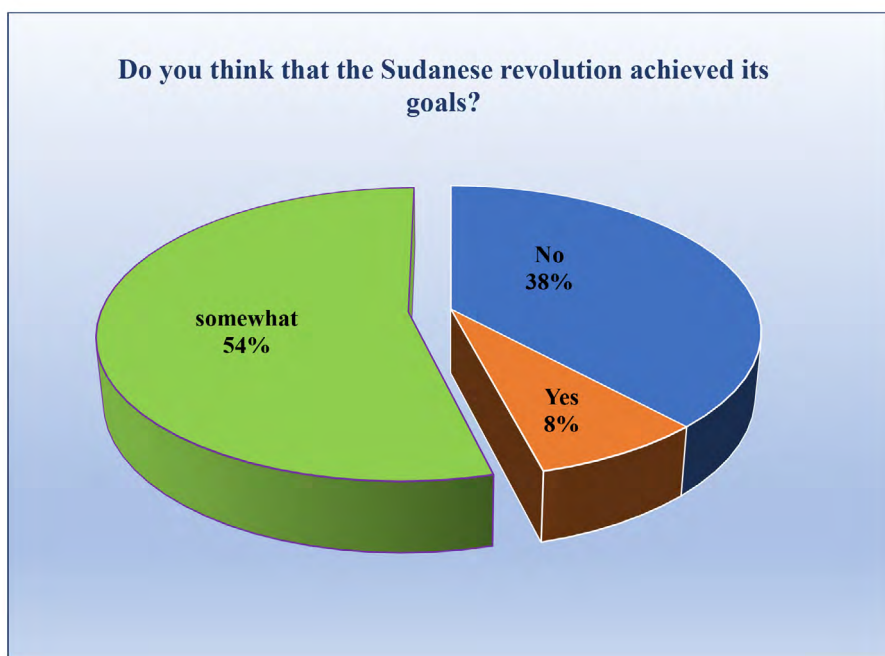


respondents confirmed that they achieved their goals (Elnaiem and Abdelraoof, 2019).

The position of the military and security institutions that belonged to the defunct regime has not been determined. On the contrary, there was a tendency to deal with these military institutions in building the new state. This is a failed theory because these institutions are corrupt. In addition, there was a weakness in the programmes and a lack of vision, as well as a strong lust for power and a lack of democratic awareness and confidence in the people. This occurred even though it was these people who went out for four months despite not trusting them and being

able to make a correct democratic choice. It is strange that political parties are being intimidated by the military in early elections. Unfortunately, most of the political parties that make up the Forces of Freedom and Change are ideological revolutionary parties that do not exist among the masses, and it is better for them to ally with the military in order to obtain fragments of power. The approach to anti-elections is an old approach among Sudanese political parties. It is the one that has produced all the military coups in the history of Sudan given that all the military coups in Sudan stood behind them and have been supported by political parties since Sudan's independence (BBC News, 2019a).





**Figure 4: Did the Sudanese revolution achieve its goals?**

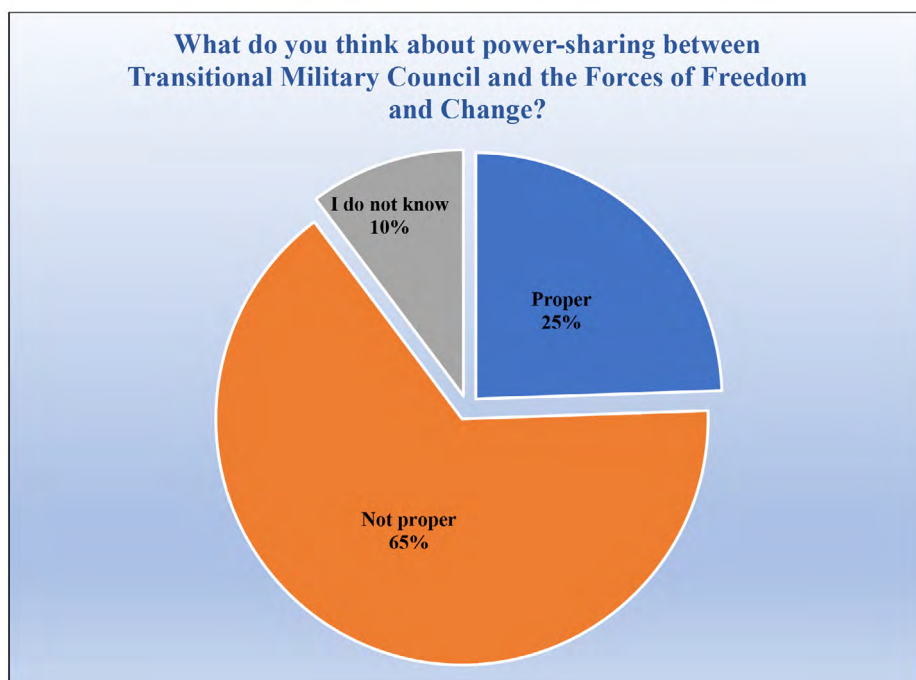
*Source:* Devised by author from questionnaire data

## **Dissatisfaction with the Constitutional Declaration**

After the success of the revolution, the Sudanese celebrated the signing of the Constitutional Declaration of the power-sharing agreement between the ruling military council and the civilian opposition. It saw the entry of Sudan into a new era witnessing a transition to civilian rule and the end of the era of ousted President Omar al-Bashir, who tightened his grip on the country for more than three decades. The agreement on the Constitutional Declaration for the democratic stage came after painstaking negotiations between representatives of the opposition

that led to widespread protests against the al-Bashir regime and the military council that overthrew him in April 2019 (Saber, 2019).

With regard to power-sharing between the Transitional Military Council and the Forces of Freedom and Change, as shown in Figure 5, the overwhelming majority of those polled, 65%, believed that it was not at all successful, while about 24% thought it was successful, and 10% thought it was somewhat successful (Soliman, 2019).



