

THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE COUP IN SUDAN

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Africa, African Union (AU) and India

The move by [Sudan's military to dissolve the Sovereignty Council](#) where it shared power with civilian leaders has thrown the African country's fragile transition from dictatorship to democracy into chaos. Almost three years ago, tens of thousands of Sudanese rose against the regime of Omar al-Bashir in what they call a "revolution" that eventually [led to the dictator's fall in April 2019](#). Ever since, the military and leaders of the civilian movement [came together to form a transitional government](#). In their agreement, the acting Prime Minister would run the day-to-day affairs while the military chief would remain the leader of the Sovereignty Council for two years. Lt. Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the military chief, was scheduled to hand over the leadership of the transitional government to the civilian leadership in a few weeks. Instead, he disbanded the government, proclaimed himself the new leader, declared a state of emergency and [imprisoned the civilian leaders](#), including Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok. Tensions were brewing in recent weeks. Pro-military mobs had been carrying out protests demanding the government's removal amid soaring prices of essentials. Port Sudan, the country's largest port, on the Red Sea, had been blockaded by a tribal group, with help from the military, which worsened the economic situation, including acute shortages of food, currency and fuel. The civilian leadership had accused the military of exploiting the economic crisis.

The overthrow of the Bashir regime and the promised democratic transition were the best hopes for Sudan to end its international isolation, heal the wounds of decades of oppression and state violence, and build a stable economic and political order in an otherwise violence-ridden Horn of Africa. Sudan had taken the steps in that direction. Last year, the U.S. removed the country, which hosted Osama bin Laden in the 1990s, from the list of state sponsors of terrorism and announced financial aid. Earlier this year, the IMF had reached a \$50 billion debt-relief agreement with the transitional government. The civilian leaders had promised that they would send Bashir to The Hague to prosecute him over allegations of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. The country was also gearing up to organise its first free and fair elections in decades. But the power-hungry generals appear to be more concerned about protecting their interests, which they feared would be at risk had a democratic government taken full control of the country. After all, Sudan's military cannot absolve itself from whatever allegations Bashir is facing. But this time, it faces a stiff challenge from the public. The protesters who brought down Bashir are back on the streets fighting the security personnel. A violent showdown is most likely. Gen. Burhan should desist from more violence. The military should release all the arrested leaders, restore the transition government and let free elections decide the future of the country.

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