



# FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT IN THE FACE OF THE CRISIS OF TRANSITIONAL ADMINISTRATION IN SUDAN\*

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**he protests that started in December 2018 in Sudan against the then-President Omar al-Bashir administration over economic problems and allegations of corruption during his more than 30-year rule lasted for nearly six months, and in April 2019,

the Sudanese Army intervened in al-Bashir's rule. The Military Transitional Council, established after the coup, signed an agreement with the groups that organized the protests in August 2019 and established the Sovereignty Council, consisting of six civilians and five soldiers. The names agreed upon by this council were appointed as Ministers. How-

\* We are grateful to Yunus Badem efforts, who contributed to the translation of the Framework Agreement text.

ever, none of the issues anticipated for the following period, such as the economic recovery, the establishment of the legislature, or the organization of democratic elections, materialized. Conflicts between civilians and the military deepened during this period, and in October 2021, the military took over the government by force, placing Abdalla Hamdok, the civilian-appointed prime minister, under house arrest. In the following period, the new Sovereignty Council, established under the coordination of the army, ensured that Hamdok was reinstated as the prime minister.

Following the resignation of Abdalla Hamdok as the transitional prime minister, new disagreements emerged both among civilian groups and between civilian groups and the military, deepening the political crisis in Sudan. Thereupon, the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) initiated facilitation talks to ensure the fragile democratic transition in the country. During the aforementioned process, at a press conference in Khartoum, UNITAMS Special Representative Volker Perthes stated that the first meetings would include individual consultations between different actors, and the second meetings would be direct or indirect negotiation rounds. Perthes announced that in addition to stakeholders such as the military, rebel groups, political parties, and protest movements in Sudan, civil society and women's groups will be invited to participate in the process. In this context, the Sudanese Professionals Associations (SPA), an activist alliance in anti-Omar al-Bashir rallies, firmly rejected the proposal of this mediation ini-

tiative carried out by UNITAMS to normalize relations with the authority of the new sovereignty council in order to resolve the country's political crisis, and the lack of explanation after the launch of the initiatives was noteworthy. In this sense, UNITAMS representative Volker Perthes was attending the briefings at the UN Security Council at regular intervals<sup>1</sup>.

**On anniversary of 2021 military intervention, stability remains elusive in Sudan**

A year after the Sudanese military took over the government after dissolving a partnership with civilian officials and declaring a state of emergency on Oct. 25, 2021, it has still not been able to fulfil its promises, while political groups are yet to achieve unity

**2021**

- OCT. 25**  
The military detains then-Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and declares a state of emergency
- NOV. 11**  
Army Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan reinstates the Sovereign Council, which he had earlier dissolved
- NOV. 21**  
The army appoints Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo "Hemedti" to form technocrat government

**2022**

- JAN. 2**  
Hamdok resigns due to the political crisis remaining unresolved
- JAN. 20**  
Burhan issues a decree on the appointment of 15 ministers
- MAY 30**  
The state of emergency is lifted
- JUNE 10**  
The Forces of Freedom and Change, Sudan's former coalition government, holds its first talks with the soldiers
- JULY 4**  
Burhan announces that the Sovereign Council will be dissolved once a transitional civilian government is formed
- OCT. 17**  
The Forces of Freedom and Change expresses its vision on the fundamental steps and principles to resolve the political crisis in the country

**IMPORTANT ACTORS ON POLITICAL STAGE**

- THOSE WHO CALL THE OCT. 25 INTERVENTION A 'COUP'**
  - Former coalition government Forces of Freedom and Change-Central Council  
Represents political powers opposing military rule
  - Resistance committees  
Leads protests
  - Sudanese Communist Party
  - Sudanese Professional Association
  - Alliance of Forces for Radical Change  
Includes political and professional organizations
- GROUPS CLOSE TO THE ARMY**
  - Forces of Freedom and Change-National Consensus Forces  
Consists mostly of armed groups
  - Broad Islamic Current
  - Forces of National Movement

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Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC), Sudan's leading civilian opposition coali-

<sup>1</sup> "UNITAMS SRSG Mr. Volker Perthes Remarks to the Security Council 24 May 2022," *UNITAMS*, 24 May 2022.

tion, had issued a statement emphasizing its support for any international efforts that contribute to the achievement of the Sudanese people's goals of opposing the coup and restoring a civilian and democratic state<sup>2</sup>. In this context, the negotiations, which started with the coordination of UNITAMS, continued with the roundtable meetings of the Emergency Lawyers, the Doctors and the Journalists Association<sup>3</sup>.

