



Protests in Sudan – International Actors and the Future (Part 2): Elfadil Ahmed & Tag Elkhazin

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The Nokoko journal is committed to a world where people are free from all forms of oppression and exploitation, where respect for individuals' varied differences is maintained, and where everyone can realise their full potentials. NokokoPod is a companion to the journal, covering current African issues. It aims to bring forth new perspectives that broaden, trouble, complicate and enrich current discourses. Edited and annotated versions of the conversations will be made available on the journal website.

This issue of NokokoPod discusses the role of international actors in Sudan amidst the uncertainty and change of government as well as reflections on what the future may hold. See Part 1 for a discussion on the history of protest in Sudan and the demands of the current protest. The podcast for this discussion is available on the Nokoko journal website. This conversation took place on May 5th, with Logan Cochrane, Elfadil Ahmed and Tag Elkhazin in Ottawa. This version of the PDF has been reviewed by Logan Cochrane, Elfadil Ahmed and Tag Elkhazin. In addition to the conversation, a set of annotations have been added as footnotes so as to strengthen the value of these publications and enable them to act as a resource for listeners and readers who want to have additional context and/or find additional resources on the topics discussed.

Logan: Let us zoom out to the external actors that are playing a role in the current structure, some previously doing so and others potentially trying to influence what happens in the future. On the one hand we have the UAE and Saudi Arabia, Qatar is also trying to play some influential role. The traditional set of US, UK and Norway group are involved to an extent. How do you see these external actors being involved in the current protest and shaping, or trying to shape, some of the direction of the future?

Tag: I think the sub-question needs to be: Are any of these regional actors acting in their own interests and initiatives, or is this part of an orchestrated approach to the issues of Sudan? In January, I met with four Western ambassadors in Khartoum and they all realized that the core problem was actually an economic problem. Everything comes out of that. They realized that the economic problems of Sudan cannot be solved by themselves. If the people on the street think that Sudan can solve all of these challenges, they are really dreaming. There is no way that any government that could come would be able to tackle the massive economic problem. My question to the ambassadors was: "How does Sudan get out of that?" They said they cannot do it on their own. We need the pioneers, we need the primers, which is the IMF and the World Bank. All western diplomats said that the West is not going to do that priming until they see change on the ground, which is a chicken and egg situation. To my mind, neither the Emirates nor Saudi Arabia would actually give 250 million or 500 million,¹ or whatever have you, just like that. It

¹ The United Arab Emirates, specifically the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, announced that it was going to deposit US\$ 250 million into Sudan's Central Bank. This was part of a broader support package, valued at US\$ 3 billion, in a joint aid effort between Saudi Arabia and the Emirates for Sudan. See: <https://www.thenational.ae/world/gcc/uae-set-to-deposit-250-million-in-sudan-central-bank-1.854710> Other reports suggested that the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabian joint aid package would deposit US\$ 500 million into the Central Bank of Sudan (e.g. <https://www.africanews.com/2019/04/22/sudan-receives-3-billion-from-saudi-arabia-uae/>). Significant uncertainty exists about these commitments.

is not that they would wake up in the morning and say that this is what they want to do. I feel that there is an orchestrated approach to give just a little bit so that the country does not collapse completely. Then, there is a wait and see situation. I have met with the Canadian government several times. In one case, there were six people who came from the director level going down to the desk officer, and they were all in agreement that they are in a “wait and see” situation. To answer your question, I think that there is an orchestrated approach. I think that the Gulf States are not working out of their own initiative.

Elfadil: One my presentations as a student was about the relation between foreign policy and domestic policy or foreign policy and the internal politics. I argued that it is a relation of co-efficiency not variability. What is happening inside the country dictates much of its international relations, and the international relations have an impact on the domestic politics of a country. In the case of Sudan, during the Bashir era, when the economy collapsed and there were no resources to generate any national income. the government started selling the country and with that its sovereignty and free will.² Lands were sold to China, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Large amounts of money were received from those countries and other ones as grants and loans. These nations do not give you money for free. That money comes with very serious demands and very high bills. One of the challenges facing the next government will be reforming the country’s foreign policy. A new foreign policy should identify what leverage the country has, what are the objective of its foreign policy, what are the limitations, can it afford to follow a principled foreign policy and draw some red lines. Sudan is not a poor country. The country has a lot of resources; we have minerals,