**Figure 5: The power-sharing between the Transitional Military Council and the Forces of Freedom and Change**

Source: Devised by author from questionnaire data

The Constitutional Declaration abrogated Sudan's 2005 transitional constitution and state constitutions, but it excluded laws issued pursuant to it that will remain in effect unless repealed or amended. The document described the Republic of Sudan as:

*'an independent, sovereign, democratic, parliamentary, pluralistic, and decentralised state in which rights and duties are based on citizenship without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, culture, gender, colour, gender, social or economic status, political opinion or disability, or regional affiliation, or other reasons.'* (Xinhua, 2019)





According to the document, the transitional period will continue for a period of 39 months from the date of its signature, with elections to take place at its end. The document indicates that the priority in the first six months of the transitional period is to work hard to establish peace, implementing the programme of the transitional period in the regions experiencing conflicts in the country. The programme for the transitional period includes working to achieve legal reforms that abolish provisions restricting freedoms, and programmes to reform state agencies, address the economic crisis, settle the conditions of arbitrarily dismissed persons, guarantee the rights of women, enhance the role of youth, and build a balanced foreign policy. The document states that the transitional government bodies consist of the Sovereignty Council (that represents the head of state and the symbol

of its sovereignty and unity), a cabinet that represents the supreme executive authority of the state, and a legislative council that has the authority to legislate and oversee the executive body. The Sovereignty Council, which is the supreme commander of the armed forces, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and other regular forces, consists of 11 members, 6 civilians and 5 military personnel (Aljazeera, 2019).

A military figure shall assume the presidency of the Sovereignty Council for a period of 21 months, then a civilian person shall preside over it for the remaining 18 months of the transitional period. The Sovereignty Council has the power to appoint the Prime Minister and ministers, approve the appointment of provincial governors and governors, and appropriate members to be appointed to



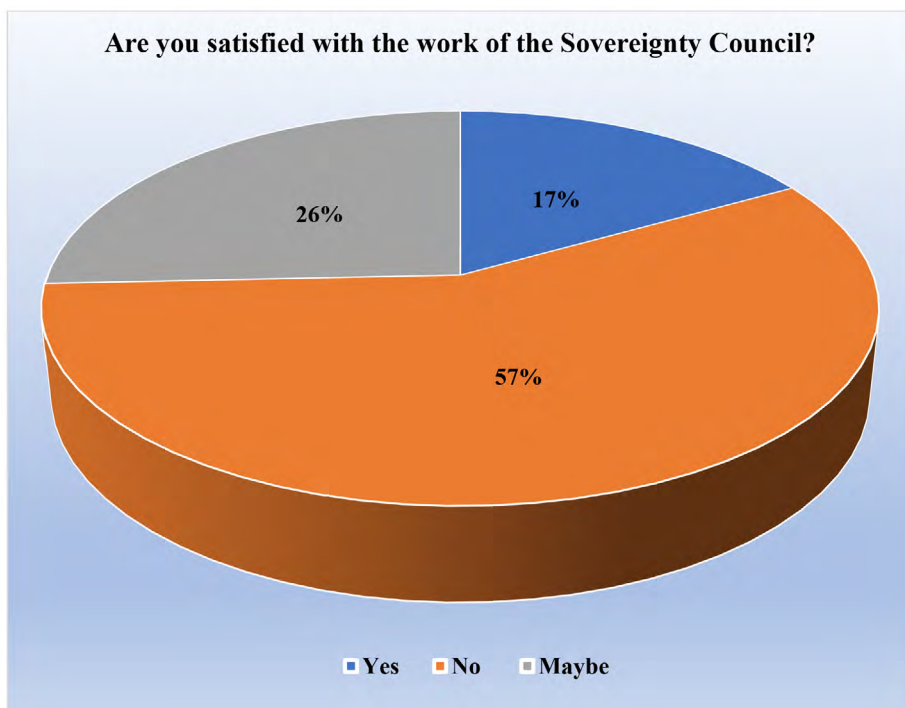
the Transitional Legislative Council, the head of the judiciary, supreme court judges, the Attorney General, and ambassadors, as well as having the power to declare war and a state of emergency. The document stipulates that the Council of Ministers shall consist of a Prime Minister and a number of ministers, not exceeding 20 independent national competencies appointed by the President of the Council from the list of candidates for the Forces of Freedom and Change, with the exception of the defence and interior ministers who are nominated by the military component of the Sovereignty Council (Wanyoike, 2019).

A year after the formation of the sovereign council, more than 58% of respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the work of this council, compared to only 17% who saw positive results in the work of the two councils; 26% of respondents did not have a clear opinion in this regard. Figure 6 shows

the extent of satisfaction with the work of the Sovereignty Council (Khan, 2020).

The document defines the terms of reference and powers of the Council of Ministers, the conditions for membership of the Council, and the reasons for its loss. It also defines the mechanisms for challenging the actions of the Sovereignty Council and the Council of Ministers and the procedural immunity of their members. The document indicates the formation of a transitional legislative council whose number does not exceed 300 members, 67% of whom chose the Forces for the Declaration of Freedom and Change, and the remaining percentage the other forces that did not sign the declaration. The exception was that of the NCP and the symbols of the previous regime, provided that it was formed within three months of signing document (LoC, 2019).





**Figure 6: The extent of satisfaction with the work of the Sovereignty Council**

Source: Devised by author from questionnaire data

The document specifies the competencies of the Legislative Council, its powers, its duration, the conditions for its membership, the reasons for its loss, and the oath of its president and members. The document devotes a chapter to the mechanisms of forming national judicial bodies, represented by the High Judicial Council, the Judicial Authority, the Constitutional Court, as well as the Public Prosecution and the Auditor General. Another chapter is devoted to the armed forces and security agencies, including police forces, the intelligence apparatus and military courts. The document defines the tasks of the intelligence service as:

