

Diagnosing De-stabilization: An Analysis of Sudan's 2019 and 2021 Coup d'Etat
By Ashrakat Hassan

ABSTRACT

Viruses, like political destabilization, do not show their symptoms all at once. They fester in their hosts for extended periods, ever-mutating, creating disastrous consequences. Still, the warning signs often present themselves in subtle ways. It is the goal of a physician and a political analyst to recognize these signs before tragedy. From death in a patient to a complete overhaul of a political system by force in a country, destabilization always has warning signs.

Sudan displayed symptoms long before former President Omar al-Bashir was ousted from his position in April 2019. Famine and inflation ravaged the country in the months preceding the coup d'état, international pressures turned on the heat for Bashir himself, and ever-growing military personnel did not help either. The situation exacerbated as the Sudanese people grew frustrated with the economic and political situation, flooding the streets with demonstrations. The result was immense pressure on the economic and political system to sustain itself despite the conditions against it. The Sudanese military saw an opportunity and took it.

While the world watched in shock, the Sudanese people and diaspora members were not as surprised. Decades of political turmoil and injustice, like a high fever, can only grow more intense when not treated. Questions remain for many: what human actions and economic conditions led Sudan to the praetorian regime that now grips it? Is it possible to identify the warning signs of such strife before other nations become another example of the power of praetorian governments like those in Sudan?

Research into the specific political history of Sudan is vast, and the general analysis of coups, military interventions, and their aftermath is as well. This research will connect the two subject areas to provide a diagnosis of how Sudan reached this point, the political and economic variables that cause coups such as the one in Sudan, the social repercussions of the turmoil, and a prediction of how Sudan and nations like it can recover from the unrest. This research will also help non-governmental organizations and political officials understand the signs of military interventions before they begin. Various authors have researched military governments. However, this research is novel in that Sudan's recent coups have not been analyzed from a political, economic, and social lens from Sudan's beginning until the present.

Since independence in 1958, Sudan has experienced political and economic turmoil. With a poor political transition since the British Crown left Sudanese soil and a

neglectful development of southern Sudan, Sudan had a poor headstart in its sovereignty. In a pattern that Sudan would witness for the next 65 years, a lack of political infrastructure could not support the needs of its social groups. The economic hardship would derive from the Sudanese government's centralization of its military. They were provided with advanced weaponry, training, providing social capital and respect, and enough strategic support to sustain four coups over the next few decades. Other industries in agriculture, textiles, and manufacturing became a large part of Sudan's main exports, but the industries were never advanced enough to protect the nation from destabilization.

Coups in Sudan were not only predicted by economic or political hardship or even the centralization of the military; coup-prone personalities within military sectors of the nation are also a large factor in the likelihood of destabilization. Demagogues whose words ring louder than their dictator or head leader increase the military's strength and power to take over the government as it stands. Yet, these personalities and their impacts on coups can be offset by the strength of the social groups in the nation. Should they work to mobilize against certain ideologies, advocate for new systems that support their needs, and are generally politically engaged; military coups become less and less effective in creating new regimes. However, as aforementioned, the political transition in Sudan gave way to little political structure to support said needs of said social groups. That makes these coups so prevalent and encompassing: there will be destabilization when no structure supports the majority.

Sudan's story of military coups is a history of patterns, patterns of economic and political instability, lack of social support, and a centralization of the military's strength through its time as a state. The issues of 2019 and 2021 are a continuation of these patterns into the modern era. Despite the reforms and support from foreign non-governmental organizations, Sudan has continued to fall into these patterns. To find some sort of stability amidst the turmoil, Sudan needs a structural overhaul of old systems.