² Data is limited on these deals. However, relatively more data is available on large scale land acquisitions, as provided by the Land Matrix database. For Sudan, see: <https://landmatrix.org/data/?country=729>

we have the agriculture, we have vast land. If we are able to manage our resources in an appropriate way, miracles can happen as was the case with Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan and lately Burundi. When there is a will, when there is good management, when there is no corruption, things can happen. It might take time, but people can put themselves on the right track and we will get there and have at the end a foreign policy based on common interests and mutual respect.

Tag: I always try to look for the conditionality of intervention, if it is a financial intervention or political support intervention. What is the conditionality? Nobody will wake up in the morning and say I am going to support either Bashir or people in the street, unless there is some kind of interest. We need to look into that. If you look at the claimed deposit of 250 or 500 million that the Emirates did, very shortly after that the Minister of Foreign Affairs and other ministers went to South Sudan. They wanted to have a stake and an interest in the oil of South Sudan. Salva Kiir is shivering now because of what is happening in Khartoum and the reason is that the rehabilitated oil wells that increased the production of oil in South Sudan and continues to increase, are actually mutually guarded by soldiers from the Sudanese army and from SPLA. The issue of interest is there. The oil is flowing. It was very interesting to hear one of the members of the military council confirming that all the oil in South Sudan is flowing smoothly. We need to create that linkage as well.

Tag: We need to look into why Abiy Ahmed,³ all of the sudden, does not seem to be that much interested in in Sudan. Yes, the

³ Abiy Ahmed is the Prime Minister of Ethiopia. Previous podcasts cover the changes that have occurred in Ethiopia since 2018, see:

Cochrane, L. and Kefale, A. (2019) Discussing the 2018/19 Changes in Ethiopia: Asnake Kefale. NokokoPod 2019(3): 1-16.

president of Ethiopia came out yesterday and said: "Yes, we need to help Sudan."⁴ There is a big difference between lip service and actually exerting some help. We need to look at the conditionality. We also need to look at who is going to plug the gap of lost income and of lost production during the last four months. The country has been brought to a standstill. These are the negative unintended outcomes of this kind of uprising. There are now 550 rail wagons carrying over 16,000 tons of badly needed supplies that are blocked between Port Sudan and Khartoum (see map in Figure 1).⁵ This should be going to people. To feed people and give them fuel. There is a massive loss that that happened; 250 or 500 million is really peanuts for the gap that we are talking about.⁶ We need to look at the interests. We also need to look at the front actors and who is behind them. If it is

Cochrane, L. and Mandefro, H. (2019) Discussing the 2018/19 Changes in Ethiopia: Hone Mandefro. *NokokoPod* 2019(2): 1-25.

Cochrane, L. and Zewde, B. (2019) Discussing the 2018/19 Changes in Ethiopia: Bahru Zewde. *NokokoPod* 2019(1): 1-16.

⁴ Ethiopia has expressed some support for Sudan, for example: <https://www.africanews.com/2019/04/15/ethiopia-stands-with-resilient-sudanese-protesters-pm-abiy/>

⁵ The impact on transportation networks and the distribution on food and supplies has not been widely reported on in the international media. However, the military has warned that roads and railways need to be cleared as provinces have insufficient supply of essential goods (see: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/sudan-protesters-defiant-army-warns-chaos-190430153551981.html>).

⁶ While the United Arab Emirates has pledged to deposit US\$ 250 million into the Central Bank of Sudan, little reporting is available to verify what has and has not happened regarding that. Greater uncertainty exists with regard to the larger aid package pledged by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, valued at US\$ 3 billion. Reporting has highlighted the uncertainty of these announcements, see: <https://www.africanews.com/2019/04/22/sudan-receives-3-billion-from-saudi-arabia-uae/> However, the protesters have already raised their concerns, and warnings, for these two nations. See: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/for-sudans-protesters-another-threat-looms-meddling-by-saudi-arabia-and-the-uae/2019/04/24/b2986416-667f-11e9-a1b6-b29b90efa879_story.html and <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/why-are-sudan-s-protesters-snubbing-the-uae-and-saudi-arabia-26179>

Mohammed bin Rashid⁷ or Mohammed bin Salman⁸ are they acting in their own right? What are the limitations? Can they turn around tomorrow and give 10 billion or 20 billion? I do not think that they can.