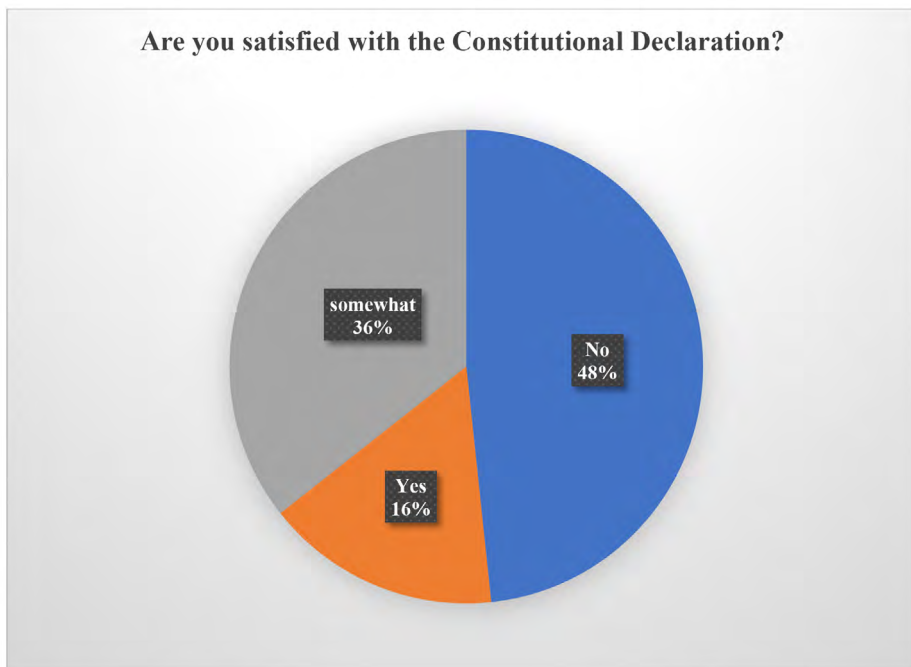
*'a statutory body concerned with national security. Its tasks are limited to gathering information, analysing it and presenting it to the competent authorities. The law defines its duties and tasks and is subject to the sovereign and legislative powers'* (BBC News, 2019b).



The document devotes other chapters to the independent commissions and to the details of declaring a state of emergency, as well as a document of fundamental rights and freedoms that stresses the protection of the personal freedoms of citizens and their rights to freedom and safety, respect for their human dignity, and not to arbitrarily arrest them or subject them to torture or cruel or degrading treatment. The document affirms the guarantee of freedom of belief and worship, freedom of expression and the dissemination of information, freedom of assembly and association, political participation, women's rights, and equality between men and

women (Radio Dabanga, 2019).

However, more than a year after the signing of the Constitutional Declaration, almost half of those surveyed expressed their dissatisfaction with the Constitutional Declaration signed between the military and the forces of the Declaration of Freedom and Change, as shown in Figure 7. Of the participants, 48% expressed their dissatisfaction; 36% indicated some satisfaction, while only 16% confirmed that they were satisfied with the Constitutional Declaration (Bauer, 2019).



**Figure 7: The dissatisfaction with the Constitutional Declaration**

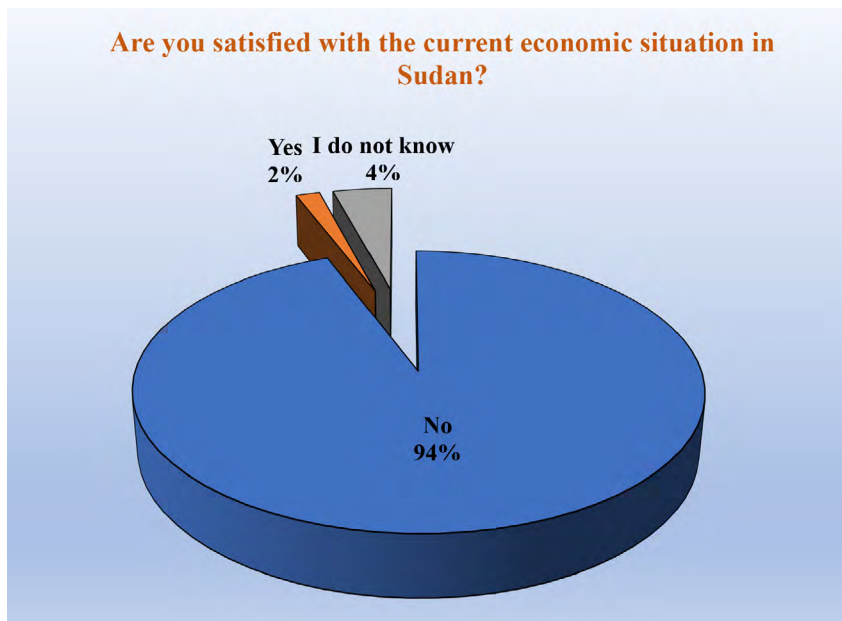
Source: DeVised by author from questionnaire data



## The Dissatisfaction with the Current Economic Situation in Sudan

The results of the questionnaire indicate that, despite the great frustration among the respondents with regard to the revolution and its results, especially in the economic and living standards, 94% of respondents indicated their dissatisfaction with the economic situation in the country after more than a year of the revolution (see Figure 8) (Fenton-Harvey, 2020). This is for several reasons. First, the transitional government headed by Prime Minister Abdullah Hamdok has been unable to lay down a clear programme of how things are going in the country, especially concerning the economic and life path of the people. It is known that the problem of the Sudanese economy is structural because it is largely an unproductive economy; consumption and imports are much

higher than production and exports, so there is always a structural imbalance in public money. Also, there is a continuous shortage of funds allocated to the basic tasks in the country, including salaries and allocations for infrastructure, health, education and support for basic goods (The National, 2020). Second, the American blockade imposed on Sudan for many years, and the failure to remove Sudan from the American list of states sponsoring terrorism, have greatly exhausted the Sudanese economy. This is despite the fact that the USA is not an important economic partner for Sudan, as are China, Turkey, or other Arab countries, and that the US has not stopped human support for Sudan even during the president's regime (Suliman, 1997).



