**Sudan, civil supremacy and secularism**

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Sudan, with a 97 percent Muslim population, ravaged by the dictatorship, oppression and megalomaniac phantasies of its generals for over fifty years, recently celebrated the second anniversary of its success to secure civil supremacy and secularism. The decision followed an agreement between the Sovereign Transitional Council (STC) and the Sudan Peoples ‘Liberation Army that fought troops fielded by the dictator generals in the Darfur border state and spurned any deal that would not ensure a secular system separating religion from the state. The STC was created by a compromise between the ruling commanders and the leaders of the protestors and activists whose struggle in April 2019 forced the generals to end their dictatorship, dismiss and detain their chief, General al Bashir who had usurped power in 1989 and sworn to make Sudan a “vanguard of the Muslim world”.

He enforced a hardcore version of Islam like imprisoning the women wearing objectionable clothes, banning alcohol, apostasy and inflicting punishments like public flogging for various violations. Even terrorist outfits like Al-Qaeda and Carlos d Jackal were harboured, inviting international sanctions in 1993 for sponsoring terrorism. But the crippling economic conditions, repressive codes and coercion also aggravated the religious divide, stirred violent protests against the Army occupation and pushed the predominantly Christian southern parts to become an independent state.

[Artificial intelligence brings new vision to healthcare](https://nation.com.pk/18-Mar-2021/artificial-intelligence-brings-new-vision-to-healthcare)

Sinking supplies and skyrocketing prices of bread in December 2018, at last, broke all the barriers prompting wild protests not merely by the masses and labour leaders but also by politicians and professional cadres like the lawyers, doctors, engineers and professors emerging as the Sudan Professional Association. An umbrella organisation, the Forces for Change and Freedom, was formed. The movement was mostly led by the youth and about 70 percent of the protesters were females out to end the sexist stipulations set under the repressive laws. The protests soon spread to the capital.

General Ibn Auf, a former defence minister of Bashir took over as an interim head of the Transition Council but the protesters were over cautious of the usual device of one dictator replacing the other and determined to preempt this saga. They kept mounting their protests ousting not only Auf but also his two successors, Fattah and Burhan within three days. The Council’s covert tactics to linger, retain the reigns and repress the popular passions led to a massacre on June 3, that consumed 128 lives. This Council at last surrendered to handover the executive authority to a Sovereignty Council, comprising six civilian and five army members. It was entrusted to make requisite arrangements for election and ensure power transfer in a stipulated span of three years.

[UN Security Council condemns escalation in Yemen](https://nation.com.pk/18-Mar-2021/un-security-council-condemns-escalation-in-yemen)

A further civilian semblance to this setup was imparted by appointing a cabinet containing mostly the civilian incumbents representing various cadres of the freedom movement. Abdallah Hamdok, known for his experience as an economist and administrator in many national and foreign organisations, was appointed the Prime Minister. Nemat, an eminent female jurist, was appointed the Chief Justice. General Bashir has been already convicted for corruption and imprisoned for two years. His political party and moral police, have been disbanded and he is also likely to be extradited to the International Criminal Court of Justice, to be tried for genocide and crimes against humanity.

The government has pledged to afford equal rights to all its citizens, scrapped the apostasy law as it was deemed to be detrimental to the security and safety of the society. Public flogging as a punishment for various acts, the coercive codes against females including the mutilation of their parts and ban on alcohol were abolished. There has also been some economic relief as the sanctions imposed by the USA, on the generals’ junta for terrorism, were lifted. A rare euphoria seemed to sweep Sudan in December as the activists were quite ecstatic during recent rallies and celebrations of the day marking the eruption of their movement in 2018.

[FM Qureshi, UN chief discuss issues of mutual interest](https://nation.com.pk/18-Mar-2021/fm-qureshi-un-chief-discuss-issues-of-mutual-interest)

The real success of this struggle to spur peace, economic recovery and reconstruction, however, still lies in Sudan’s attitudes, interaction and entente with its bordering regions and the new Southern Sudan neighbor. Most of the oil, mineral and water resources are now located in this new state that has often traded the allegations of proxy interference and incitement to its various rebel factions to impede and interrupt the development of its mineral wealth.

The new broader devolution, autonomy and interaction patterns evidenced by the evolution of the European Union, could also help Sudan to heal the discontent among its own regions and enjoy new shared avenues with its estranged southern neighbour.