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Figure 1. Sudan

Elfadil: When it comes to international relations, Sudan is a receiver. We are not an actor. We are very much acted upon, at least for now. We should be very much conscious and aware of the international environment in which Sudan is acting. Things are not as they used to be in the 50s. There will be no foreign aid large enough

⁷ Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum is the Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates. He is also the ruler of the Emirate of Dubai.

⁸ Mohammed bin Salman is the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia.

to build up Sudan. There is a lot of apathy in the international community. On the political side, foreign countries including Canada started to pay attention to what is happening in Sudan in a very late stage of the developments as Sudan is not a priority for those countries. Sudan is very far and very remote. What happens in it does not concern or affect Canada that much. Sudan is not Venezuela. The Liberals⁹ are not saying it, but Stephen Harper¹⁰ put it very clearly: the Canadian backyard is Latin America and Africa is the backyard of Europe. As a result, they felt that the Europeans should take care of Africa. Thus, Sudan needs to be very knowledgeable and realistic about what to expect from the world around it.

Elfadil: As for the neighbors of Sudan: there are no permanent friends or enemies. It is always a matter of interest. Our closest neighbors, the Egyptians, have their national interest in Sudan - they want to see Sudan weak, so they can pursue their own agendas in it and dictate what suits them. The relations between Sudan and its neighbors are thorny; it is not always love. Lip service from the Ethiopian regime does not mean that they are going to help Sudan.¹¹ They have their own interests in Sudan. It is worth noticing that when the regime in Sudan was collapsing, for the first time an Egyptian sitting President entered a disputed part of Sudan to assert that this is a part of Egypt over which it has sovereignty. What Sisi did by visiting in Halayeb was unprecedented and no Egyptian president

⁹ The Liberal Party of Canada, led by Justin Trudeau, won the election in 2015 and have led Canada since.

¹⁰ Stephen Harper led the Conservative Party of Canada, and was Prime Minister of Canada, from 2006 to 2015.

¹¹ The Government of Ethiopia has made some statements on their support, such as: <https://www.africanews.com/2019/04/15/ethiopia-stands-with-resilient-sudanese-protesters-pm-abiy/>

had done that before.¹² He exploited the turmoil in Sudan and the fact there was no government. The Ethiopian regime as well sent their troops during this chaos to the border of Sudan, killed officers who were at the border and claimed more parts of the Sudanese territory. If friends do not come to help you when you are in need and when they hit you when you are down, you should not consider them friends or great neighbors. Sudan is weak now and cannot fight on all fronts and retrieve all the occupied territories. It is ideal to be in good terms with neighbors in a way that benefits all. Rather than achieving that through wars and clashes, neighbors must rely on diplomacy. However, you cannot reach just diplomatic solutions unless you are powerful. To be powerful, you must have a solid integral internal front, have a strong economy, reliable arms force and more than that you have to have the will and the support of all your people behind you.

Tag: One thing that the current leaders are talking about is that Sudan is rich in resources. Yes, South Sudan is rich in resources, but there is a very big difference between resources and turning the resources into opportunities. Nobody is willing to come and invest in South Sudan now. Nobody is willing to come and invest in Sudan now. Regardless what resources are there. Egypt is one of the players now and it was actually Egypt who managed to convince the African Union to delay the suspension of Sudan after 15 days to three months.¹³ When Egypt looks south, they do not see people, they do not see land, they only see water. The per capita apportioning of

¹² Egypt has viewed the disputed territory as a critical issue during this transitional period, see: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190508-exclusive-egypt-has-three-demands-to-sudanese-transitional-military-council/>