**Figure 8: Dissatisfaction with the economic situation**

*Source: DeVised by author from questionnaire data*

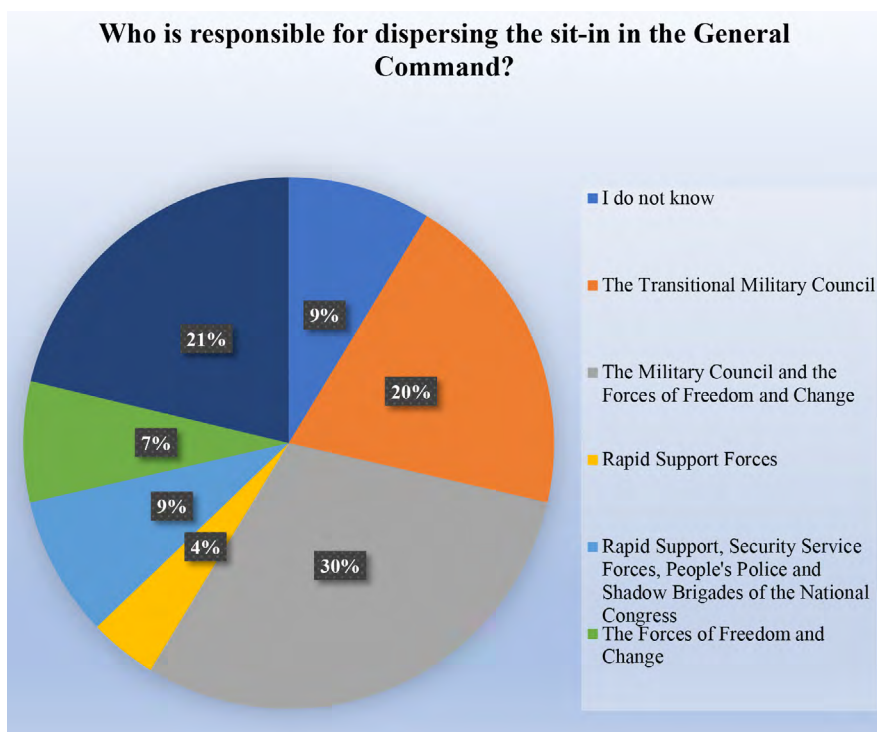


## Breaking up the sit-in of the Sudanese Armed Forces in Khartoum

On 3 June 2019, gunmen wearing military uniforms broke up a sit-in demanding the handover of power to civilians in front of the Sudanese army headquarters in Khartoum, after the overthrow of President Omar al-Bashir in April of the same year. According to the Sudanese Ministry of Health, the dispersal resulted in the deaths of 66 people, while the Forces of Freedom and Change that led the popular movement at that time estimated the number of victims at 128 dead (Hollingsworth et al., 2019). The Forces of Change held the

military council, which was in power at the time, responsible for breaking up the sit-in, while the Transitional Military Council said that it did not issue a dispersal order (Burke and Salih, 2019).

Most of those surveyed, however, hold the Military Council and the RSF, the Forces of the Declaration of Freedom and Change, as well as the Shadow Brigades of the former National Congress Party fully responsible, as shown in Figure 9.



**Figure 9: Responsibility for breaking up the sit-in in front of the General Command of the Sudanese army**

Source: Devised by author from questionnaire data

On 21 September 2019, Prime Minister Abdullah Hamdok made a decision to form an independent investigation committee to disperse the sit-in of the General Command in Khartoum, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitutional Declaration for the transitional period for the year 2019. This committee is concerned with the investigation of events and incidents in which violations of the rights and dignity of citizens occurred in the vicinity of the General Command of the Forces Armed and states (The New Arab, 2019).

The committee consisted of the lawyer Nabil Adeeb (Chairperson), Othman Muhammad Othman (rapporteur), and from the criminal prosecution, Suhaib Abdul-Latif (alternate rapporteur); the committee included in its membership Ismat Abdullah Muhammad Taha, Khaled Mahdi, together with Muhammad Zain al-Mahi and Ahmed al-Taher al-Nur. According to the decision, the committee was given the power to 'investigate with the aim of determining the persons responsible for breaking up the sit-in with incitement, participation, criminal agreement or any other violations'. The committee was concerned with determining and counting the number of victims of the dead, injured, wounded and missing, and the value of the financial losses and the parties and persons affected by those losses. Further, the committee had the right to summon any person, government or statutory official, or public employee for the purpose of testifying or investigating (Younis, 2019).

UN experts also stressed the need to achieve justice for the victims of the sit-in dispersal, and called on the Sudanese authorities to

implement their pledge to achieve justice in a manner that guarantees the rights of victims and holds those responsible for the sit-in's dispersal accountable, in accordance with legal procedures and international standards. The experts also stressed the need for major reforms in the Sudanese security services to achieve accountability and respect for human rights, and called on the Sudanese authorities to address past violations and establish an effective transitional justice commission (OHCHR, 2020).

None of these measures came to fruition, and the committee formed has not thus far issued its final report in this regard, and no accusation has been brought against any particular person or any military or civilian body. This prompted many of the victims' families to sit-in and demonstrate again, accusing the committee, the government, and the army of complicity and trying to evade accountability (Human Rights Watch, 2019).



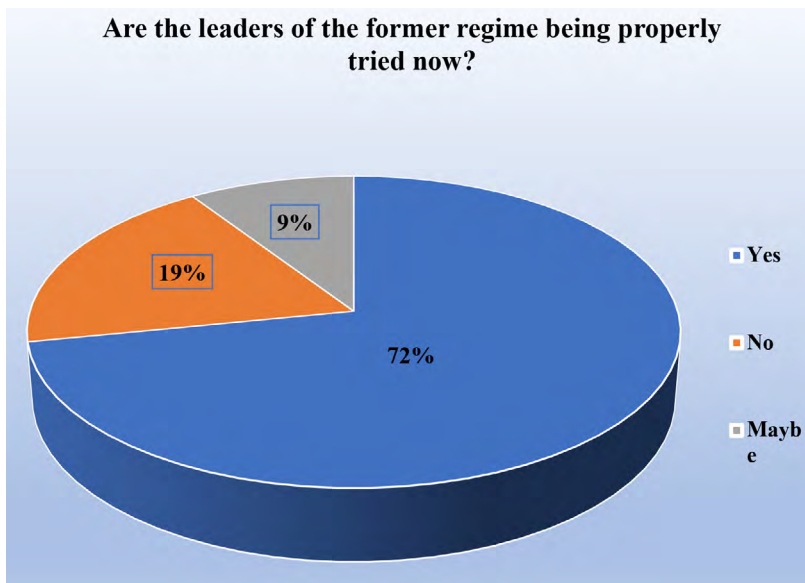


## The trial of the leaders of the former regime and the surrender of the ousted president to the International Criminal Court

