



Policy Brief: Ensuring the Resolution of Political Conflict between Political Factions in Sudan

Authors: Khattab Hamad and Mohammed Galal

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- **Email:** sudandemocracy@amelproject.org
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/democracyactionproject>



Executive Summary:

This policy brief provides a comprehensive framework for improving international engagement with Sudan, focusing on key strategies to address the current political challenges. The analysis highlights the complexities arising from Sudan's political alliances, particularly the role of the Tagadom coalition and the Democratic Bloc (DB), and how these dynamics impact the broader political landscape.

The brief underscores the limitations of relying solely on the Tagadom coalition, which, despite its neutrality, has not fully represented the diverse interests of the Sudanese populace. The shifting support of the DB towards the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) further complicates the political process, introducing additional layers of division and conflict.

The international community's current approach, which emphasizes a ceasefire, has inadvertently reinforced existing divisions. To achieve a sustainable transition, this brief advocates for a more balanced approach that includes power-sharing arrangements and trust-building measures. Recommendations include expanding engagement beyond the Tagadom coalition, promoting equitable power-sharing, and facilitating dialogue among all relevant parties.



Introduction:

The current political environment in Sudan is characterized with mistrust, where conspiracy theories abound, and political actors emphasize their differences without clear understanding of points of convergence. Many of these actors seek to exploit the multiple mediation platforms to avoid genuine consensus-building. The ongoing war has deepened these divisions, creating significant polarization among the political factions. The Tagadom coalition, as the only political entity that has declared neutrality and a commitment to peace, has become a preferred partner for the international community (Marsden, R. 2024). However, this reliance on Tagadom imposes challenges, as its limited recognition among the broader Sudanese populace further exacerbates the fragmentation and mistrust.

The absence of a comprehensive framework for identifying and engaging with key actors, combined with the international community's over-reliance on the Tagadom coalition, has led to increased fragmentation and polarization, prolonging the war and worsening its impact. It has become evident to all actors and stakeholders at local, regional, and international levels that the conflict cannot be resolved without a significant national effort by the Sudanese to come together and propose effective solutions. However, recent experience suggests that deep political and societal divisions in Sudan outweigh the desire and ability of elites to lead a constructive dialogue. However, this paper aims to provide the international community with recommendations for a successful engagement with the Sudanese stakeholders. Moreover, it aims to facilitate inclusive dialogue among the SAF, RSF, Tagadom, Democratic Bloc and other relevant groups to offer a more comprehensive political process.

Scope:

This paper focuses on analyzing the conflict of the political alliances and elites in the context of Sudan's political processes, focusing on how these dynamics affect the ongoing war, democratic transition, and efforts towards peacebuilding. It will explore the roles of different political actors, the impact of their alliances, and the influence of international efforts on the sustainability of the political process results.

Actors analysis:

Analyzing the roles of different actors is crucial for understanding the dynamics of each event and identifying potential avenues for a successful political process (Smith, 2012). By examining the interests, motivations, and challenges faced by various stakeholders, we can develop strategies to encourage cooperation and collaboration among the political process' parties. However, for this paper, we used primary data to get deep insights to present the political factions opinions. We talked to one of the leaders of Tagadom coalition, and one of the leaders of the Democratic Bloc (DB). We tried to reach out to other parties under the focus such as Sufi leaders, tribal leaders, and others. Unfortunately, we were not able to reach them.

Deeper Analysis of Tagadom's Role:

- 1. Being the only neutral entity:** Tagadom's perceived neutrality is partly rooted in its consistent advocacy for peace and its efforts to distance itself from the military conflict. Tagadom has promoted dialogue and refrained from aligning with either the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) or



the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). This stance, combined with its calls for a civilian-led transition, aligns with the international community's objectives, making it a favored entity.