¹³ For details on that agreement, see: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-africa-sudan/african-summit-gives-sudan-military-three-months-for-reforms-idUSKCN1RZ16M>

water for every Egyptian of the 105 million people¹⁴ in that country is just under 600 cubic meters per year. Crisis level is 500 cubic meters. As you know, 2030 is going to be a very big issue for water. By 2030, Egypt will be under the critical 500 cubic meters per year. Whenever they look south, they only see water. We had the Egyptian ambassador at the Global Water Institute¹⁵ last week, and if you could see the anxiety and the passion with which he was talking, all that they care about now is water. They went in to do desalination plants along the Mediterranean Sea.¹⁶ Egypt has no real sympathy with Sudan or South Sudan. As you may know, they started dredging Bahr el Ghazal, where two rivers meet in Wau, South Sudan. It was only the war that actually stopped them, and people like myself, who worked to raise the awareness of South Sudanese government in order that they understand that any water that goes down the Nile, that is it, you are not going to retrieve it. Egypt is going to be a player. They lost the rest of the Nile. They gave up on the GERD now;¹⁷ they realized that this is going to happen if they like it or not. Since the days of the Ndugu movement¹⁸ that was started by Boutros

14 Population figures differ by source, the World Bank lists the Egyptian population as 97.5 million in 2017, see: <https://data.worldbank.org/country/egypt-arab-rep>

15 Global Water Institute, Carleton University (<https://carleton.ca/gwi/>).

16 For information on Egypt's commissioning of seawater desalination plants, see: <http://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/66690/Egypt-signs-MoU-with-Swiss-company-to-build-seawater-desalination>

17 The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is being built near the source of the Blue Nile, in Ethiopia. Construction began in 2011, which was initially contested by Egypt. When completed, it will be the largest hydro-electric power plant in Africa.

18 Ndugu means 'brotherhood' in Swahili. Under Boutros-Ghali, who was then State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Egypt established the 'Ndugu Project' to deal with the tensions between the 'rights' to the Nile waters and 'useful usage and needs' with the aim of having a 'cooperative framework.' The Ndugu countries were: Egypt, Sudan, Uganda, Central African Republic, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania having an observer status. Ethiopia declined to join. For some unknown reason, in 1988 Egypt dropped the Ndugu (UNDUGU) project actively propagated by Boutros Boutros-Ghali and with the end of that project Egypt seemed to have withdrawn considerably from the Equatorial and Great Lakes regions of Africa. Some observers hope that

Boutros-Ghali¹⁹ in the 1980s, and then when 1988 came and Lake Nasser filled up, they dropped Africa like a hot potato. They have never been able to regain the connectedness that they had. This again takes me to the idea that whoever pokes his nose into the issues of Sudan there is always an ulterior motive. There is always an interest that they have, other than just trying to help.

Logan: Not to belabor the international community, but maybe in addition to the interest factor there is a kind of retraction in the international community on international engagements, Europe and the US in particular. We might see Sudan, by necessity, looking to other friends, like China and the Belt and Road Initiative²⁰ or looking to other places when traditional financiers, traditional supporters are looking inward. They may be more focused on domestic issues, whether that is the Europeans or the Americans or whoever, and therefore Sudan may need to look elsewhere, where financing may be available and that may be the only place where it is available. Do you see this playing a role?

Elfadil: Evidently, there is a retraction in the international relations now. For so many reasons. Many countries have their own issues and they are becoming limited in their resources. Even the issues that are being addressed by the international community for years are now different. Now countries are concerned more and consumed by questions of refugees and migration, environment,

during the current chairing of Egypt of the AU, stronger links will be re-established and either through a revived UNDUGU or the Current Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), a Cooperative Framework Agreement will be in place for the Nile Waters.

¹⁹ Boutros Boutros-Ghali was an Egyptian national who was the United Nations Secretary General from 1992 to 1996. He was Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in Egypt from 1977 to 1991.