The ousted Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and sixteen others appeared before a special court of three judges in Khartoum on charges of overthrowing the elected government in 1989; according to prosecutors, this was the first case of its kind and one that may carry a death sentence. The vast majority were convicted of other issues related to corruption and the exploitation of public funds. More than 70% of those polled, however, believed that the trial of the leaders of the former regime was carried out in an improper manner, while only 9% believed that it was conducted peacefully, as shown in Figure 10 (BBC News, 2020).

Deposed Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir,

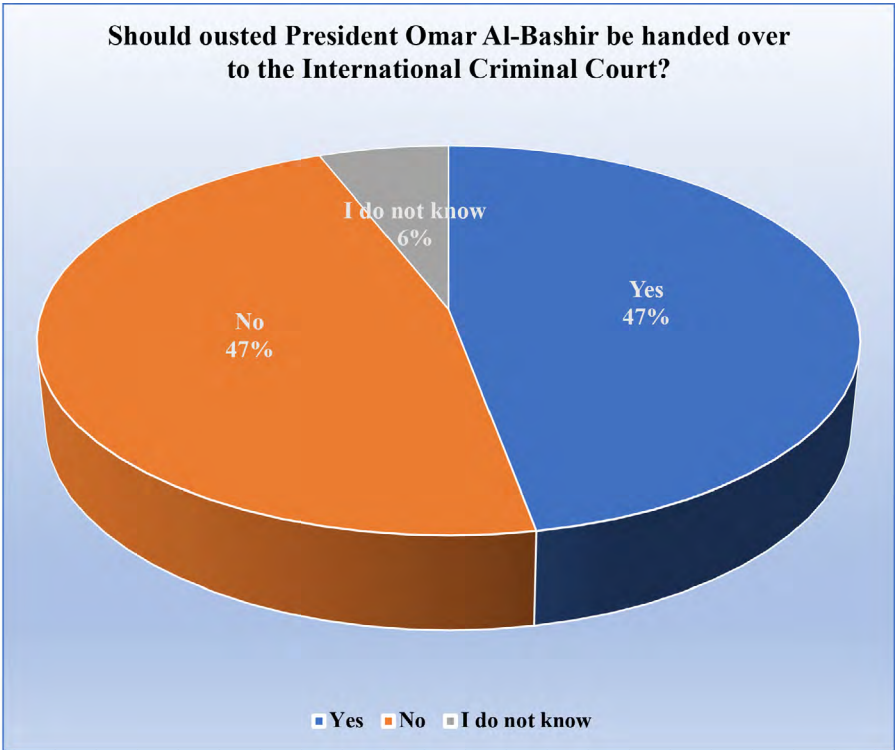
who ruled Sudan for more than three decades since 1989, is subject to international arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court, on charges of committing war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing during the conflict that has raged in the Darfur region since 2003. UN reports confirm that the Darfur conflict has resulted in the death of about 300,000 people and the displacement of 2.5 million people, while hundreds of thousands are still living in camps in dire conditions and extreme poverty 15 years after the outbreak of the conflict. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has been demanding the extradition of al-Bashir for years and renewed its demands to do so after his removal from power (ICC, 2019).



**Figure 10: The trial of the leaders of the former regime**

Source: Devised by author from questionnaire data

For its part, Amnesty International called on the new governing institutions during the transitional phase in Sudan to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court; this would allow al-Bashir to be transferred to this international court. With regard to handing over the ousted Sudanese president to the International Criminal Court, the Sudanese are completely divided (see Figure 11); half of them see the need to hand him over to the Criminal Court, especially the people of Darfur or those from there, and the other half believes that the state's sovereignty does not allow for the extradition of any Sudanese citizen to another country and that he must be tried for crimes inside Sudan. This shows the extent of the Sudanese division in this regard (Amnesty International, 2019).



**Figure 11: Handing over the ousted Sudanese president to the International Criminal Court**

*Source:* DeVised by author from questionnaire data



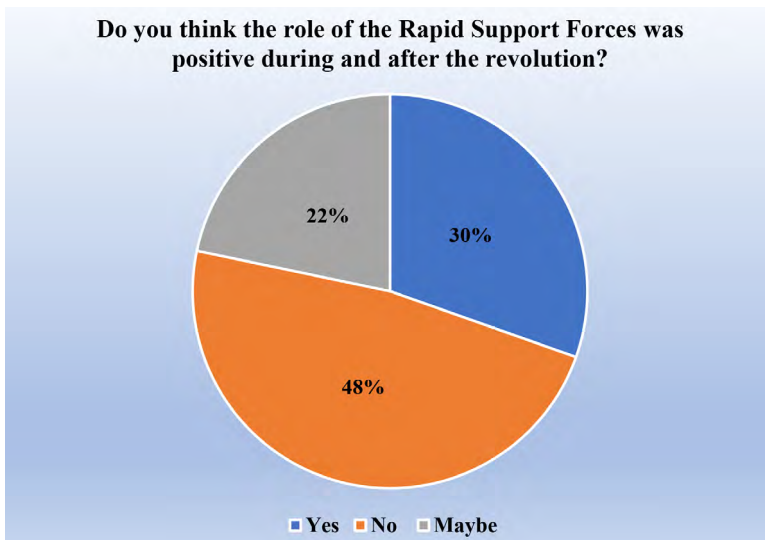


## Restructure the army and merge the rapid support forces and the armed movements

After the success of the Sudanese revolution, opposition voices were raised calling for the restructuring of the army, dismantling the ideological currents within it, and making it an army for all Sudanese, especially the RSF and the armed movements' forces. Many Sudanese experts believe that structuring the armed forces in the era of the transitional government is difficult and that the law does not allow them to do so. An elected legislature endorses military policy, and therefore it is "impossible" to structure the army under an unelected government. The Constitutional Declaration indicated that the RSF is a 'national guardian of sovereignty' that is subject to the Sovereign Council and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. However, this situation has sparked a wave of discontent, especially

among the Sudanese, and there is a state of anger on the street for the RSF, accusing them of killing protesters in the events of the General Command in June 2019 (Atalayar, 2020).