2. **Limitations:** Despite its neutrality, the narrow support base of the Tagadom coalition limits its ability to represent the diverse interests of the Sudanese people. The current polarization created by the war, or more precisely, by the RSF's crimes against civilians, has been exploited by the military and its NCP remnants to distort Tagadom's position towards a ceasefire. Also, Tagadom's public discourse frequently mentions the post-war political process, which the SAF and NCP propaganda machine exploits to portray Tagadom as a political entity that is only greedy for power. Therefore, over-reliance on Tagadom limits the consolidation of peace due to Tagadom's distorted public image, which could worsen existing grievances and fuel further polarization.
3. **Fear of the return of the NCP:** In our conversation with Tagadom leaders, they told us that their non-negotiable position is the participation of the NCP in any political process, attributing this position to the NCP's ongoing attempts to undermine the democratic civilian transition, starting with the sit-in massacre in 2019, the October 25 coup, and the ongoing war, according to them. They also said that this position is not personal or intended to exclude political actors. Still, they see that any opportunity for the presence of the NCP, without guarantees and monitors to ensure that no political process is sabotaged, is considered an unhappy end of the December revolution. According to one of Tagadom's leader, he confirmed that if there are guarantees, they will reconsider this position and work to ensure an inclusive political process. Moreover, the Tagadom's representative told us that they consider the Democratic Bloc as a tool used by the NCP to destroy the democratic transition, which was evident in the sit-in at the Republican Palace that paved the way for the October 2021 coup.
4. **The contradictory U.S. approach:** That leader of Tagadom told us that the U.S. worked to replace the political parties with civil society organizations and actors. However, this approach has failed but it led to mistrust by Tagadom in international initiatives.

Overall, it is clear that Tagadom supports a civilian-led transition and is cautious about power-sharing arrangements that could allow the NCP to regain influence. They are concerned that without strict guarantees and monitoring, power-sharing with the NCP and their respective allies from their perspective could undermine the democratic process. While they are open to reconsidering their stance if strong monitoring mechanisms are in place, their current position reflects a strong desire to prevent the NCP from undermining the political transition.

Deeper Analysis of the Democratic Bloc role:

1. **Supporting SAF:** The Democratic Bloc (DB) coalition has recently shifted its position in the ongoing conflict, now supporting the SAF. This change comes after nearly a year of maintaining a neutral stance. By supporting SAF, the alliance is likely responding to evolving dynamics within the conflict, which may be driven by strategic, political or security considerations, as is currently evident in the conflict around and in Alfasher (Mostafa, M. 2024). This decision could



significantly impact the balance of power in the political process.

2. **Considering Tagadom as RSF ally:** We talked to one of the leaders of the DB. He told us that they consider Tagadom as an ally of RSF because it has signed an agreement with them in Addis Ababa (Sudan Tribune 2024). So, this position made the scene more complicated in order to bring the views of the two main political factions in Sudan closer together. It prevents them from overcoming the previous problems between them, starting with the sit-in at the presidential palace that paved the way for the October 2021 coup, and the framework agreement that excluded a number of political actors. The DB's position, particularly their support for the SAF, could significantly impact the balance of power in any future political process. This could potentially restrict efforts towards inclusive power-sharing arrangements.

Analysis of the international community role:

1. **Prioritizing ceasefire over political process:** The United State's special envoy to Sudan, Tom Perriello, as a representative to the international community, mentioned that at this moment, the invitation of negotiation that is organized by the U.S. is only directed to SAFs and RSF, and they do not want the two warring factions to decide the future of Sudan. He added that they are learning, so they have involved other regional parties like Egypt and the UAE. Moreover, he stated that they are open to new ideas, and the United States does not have preconceived notions, so they are open to listening to opinions. There may not be an opportunity to involve everyone, and this is very difficult. Intermediaries and parties will monitor what Sudanese people are saying on social media platforms, so this represents their voices.

2. **Representation criteria:** Perriello told us that they want to involve youth, women, and resistance committees, but which youth and which women, and how will they be selected. He mentioned that the Geneva negotiations are part of a long process, and they can consider further inclusivity in the future. Last sentence contradicts with the last sentence in (1.), indicating a lack of a real vision and determination from the international community, and the United States in particular, towards inclusivity in dealing with the situation in Sudan.