²⁰ For information on China's Belt and Road Initiative, see: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/regional-integration/brief/belt-and-road-initiative>

terrorism, racism and arms proliferation as examples. The world is well beyond the Cold War, when two camps were vying, even fighting, to gain the support of this country or that or when the underdeveloped countries had the benefit and margin of maneuvering and trying to play one camp against the other to make some gains. Foreign relations are based currently on interests not principles and countries are becoming more pragmatic in conducting their foreign relations. For countries like Sudan one of the ways out is to try to find an area where there are common interests. Unless you are able to convince the international powers that they have a stake in Sudan, they are not going to come. If they come, they will only do so with a high price, as with the experience of the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia who are willing to help Sudan as long as it is willing to send Sudanese soldiers to fight their war at the front lines in Yemen.²¹ We do not have a government now in Sudan, though, whoever will be in power in Sudan will find it difficult to address the complex, vast and old relations with United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia,²² and because of what they offered/ promised the current or future regime in Sudan. Accepting such offers will be problematic as the country will continue to pay a very high price, the souls and blood of its citizens. This is one of the issues that the coming government should address. It is going to be a very delicate issue that is not going to be easy to deal with.

Logan: In both of those countries, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, there is a high percentage of Sudanese expats working in high

21 The military of Sudan has thus far committed to keeping their troops in Yemen (<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1483051/middle-east>). The role of Sudan in Yemen has received limited international attention. For an exception to that, see: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/28/world/africa/saudi-sudan-yemen-child-fighters.html>

22 The coalition working to restore the former Government of Yemen is being led by Saudi Arabia, with the United Arab Emirates as a key partner.

skilled professions, as engineers and professors, throughout the Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

Elfadil: That is why I say it is delicate. If you try to sever relations with them, or if you are going to try and start dictating your terms, you cannot imagine the number of Sudanese people who will lose their jobs there. They are there in the millions and the country, Sudan, is not in a position to receive and accommodate them, yet.

Tag: That is already happening. The Saudis are already sending people away. Last year, they sent away 750,000 people, of what they call foreign laborers.²³

Elfadil: For now, there are still working relations between the Gulf States and the government. Yet, if tomorrow the Sudanese government decided to pull out the Sudanese troops from Yemen, this would be an indicator of a drastic change in Sudan's foreign policy towards those states, which are not going to consider the humanitarian element, that the Sudanese expatriates had been working there for tens of years. They put pressure on the Sudanese government and the Sudanese people, stay in Yemen or face consequences.

Tag: As we started talking about the international issues, other than donor fatigue, there is also compassion fatigue. When an issue is lingering for a very long time, other things take precedence over what has been there for a long time. A typical example is the Palestinian issue. It is no longer what it used to be, just 20 years back. People look at other things. Talking about other sources of support -

23 In 2017, it was reported that 47,000 Sudanese returned to Sudan (<https://indianexpress.com/article/world/nearly-47000-sudanese-expats-to-return-from-saudi-arabia-4763281/>). Of all nationalities, Saudi Arabia has deported 730,000 people over the last year and a half (<https://www.internationalinvestment.net/news/4001702/saudi-arabia-deports-730-illegal-expats-months>).

financial support and political support - the Chinese, the Indians and the Turks go in with hardly any conditionality at all, especially conditionality relating to human rights. They just do not care. I was told by a friend that Bashir had asked him to go to China and get him 600 million dollars. He was there for two weeks. He finally got the 600 million dollars. When he came back, he resigned. He said that all during the two weeks, the only thing that the Chinese were interested in was: When will the money be paid back? And, what is the rate of interest? What is in it for them? If Bashir takes this money to slaughter people, they just could not care one little bit. However, as Elfadil alluded, this has started to reach saturation. The Chinese want to be paid back. The Turks want to be paid back. Sudan is bankrupt now. If you cannot pay what is due, why would a country like China, the second largest economy in the world, why would they keep pouring money in? What I was told by a diplomat in Khartoum is that the West is not willing to nudge the IMF and the World Bank until they see measurable change on the ground. It is a disgrace. It is a chicken and egg situation. If part of the dilemma in which Sudan is now in is economic, and if there is there is no kind of program to pull them out of the rabbit hole, how are they going to manage?

Elfadil: These institutions, the World Bank and the IMF, also do not help without conditions, which in some cases led to the collapse of governments. As Tag said, it is not going to be easy; these international actors want to see far-reaching, vast and fast economic reforms. They are under the influence of super powers. However, if they are genuine about helping, they should be more flexible and understanding.