Therefore, Figure 12 indicates that the vast majority of those we surveyed, i.e., about 48%, stated that the role of the RSF during and after the revolution was not positive compared to 28% who believed that their role was positive. Approximately the same percentage was reflected for the opinion of respondents regarding the role of armed movements during and after the revolution (see Figure 13). This clearly shows the dissatisfaction of the vast majority of Sudanese with the approach and method of activity of the armed movements to reach their goals (Watson, 2020).



**Figure 12: The role of the RSF during and after the revolution**

*Source: Devised by author from questionnaire data*

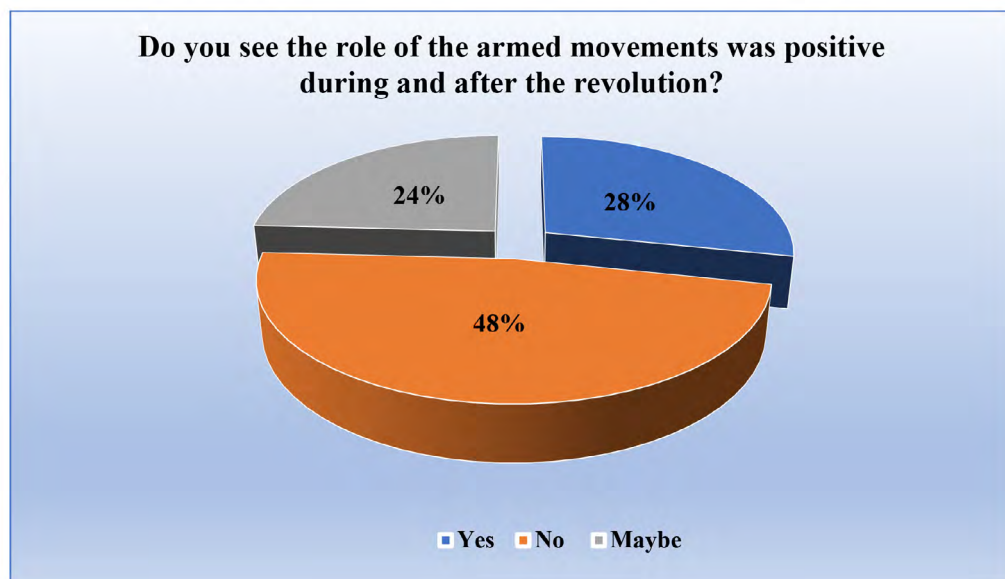
The support forces are now led by Lieutenant General Muhammad Hamdan Dagalo, known as “Hemedti”, the vice president of the Sovereign Council that resulted from the political agreement between the Sudanese after the ousting of former President Omar al-Bashir. In many circles, they promote the idea that the RSF is controlling all aspects of life in Sudan; this has been described as an endless financial tap without anyone knowing exactly where it came from (Michaelson, 2020).

The armed struggle movements in the Darfur track signed a file of political issues with the Sudanese Transitional Government in the capital of South Sudan, Juba, with the mediation of the State of South Sudan, Chadian and Emirati, and a representative of the Egyptian government. The political issues for the Darfur track include seven protocols. These are:

- the issue of land and hawakeer (lands traditionally used by a particular clan or tribal group);
- transitional justice;
- compensation and reparation;
- the protocol for developing the nomads and herders sector;
- the division of wealth;
- the protocol of power-sharing; and
- the displaced and refugees.

However, there is one further protocol, that of the security arrangements file, out of the seven protocols that were submitted by the armed struggle movements in the Darfur. It is noteworthy that the Darfur track struggle movements consist of five organisations. These are:

- the Sudanese Alliance (it includes 15 organisations);
- the Sudan Liberation Army Movement led by Minni Arko Minawi;
- the Justice and Equality Movement;
- the Sudan Liberation Movement—Transitional Council; and
- the Sudan Liberation Forces Group (Radio Dabanga, 2020).



**Figure 13: The role of armed movements during and after the revolution**

Source: Devised by author from questionnaire data

## The role of the Sudanese Diaspora

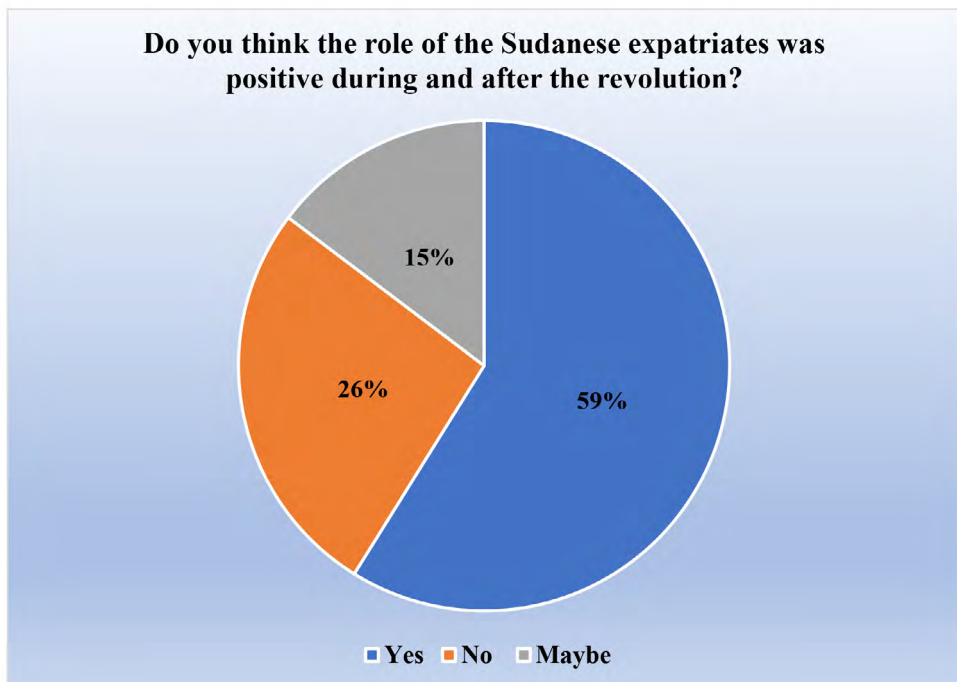
Sudanese expatriates formed strong support for demonstrators against the regime of ousted President Omar al-Bashir throughout the protests that took place on 19 December 2018. Sudanese communities abroad organised demonstrations in many cities and capitals of the world in front of the headquarters of Sudanese diplomatic missions in support of the protests. The largest demonstrations of Sudanese expatriates began in London,

