



Sudans Studies Association

40th Annual Conference

June 4 through 6 Virtually via Zoom

Call for Papers

Theme: Two Sudans in a fragile region

In Sudan, people have recently commemorated the uprising referred to as the December Revolution which led to the end of Al Bashir's reign on April 11th 2019. Since then, the broadest political coalition in the history of Sudan led by the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) reached a power-sharing arrangement with the military leaders of the previous regime. A civilian government was formed in September of 2019 and headed by a transitional Sovereign Council made up of military and civilian leaders.

During this time, the newly formed government has made significant, albeit incomplete efforts at addressing the countries' challenges. Sudan has entered into a peace agreement with most of the armed groups. Additionally, the Government managed to reincorporate the country into the international community by striking a deal with the U.S to remove Sudan from the list of State Sponsored Terrorism (SST).

Nonetheless, serious challenges remain. While the Sudanese people welcomed and celebrated the Juba peace agreement, many remained skeptical about the prospect of peace. Moreover, the economy has remained the biggest challenge for the transitional government with hyperinflation reaching record highs coupled with the decline of exchange rate for the Sudanese pound. The economic difficulties and how to address them played a major role in sowing division

among the political forces that had come together for the revolution, many of whom have reverted to fractious, factional politics. In February 2021 a newly formed cabinet was sworn in to deal with the realities that can be summarized as 1) incomplete peace deal, 2) revving the country's economy, 3) managing the democratic transition and laying the ground for national election, and 4) unifying Sudanese people behind this agenda

Meanwhile, South Sudan is attempting to implement the latest of the many peace accords signed between President Salva Kiir and his former Deputy Riek Machar. While circumstances are not completely peaceful, the country has enjoyed moments of relative stability in the absence of large-scale fighting. Despite the warning signs regarding the fragility of the governing coalition, the peace agreement “limps along” according to the UN top official in South Sudan in September 2020. Struggling to make peace within, Kiir successfully brokered a peace agreement between the transitional government in Khartoum and the Revolutionary Front, a large alliance of armed groups, which can be seen as a sign of hope.

Both countries have been facing serious challenges in combating the Covid 19 pandemic due to poor health infrastructure, institutional inertia and weak state capacity. It is almost impossible to discern fully how Covid 19 affected both countries in terms of the scale of infection and death due to the lack of reliable sources of information. What is certain is the economic impact of the pandemic on both countries is serious.

The looming threat of war between Ethiopia and Sudan over a border dispute has never been higher. Ethiopia is facing its own internal meltdown amidst accusations of major atrocities in the Tigray region perpetrated by the Ethiopian Defense Forces, Eritrean troops and other ethnic militias. There have been sporadic clashes between Ethiopia and Sudan and there are major movements of troops on and around the borders by both sides. The change in Sudan's position regarding the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) during the failed mediation attempt by the U.S. between Ethiopia and Egypt regarding the filling and management of the dam, coupled with the political changes inside Ethiopia, appear to be the driving forces behind the tension in the borders.

With all these realities about the changing political landscape and shifting socioeconomic dynamics, the Sudans Studies Association invites scholars, practitioners and advocates in the region and around the world to submit a proposal in the following tracks:

1. The challenges facing democratic transformation in Sudan, examining the balance of power among internal political forces, regional players, and the role of the UN mission (UNITMAS) and the international community.
2. The prospect of peace given the following factors: a) absence of two major factions such as SPLM north (Nuba Mountain) and SLM (various factions), b) the weak capacity of the Sudanese state, c) (lack of) interest and financial support from the international community to implement the signed peace deal, and d) (lack of) engagement of broad base of stakeholders in the peace process and the implementation of the agreement.
3. Can the “limp along” agreement in South Sudan lead to stable power-sharing coalition that can lay the seeds for a lasting peace or we are just witnessing a truce? What are requirements to strengthen this peace arrangement? What can be done from containing minor clashes to prevent a major breakout wars again?

4. The horn of Africa is experiencing extraordinary circumstances of geopolitical reshaping and conditions that can lead to great cooperation or destruction. Might Sudan and Ethiopia go back to the eras when each armed and supported oppositions of each other? Can the war in Tigray region lead to major clashes or usher a new era of destabilizing war in Ethiopia? What is Eritrea's strategic gain from the destruction of TPLF, would that prove to be a miscalculation in the long run?
5. What historical antecedents speak to the challenges facing the Sudans? In what ways have the politics of today affected social and cultural relations in the Sudans?

We welcome abstracts that can speak to the issues raised in these tracks, as well as topics that might fall outside the scope which may inform contemporary challenges. An abstract should not exceed 500 words. Please identify the track under which you would like the abstract to be considered.

Submit your abstract to sudansstudiesconference@gmail.com before **May 15th, 2021**.