Elfadil: As for China, India, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates, they have huge investments in Sudan. The terms in the contracts of those of those projects are not revealed. It is

believed there was a lot of corruption. It is not yet known what the next government is going to do about them. By international law, and by what had been signed these countries are entitled to own and to benefit from their investments for as long and as much as the contracts indicate. The next government might be tempted to invalidate those contracts. Other than the legal complications, such a move will discourage future potential investors who will take in consideration the probable risks involved in investing in Sudan.

Tag: The IMF was actually in Sudan a few days back, the regional director. He came out with a very brief, but very clear communique. It stated that there is no way that the IMF or the Bretton Woods institutions, the two of them, are going to offer any assistance to Sudan right now. The reason is because there are arrears of 1.4 billion dollars that need to be paid first. Sudan cannot pay 1.4 million let alone 1.4 Billion.²⁴ However, he does not come on his own. He does not even come with the instructions of the director general of the IMF. These two institutions are completely in the hands of the Western countries. It is a black hole where this could possibly be going for me, it is really a black hole. I cannot see a trajectory where I would say that A will lead to B and B will lead to C, and then at the end of the day this is where we are going.

Logan: Other than the international community, are there domestic changes - even individual post changes in the government - that are signposts that you are looking for? Something along the lines of: if X happens it will likely lead to Y; if X does not happen it will likely lead to Z. Is there anything that you have been thinking about that might act as a kind of indicator for the future? Something that would provide direction on how this might all pan out?

²⁴ Commentary on the refusal to provide financing is available here: <https://af.reuters.com/article/africaTech/idAFKCN1S50FX-OZABS>

Elfadil: There are so many moving parts. Day by day they are getting looser, and they are multiplying. How things will unfold in the coming days will determine what will happen in the Sudan in the short and far future. There is the army and there is a militia of Bashir called the Swift Support Forces led by the strong man General Hamiditi. There are the Islamic groups that cannot be ruled out yet. There are also those who are revolting and despite the fact that they are all anti-Bashir, they themselves are divided into many factions along ideological and political lines. There are also the political parties, old and new. Besides, there are elements from the peripheries and marginalized regions whose support of the revolution and the regime is entirely conditioned by addressing their own concerns and satisfying their demands. There are so many elements and factors to reckon with in any attempt to predict the political future of Sudan. There are the potentials of Sudan continuing to be united, politically stable, with peace, justice and security prevailing and economic problems properly addressed if all the forces indicated earlier will miraculously come together and reach an agreement that puts interests of the country foremost and first. But if each group will insist on dealing with its demands as the ultimate priority and its way of dealing with them as the only one, then Sudan is a long way from stability, security and progress. Its unity as well might be jeopardized. As indicated earlier, the current revolution is different from any revolutions that Sudan had before. It is the largest. It involves, horizontally and vertically, as numerous sections of Sudanese people as never had been witnessed before. It is not only about bread and butter and it is happening in a different era, when people are more conscious of their rights and more aware of their power. This revolution is either going to make Sudan or break it, depending on how the Sudanese people and those who are leading them will handle the very delicate and complex circumstances.

Tag: There are agents of change and agents of continuity. The people who are demonstrating now, you cannot take them in the morning and then let them rule Sudan. You need structures to rule. I see them as agents of change. The question is: are the agents of continuity there now? Are they harmonious? I see a very fluid situation. I see a lot of latent forces and latent powers that are sitting back and watching, including the Islamists. There is no way that you can get rid of the Islamists because there are demonstrations. They are there. They are very much rooted into the civil service. They are very much rooted into the political arena. I find it very difficult for anyone to offer a prophecy or to look in the crystal ball and say 'this is where this thing is going'. It may be a very interesting case study of what we call scenario building, taking all the factors that are available to us - what meets the eye and what does not meet the eye. Building a worst-case scenario, a middle-case scenario, and best-case scenario. The worst-case scenario is that the current transitional military rule goes on, and all these political parties and civil society groups bang their heads against each other while they are carrying on. There has to be a transition. There has to be a giving of power to A, B or C. If that does not happen, if the military is not willing to relinquish power, nothing is going to happen and the current crisis is going to continue.