Washington, Brussels and Paris; they also started petitions calling for the support of their families in Sudan to the representatives of those countries (see Figure 14). Expatriate groups have formed continuous support for the protests by publishing posters, videos, and news on social media. As for financial support, the Sudanese expatriates gathered funds in most community places to financially support the protests, to help the wounded in hospitals,

and to send many young people who were seriously injured to receive treatment abroad (Etienne and Franck, 2019).

Sudanese migrants and expatriates around the world played an important role in supporting the December revolution that toppled the regime of Omar al-Bashir, the dictator who had ruled Sudan for more than

30 years. Immigrants and expatriates have played a large role and have had an impact on the politics of their homeland since the 1989 coup that brought about the regime of the NCP and President Omar al-Bashir. The 1989 coup had direct support from the Muslim Brotherhood movement that was led by its late leader Sheikh Hassan al-Turabi (Fadlalla, 2020).



**Figure 14: The role of the Sudanese expatriates during and after the revolution**

*Source:* Devised by author from questionnaire data



## The impact of the Sudanese revolution on the strategic balance in the horn of Africa and the position of the great powers towards it

The outbreak of the revolution in Sudan that toppled the defunct Salvation Government regime may cast a shadow over the strategic balance in the Horn of Africa. This is especially so since one of the most important demands of the revolution and the revolutionaries was to cancel or reconsider the agreements concluded with foreign countries or parties, in particular those controversial agreements that may affect state sovereignty. There was a lot of talk among the revolutionaries, especially after the outbreak of the revolution, about the need to cancel the agreement signed with the Turkish side to lease the historic Suakin port; this raised the possibility of stopping Turkish aspirations in this regard (Adam, 2019).

In addition, the ongoing arrests of politicians in Sudan associated with the Muslim Brotherhood diminished the fear that Turkey would harm its economic interests in Sudan. Also, the withdrawal of support provided by the defunct Sudanese regime to the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya would inevitably satisfy the Egyptian government, who sought to weaken the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Libya by supporting retired General Khalifa Haftar. The announcement by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to stand by the Sudanese people and their support for the Transitional Military Council in Sudan, and to provide a package of financial and in-kind assistance to Sudan in the first steps after the overthrow of the

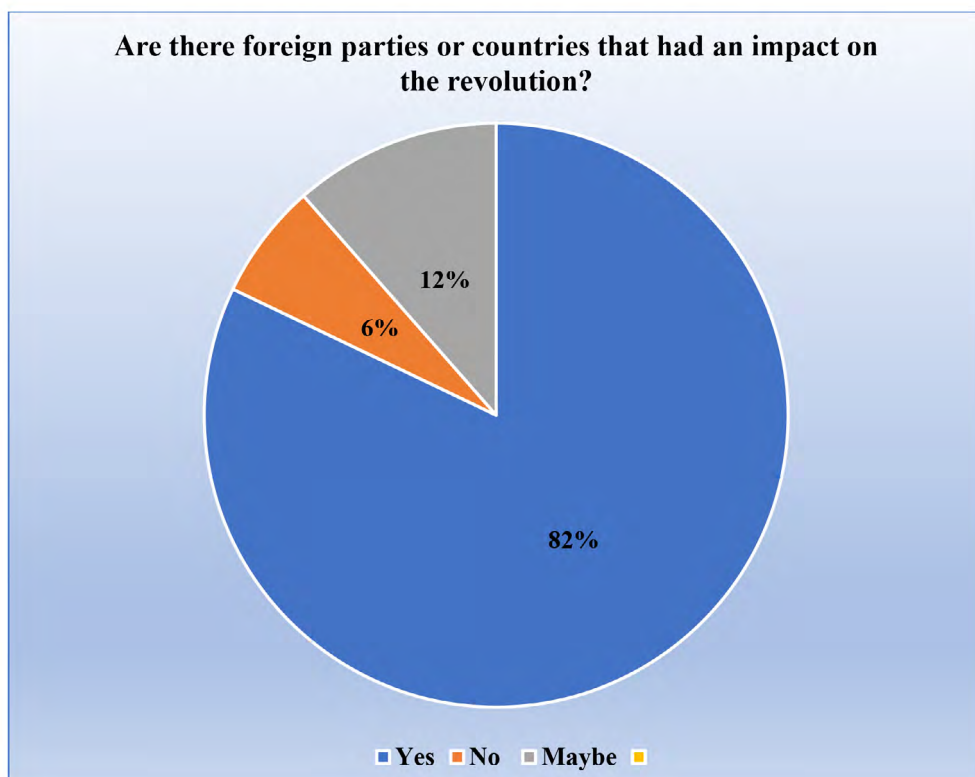
al-Bashir regime, predicted a new strategic relationship between these two countries and Sudan, especially after the Council confirmed that Al-Askari expressed his desire to keep the Sudanese forces operating in Yemen (Karamalla-Gaiballa, 2019).