In addition, protests by supporters of the troops against the interference of UNITAMS and other foreign actors in Sudan's internal politics continued intermittently. In this regard, although it is stated that the African Union has entered a new process with the contribution of the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in East Africa (IGAD), and Eritrea to the UNITAMS negotiations, which caused a new conflict between soldiers and civilians in Sudan, the protesting population continued their demonstrations, demanding complete civilian rule.

After all these developments in a period of about a year, the army administration reconciled with some groups among the

civilians with the "Framework Agreement". This reconciliation is an important step towards resolving the political crisis in the country, but the non-participation of some groups is one of the main problems that makes the agreement fragile. From this point of view, this study analyzes the steps taken in the political and security fields envisioned to resolve the political crisis in Sudan, as well as the internal and external actors who participated in the Framework Agreement.

## INTERNAL AND FOREIGN ACTORS DIMENSIONS OF THE FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

In Khartoum, in a ceremony attended by international and regional representatives, a "Framework Agreement" was signed to pave the way for the transition to a civilian government and democratic elections. International and regional actors such as the UN, the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in East Africa (IGAD), the United States, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, the United Arab Emirates, the United Nations,

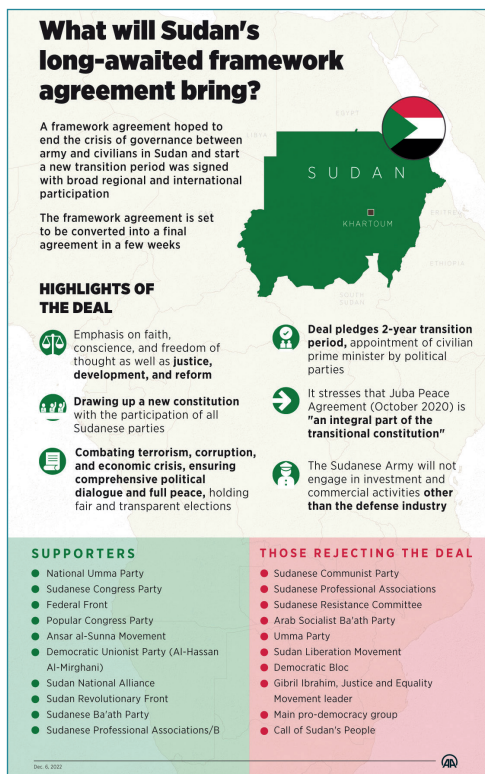
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<sup>2</sup> Susan Stigant, "In Sudan, a Narrow Opportunity to Get the Democratic Transition Back on Track", *USIP*, 7 July 2022.

<sup>3</sup> "Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan", *United Nations Security Council*, 2 March 2022.

the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in East Africa (IGAD), the United States, Turkiye, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates all participated in the signing of the framework agreement with the participation of the President of the Sovereignty Council and Army Commander General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his deputy Mohamed Hamdan Dagolo, as well as some political and religious groups, parties, trade unions, and professional associations. It would be wrong to say that this new agreement was accepted by almost everyone in the country. As a matter of fact, there are political parties and groups that have stated that they will continue their protests and reject the agreement until the country is fully under civilian rule.

The infographic lists the groups that supported and rejected the agreement. The Arab Socialist Baath Party, which was among the rejecters in this infographic prepared on December 6, 2020, announced that it left the alliance on December 14. According to the statement made by the Arab Socialist Baath Party regarding leaving the alliance, the reason for leaving the ranks of the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) was that the majority of the coalition parties signed the Framework Agreement.<sup>4</sup> When the details of the Baath Party's statement are analyzed, it is understood that the Framework Agreement's emphasis on the determination to eliminate the remnants of the al-Bashir administration, end the October 25 intervention, and build a sustainable democratic system was effective. The Baath Party was also a member of the newly formed Forces for Freedom and Change-Democratic Block (FFC-DB), which included, among others, the National Accord Forces (NAF) and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), which rejected the agreement and made statements indicating that the FFC no longer provided an appropriate framework for organizing. Indeed, a faction of the FFC, the NAF, also known as the FFC-National Accord, is an alliance of former rebel movements, including the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), led by Jibril Ibrahim, now Sudan's Minister of Finance. In this context, JEM leader and Minister of Finance Jibril Ibrahim is among those who rejected the agreement.<sup>5</sup> As a result, there is a disagreement within the Forces for Freedom and Change in Sudanese domestic politics over reaching a political agreement with the military. The current negotia-



<sup>4</sup> "Sudan's Socialist Ba'ath Party Leaves FFC Alliance Over Framework Agreement", *Dabanga Sudan*, 15 December 2022.