Elfadil: The youth and the women who are sitting in front of the military headquarters are to be highly admired and respected for their sacrifices, their motives, their sincerity, their genuineness, and all what they brought to the revolution. However, no country can be ruled by sit-ins, no matter for how long it continues, how well it is organized and how powerful it is. It is about time that if there is a leadership that people trust, it is to be given the mandate, the time, the environment and the room they need to move forward be it reaching an agreement with the military and other elements or otherwise. Definitely the sit-in played the major role in toppling the

Bashir regime. He is in jail now.²⁵ It is about time to move on and to let an apparatus be put in place and the institutions be established and function. Not having any form of government or authority for more than a month would not be without negative impacts. People should turn the page fast and work on what is next. They need to give what will be agreed upon a chance and if they see it not working they can take to the streets and sit -in anew. Some patience and some tolerance are needed and they will help.

Tag: Looking forward, we need to see if we can factor in our own Canadian government. I was in a presentation just a few days back where the top civil servant in the pan-Africa department in Foreign Affairs (Global Affairs Canada) was among a panel that was talking about sub-Saharan Africa. She said that in a suggested draft policy document that was sent to the Prime Minister's Office by Foreign Affairs, on Canada's international policy, in all the 13 pages, Africa was not mentioned even once. Let alone Sudan, which is one of 55 countries. In addition, if you look around Sudan - other than Egypt, and at times Ethiopia, and at times South Sudan - all the other African countries are silent. Nobody is talking about Sudan. Yes, they tried to make parallels with the protests in Algeria. They tried to make parallels with Tunisia. However, in the black African countries there is hardly any mention of Sudan. I see it as anybody's guess about what is going to happen tomorrow. I am also very worried about the gap that has been created and added to the economic misery by the stagnation of the economy during these last four months. Nothing has been moving. This is an unknown quantity of lost time. Now, if you want to cross from Khartoum to Khartoum North, or from Omdurman to Khartoum it might take you five or six

²⁵ Omar al Bashir was jailed in late April (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-47961424>).

hours because the roads are blocked. People are unable to move, even to find food to feed themselves.

Elfadil: I want to come back to the attitude and approach of the Canadian government. As Tag mentioned, he heard of a 13 pages document on Canadian Foreign policy in which Africa was not mentioned not even once. I have also been to two activities organized by the Pearson Centre,²⁶ in which Africa was mentioned once or twice in the context of sending troops to Mali,²⁷ and in relation to Canada's quest to secure a seat in the Security Council of the United Nations for the coming period. Africa is totally off of the radar of Canada. It is realpolitik and a year of election in which the Liberals have more than what they need in their plate. For now, Africa does not mean a lot to Canada. A country like Sudan that is not high ranking in Africa, will even entertain less if any attention from Canada.

Elfadil: On the other hand, what is happening now in Sudan and what will unfold in the coming days will also play a major role in deciding the attitude of the international community, the Western powers precisely, towards Sudan. If the chaos will continue, and if it will lead to more chaos, that will not going to be very helpful for the Sudanese people nor will it be conducive towards having sympathy or attaining help. So far, the world is appreciating and admiring what is going on in Sudan. Even the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs referred to the people of Sudan as revolting with courage and grace. These are very big words. The Sudanese people should strive to sustain this good image and positive attitude of the world with regard to their revolution. This might easily translate into support and assistance.

²⁶ The Pearson Centre: <http://www.thepearsoncentre.ca/>

²⁷ The Canadian Armed Forces supported the United Nations Mission in Mali (<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/current-operations/op-presence.html>).

Elfadil: One last remark, when comparing what is happening in Venezuela with what is happening in Sudan, the attitude of the West, including Canada, toward Venezuela is dictated by the fact that they do not want to have a socialist or communist government in their hemisphere. Now some people, commentators, and analysts believe that the forces in Sudan that are trying to replace the Islamists are communist, socialist or leftist elements. That will mean a government with closer relations with China, North Korea or Russia. This will not sit well with the West. Such government in Sudan should not expect a lot of help or assistance from the West.

Logan: Thank you very much. There is a lot of uncertainty for the future of Sudan. We will be watching to see what unfolds. Maybe we will have to return in another month to explain what has happened. Thank you very much again.

Elfadil: Thank you. We hope for the best.