Although Western countries have not shown much interest in what is happening in Sudan, with the exception of the resolution issued by the United Nations Security Council and a statement issued by the European Union stating that power should be handed over to a civilian government, the success and peacefulness of this revolution may cast a shadow over Sudan's relationship with the big powers and superpowers such as the United States, Russia, and China. The revolution may oblige the United States to unconditionally support the revolutionaries' demands and the necessity of handing over power to a civil government, as well as removing Sudan from the list of states sponsoring terrorism. This would allow Sudan to implement the necessary economic reforms that would enable it to eliminate foreign debts, or at least a large part of them.

Russia would be the biggest loser from the success of this revolution because the new authorities in Sudan would definitely give up the hospitality of Russian advisors and military contractors who contributed to the suppression of the recent protests.



China, who claimed neutrality and did not interfere directly or indirectly in the matter of the revolution, would preserve what appears to be all the projects that it acquired during the rule of the former regime. This is because China is one of Sudan's largest creditors and has strong economic and trade relationships that are difficult to abandon at this stage. Also, rescheduling Sudanese debts requires continuous cooperation with China (Schipani, 2020). Of those polled for this paper, 82% said that there are foreign countries that affected the Sudanese revolution, compared to 6% who thought otherwise, as shown in Figure 15.



**Figure 15: The foreign countries that affected the Sudanese revolution**

*Source:* Devised by author from questionnaire data



## Conclusions

It is known that building a full-fledged democratic system in countries that have been languishing under dictatorial military regimes since their independence, such as Sudan, is not an easy matter. Uprooting this desired democracy from the teeth of deep-rooted totalitarian regimes is a very expensive undertaking, even in European countries enabling democracy at a price. There are, furthermore, many countries whose democratic path has not yet been completed because democracy simply does not mean only free and fair elections; there are other important factors that must be completed, such as the independence of the judiciary system or freedom from the influence of religious circles in political decision-making, among others. States therefore move to democratic regimes through multiple bridges and pitfalls. In Sudan, this is the fourth attempt to build a democratic system. During the last three decades, the salvation regime tried to destroy the Sudanese national identity and “ideology” that rules in the country within a specific political and religious framework; however, it completely failed in this. There was no acceptance at all of this system on the part of the general Sudanese people, except for those few who benefited from its existence, and there was very strong opposition to this system at all levels over the past 30 years. Therefore, it is difficult to speak now about the failure or success of the Sudanese revolution at this early stage, but the most important thing is that we are moving forward despite the difficulties.

The fear of the countries neighbouring Sudan, or of those located in its regional surroundings, concerning the results of what will happen in Sudan must be dealt with as a very natural and understandable matter. We should not be surprised, even a little, at the attempts of some countries to thwart the democratic path in Sudan because these countries are simply worried that the establishment of a democratic state with eroded pillars in Sudan may cast its shadow directly on the styles of government in those countries: this is understandable. Therefore, the challenges and obstacles that stand in the way of building a democratic system in Sudan are not necessarily the result of political differences between the Sudanese political forces but are also the geopolitical influences and influences of neighbouring countries on the shape and nature of building the new Sudanese state.





Since the revolution that toppled the rescue system lasted continuously for about three decades, it had profound political, social, and economic effects on the geopolitical environment, especially since many countries in the region did not expect to remove this inherent system with that much ease. Rather, many Middle Eastern political circles gambled that the result of this Sudanese revolution would be other than it was. Many Arab revolutions have caused the collapse of a number of countries and the rupture of others, and a number of those countries are still fighting in brutal civil and tribal wars. Also, those who wagered on the failure of the Sudanese revolution were completely contradicted by the appreciation that the Sudanese revolutionaries had learned a great

deal from the mistakes of the revolutions that preceded them in the last decade. They also forgot that there is a discrepancy between the nature of the Sudanese people and other peoples regarding revolutionary traditions and how to manage them, simply because the Sudanese people, as is known, fought two popular revolutions before, in 1964 and in 1985. Additionally, they have a tradition of parliamentary democratic work, so the situation in Sudan is completely different from the situation in Syria, Libya, or even Egypt. We have political parties, and we have parliamentary traditions. We have held free elections in the past, and therefore there will be no bloody battles. If necessary, the Sudanese people will negotiate for years until they reach their goal: this is the freedom they seek.

Regarding the disagreement that has now arisen between the Transitional Military Council and the forces of the Declaration of Freedom and Change, this is considered normal. It was expected that there would be differences in views and interests between the political forces themselves because usually in negotiations between groups, we assume that there will be a conflict of interest between the groups that enter into negotiations. This disagreement has not reached the stage of estrangement. In my estimation, there is great hope that the parties will eventually reach an agreement, but the demand of some of the forces of the Declaration of Freedom and Change for an integrated civil system and a Sovereignty Council headed by a civilian majority, together with a transitional period of



four years, is both frightening and exciting. It calls into question the intentions of this group and its desire to rule for a period of four years without the mandate of the people. If these political forces really wanted a democratic government and an integrated civil system, then it would be more appropriate for them to demand a very short transitional period (one year) in order to provide the opportunity for wider participation on the part of other political forces that are outside the framework of negotiation and for the establishment of an integrated democratic civil system. In addition, no political forces or union have the right to claim that they brought down the salvation system on their own because the overthrow of the regime took place in a cumulative manner and lasted for nearly 30 years. All Sudanese people had their share of injustice and tyranny, and everyone contributed over these years to

doubling this system until it reached this state. Therefore, no one party can claim that it has the ultimate responsibility in this revolution. There is an absolute necessity for an adequate military presence and representation at the current stage in the transitional authority due to the medical security conditions in Sudan, especially in the peripheries. There is also a need to help to dismantle the deep state and its security apparatus; this may be dormant now but their teeth may emerge after a while.

It is also important to preserve the peacefulness of this revolution, whatever the results of these negotiations, and to work to reach an acceptable consensus and not to deal with the principle of winner and loser because intransigence may lead to chaos and insecurity, which will make Sudan a focus of conflict. Should that happen, everyone will lose.



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