<sup>5</sup> "'Democratic Bloc' Rejects Political Settlement Ending Sudan's Crisis", *Sudan Tribune*, 2 December 2022.



UNITAMS Representative Volker Perthes at the Signing Ceremony of the Framework Agreement

tions, which led to the signing of the Framework Agreement and are likely aiming to reach a final agreement by the end of this month, are predominantly led by groups within the FFC-CC. Therefore, the polarization of different political views in Sudanese civil politics draws attention.

## POLITICAL DIMENSION

When the prominent articles of the Framework Agreement are analyzed, the articles on both domestic and foreign policy draw attention. The text of the agreement emphasizes issues such as freedom of belief, conscience, freedom of thought, and justice. The legal framework envisages a legal structure that embraces secular governance, protects the right to peaceful demon-

strations and protests, and promotes judicial independence and reform. In addition to demanding the drafting of a constitution with the participation of all Sudanese parties, the agreement calls for the fight against terrorism, corruption, and the economic crisis, comprehensive dialogue, and the organization of fair and transparent elections for the full establishment of peace. In addition to these, the importance of good relations with Sudan's neighbors and the adoption of a peaceful, balanced, and strong state policy are also stressed. An important dimension of the transition period will be the legal process. The constitution-making process will be initiated by organizing dialogue meetings with internal political parties under

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In the new transition period, one of the prominent items in the agreement was the establishment of a completely civilian authority without the military, reforming the defense, unifying regular troops, integrating the militia forces in the country into the army, and establishing a single and unified national army.



Civil actors that signed the Framework Agreement

the supervision of the Constitution-making Commission, which will be established with the participation of all regions of Sudan. In this context, this process, which will continue until the elections in order to prepare the requirements of the constitution until the end of the transition period, will be presented to the public in a transparent manner. In the new transition period, one of the prominent items in the agreement was the establishment of a completely civilian authority without the military, reforming the defense, unifying regular troops, integrating the militia forces in the country into the army, and establishing a single and unified national army. In addition to these, another prominent article emphasized that the Juba Peace Agreement signed in October 2020 "is an integral part of the transitional constitution". It was also stated that the agreement con-

tains articles on the limits of the army. According to this article, the army will not be able to engage in investment and commercial activities other than those in the defense industry. In this context, a two-year transition period will begin with the determination of a civilian prime minister to be elected by political parties.

In the case where the transition period is reconsolidated in Sudan, it is foreseen that there will be five basic structures in the political structure. These are: Transitional Legislative Assembly, Transitional Sovereignty Council, Transitional Council of Ministers, Security and Defense Council, Judicial Councils and Independent Commissions. The Transitional Legislative Assembly will be composed of civilian actors who signed the agreement, and 40 percent of the assembly will be composed of women, youth, resistance committees, and



people with disabilities. In addition, the population ratios of the states will be taken into account in determining the number of seats in the parliament. The process of determining the Sovereignty Council and the prime minister will be done by the civil actors who signed the agreement. In this context, the appointed prime minister will both form the council of ministers and appoint provincial governors. However, the prime minister will be in consultation with the signatories of the agreement. The Security and Defense Council, on the other hand, will be composed of the relevant members of the ministries, the managers of the legal institutions, and six of the armed struggle forces that signed the Juba Agreement for peace in Sudan, under the chairmanship of the prime minister, provided that their duties and powers are determined in accordance with the transition-

al constitution. In the case of the Judicial Councils and independent expert commissions, members will be appointed by the parties who signed the Framework Agreement to be submitted to the prime minister. On the other hand, the Transitional Judicial Council will have 11 members and consist of the President of the Judiciary and his deputies, the Attorney General and his deputies, and the President and members of the Constitutional Court. All of these positions will be nominated by the actors who signed the political declaration and appointed by the prime minister.

In conclusion, the political dimension of the Framework Agreement in the context of resolving the transitional crisis in Sudan faces four main challenges of strategic importance. These are the transitional justice system, the reform process in the security organs,

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There are two main constraints to the healthy functioning of the agreement. The first one is the existence of groups opposed to the agreement, and the second is that these groups have the power to dominate street protests.

the changes in the Juba Peace Agreement, and the resolution of the governance problem in Eastern Sudan. In this context, it is noteworthy that the Eastern Sudan Coordination Committee used the expression “a dubious and imported solution based on a secular constitution” in its statement to the press regarding the Framework Agreement.