He added: "We are continuing to build the partnership not only for the upcoming negotiations, and we will see which groups can be integrated besides the two warring parties. We do not expect to achieve everything in one round, but we can build on it."

Addressing the Root Causes of Polarization:

Understanding the root causes of polarization in Sudan is essential for understanding the current dynamics and challenges facing the political process. This section examines the historical and contextual factors that have contributed to deep-seated divisions among Sudanese political factions.

The actors analysis provides valuable insights into how these deep-seated issues appear in current political stances. Below section provides an analysis of the root causes of polarization:

1. Historical Context:



Sudan's deep divisions have historical roots, including decades of civil war, authoritarian rule, and socio-economic disparities. The legacy of the 30-year rule of the NCP has left a profound impact, with political, ethnic, and regional identities becoming deeply entrenched. Moreover, the legacy of political exclusion practiced by the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC), which is the core of Tagadom, in addition to the signing of a political agreement with the RSF, coupled with their strict stance towards the alliance between the DB, SAF and the NCP, reflects challenges based on harsh historical positions that make a comprehensive political process a complex matter. Understanding these historical factors is crucial for addressing the underlying causes of distrust and polarization among Sudanese groups.

2. Elimination of the NCP empowerment:

The Tagadom members are strict with eliminating the NCP empowerment, in addition to making a successful democratic transition. The mistrust case between Tagadom and DB remains a major factor in political polarization and hardening of positions, as Tagadom considers DB as an ally of NCP. Without guaranteeing a successful transition, the political process will not be inclusive and might fail to address the targeted issues.

3. Attempts to control the political arena:

Tagadom is trying to exploit the international community's support to dominate the political scene, and the DB is also working on that, but by exploiting the state's resources through an alliance with SAF and NCP. The political process must ensure that none of the participating parties is given an advantage over the others.

Policy options:

Offering Power-Sharing approach among the major political alliances and elites will lead to stabilize the political landscape and facilitate the transition to democracy. Power-sharing allocates government roles and responsibilities equitably among different factions, which will solve the issue to political dominancy (Binningsbø, H. M. 2013). Promises of power might attract the different parties more than democracy slogans. Moreover, power-sharing might exclude the involvement of NCP and revoke the DB alliance with them.

Another approach is to strengthen international mediation efforts with a focus on promoting dialogue, building trust between the different factions, and ensuring strong monitoring mechanisms to prevent the political transition process from being undermined.

Proposed policy:

We advocate for power-sharing approach as it provides immediate stability and reduces the probability of one group monopolizing power. In addition, powersharing creates a foundation for cooperation and collaboration between previously adversarial groups. The international community should promote the Power-sharing concept which should prevent the dominance of any single group within the post-war transition to pave the way towards elections. Moreover, the international community should offer promises of monitoring mechanisms to guarantee that any faction, particularly remnants of the NCP, from undermining the political transition.



As a mediator and supporter, the international community should facilitate trust-building measures among different factions to pave the way for the political process. Supporting initiatives such as establishing platforms for dialogues can help build trust between parties. Additionally, joint monitoring mechanisms involving representatives from different factions can ensure transparency and accountability in the implementation of the power-sharing agreement.

Conclusion:

This policy brief highlights the complexities of Sudan's current political situation and the challenges. The analysis reveals that while Tagadom's neutrality is seen positively, its narrow support base and the DB's alignment with the SAF contribute to ongoing divisions and polarization.

To address these challenges, a balanced approach involving power-sharing among major political factions is essential. This method will offer stability, ensure equitable representation, and prevent any single group from dominating the political scene. Additionally, strengthening international mediation and establishing strong monitoring mechanisms will be crucial for ensuring transparency and accountability in the transition process. By implementing these strategies, the international community can support a more stable and democratic future for Sudan.

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