## SECURITY DIMENSION

Security concerns have been one of Sudan's major issues since the death of al-Bashir. The Southern Crisis, which was resolved, albeit limited to division, in the past, and the Darfur Crisis, whose effects continue today, are among the most fundamental problems of Sudan. During the transitional administration period established in the post-Al-Bashir period, the problems deepened on a social basis and became complicated by the political groups in the capital Khartoum and their disputes with the military authority, especially the East Sudan crisis. The Framework Agreement focuses on resolving all these security concerns and sets out the steps to be taken over the next 24 months, starting with the appointment of a prime minister. In this context, it is planned to establish security organs in Sudan within a structure that will

be independent of the political structure.

The Framework Agreement aims to define the boundaries of the army's duties and authority in the fields of politics and economy. Politically, it is aimed at preventing the Sudanese army from taking part in the governance of the country both during the transition period and in the following years. In terms of economy, it is stated that the army should focus only on areas related to military production and military munitions and be prohibited from engaging in investment and trade activities that fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Finance. The duties and responsibilities of the intelligence agency are limited to collecting, analyzing, and presenting information to the relevant institutions; and it is not authorized to arrest, detain, or maintain facilities for this purpose. Within this scope, the security organs in Sudan are structured within four main regular organizations. These are: Armed Forces, Rapid Support Forces, Police and General Intelligence Organization.

According to the Framework Agreement signed by the political actors within the country, the Sudanese Armed Forces are defined as a supra-political institution that

fulfills the duty of protecting the territorial integrity, sovereignty, security, and borders of the country. In this context, the Sudanese president will be the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. All economic enterprises belonging to the Sudanese Armed Forces and intelligence shall be subject to the authority of the National Audit Office under the supervision and control of the Sudanese Ministry of Finance. Besides, it was emphasized that the Rapid Support Forces would be integrated into the armed forces as well as the armed groups within the scope of the Juba Peace Agreement. Hence, the establishment of a single professional army in Sudan is guaranteed in the upcoming period. A final issue that stands out in the agreement is the revision of the curriculum in the military schools according to the military doctrinal traditions of justice, equal citizenship, and democratic principles. The structure of the Rapid Support Forces, on the other hand, was designed similarly to the Sudanese Armed Forces, in which it was envisaged that the head of state would assume the role of commander-in-chief of the unit and be integrated into the armed forces according to the agreed schedule.

According to the Framework Agreement, there are also updates to the structures of the Police and the General Intelligence Organization. The police organization, which is subject to the policies and decisions of the Council of Ministers, has been technically and administratively legally subordinated to the Ministry of Interior. On the other end, the police force is prohibited from engaging in any investment or commercial activities. When the General Intelligence Organization is examined, it is emphasized that it will work under the prime minister and will not be involved in trade or investment in any way. An-

other important point is that the transitional government will not be able to be staffed within the organization.

## CONCLUSION

In Sudan, the Framework Agreement focuses on five key issues. The first concerns the transitional justice system, which guarantees the delivery of justice to those who have suffered human rights violations in society since 1989. The second relates to security reform. In this context, the Framework Agreement emphasizes that democracy cannot be achieved without the establishment of a professional and national army. The third concerns the completion of the Juba Peace Agreement. The fourth is that the elements remaining from the administration of Omar al-Bashir, who were removed from the administration, should be eliminated in a way that respects fundamental rights. The last one is related to the resolution of the Eastern Sudan conflict, which requires appropriate adjustments to the Framework Agreement to ensure the participation of all stakeholders in the region in the political process and to be committed to the resolution of the Eastern Sudan conflict. In conclusion, the Framework Agreement signed in Sudan is promising for the future of the country. On the other hand, the fact that global and regional actors support this agreement is an important message in terms of international legitimacy.

However, there are two main constraints to the healthy functioning of the agreement. The first one is the existence of groups opposed to the agreement, and the second is that these groups have the power to dominate street protests. As a matter of fact, it is indicated that protests have taken place in the capital Khartoum, since the day the agreement was signed.

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Kaan Devecioğlu, born in Ankara in 1991, is a 2014 graduate of Turgut Ozal University, Ankara with a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and International Relations. He earned his Master's degree in Political Science and International Relations from Ankara Yildirim Beyazit University with the thesis: "The Political Economy of Turkey and African Relations: The Case of Sudan". He won an Erasmus scholarship in 2016 and took courses in political economy, peace-conflict studies and political Islam in the Middle East at the Faculty of Economics, Law and Social Sciences at the University of Erfurt, Germany.

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