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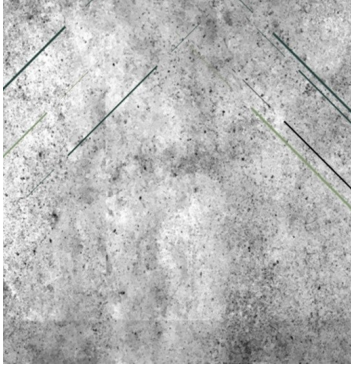## Volume 5, Number 2, 2025

The Role of Civil Society in the Overthrow of Omar Bashir's Military Regime in Sudan and Beyond

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Abstract

President Bashir's military government has secured him to sit in the power for more than three decades since 1989. His strategy has allowed him to survive during many protest cycles. However, the 2018-19 protest has proved a different thing. In less than four months, the participation of Sudanese civil has successfully overthrown him from the power. What remains is that how this democratisation has succeeded and why? Who is behind the mobilisation of Sudanese civil power and how they mobilise people? This paper analyses the role of SPA in the process of Bashir's fall during December 2018 and April 2019. Using Putnam's social capital theory and descriptive qualitative analysis methods, this study suggests that the movement of the Sudanese Professional Association (SPA) has succeeded in mobilising opposition parties, forcing Bashir's security apparatus to announce the ending of his power. The SPA has gained the trust of Sudanese people because of its perceived political innocence and reflects their demands, confirming the trust as Putnam's social capital suggested. Moreover, the Force of Freedom and Change (FFC) Alliance was also formed by the initiative of SPA, utilising their networking to mobilize people against Bashir.

Keywords: Civil Society; Democratisation; Military Regime; Political Change

Introduction

After South Sudan achieved independence with a referendum in July 2011, it lost three-fourths of its oil reserves, which caused its GDP to decrease drastically to the lowest number in the first quarter of the year. Its exchange rate to the US dollar kept worsening, from 5 Sudanese pounds (SDP) per one US dollar in 2011 to 30 SDP per one US dollar in early 2018. It decreased again to the lowest level of 70 SDP in December 3018. To stabilize the prices of essential commodities, the Bashir administration increased the subsidy for wheat, the main ingredient of bread, by 40%. The government claimed it had to bear US 737.000 every day for bread subsidy (Middleeastmonitor, 2018).

Despite the increase in subsidies, the people were still facing hardships over the policy. The price of bread was still high, even three times more than its regular price. The prices of essential commodities caused frustration among the population. These hikes coincided with the increase in gas prices. These hikes in prices motivated the working class to demonstrate in various cities.

However, the strong dominance Bashir had on every part of the government with his military force, the division of the Sudan oppositions, and the mass incarnation of figures involved in the demonstration thwarted any attempt to overthrow Bashir. These are several strategies used by Bashir since he gained power in 1989 with a military coup. He succeeded in creating a government dominated by top military officers. Bashir banned any political party, organisation, professional association, trade union, public organisation, and non-state-owned newspaper and magazine (Hassan & Kodouda, 2019). The military regime led by Bashir controlled almost all institutions

country. Under the Bashir administration, several policies that assigned his military and non-military loyalists to important positions in government institutions made little room for civil engagement in the government.

The opposition forces at the beginning of 2018 were still very much fragmented with their own goals. Political parties of the opposition were divided into three coalitions: *(1) Sudan Call (Nidaa Sudan), (2) Ijmaa Wathaniy, and (3) Ittihadiy Muarid.*

Sudan Call was formed in 2014 and became an opposition whose members have varying Islamic ideologies, such as Sufism, Islamic left, and Islamic right. This coalition is an alliance of several parties that previously had a coalition with Bashir but did not last due to specific reasons and incompatibility with Bashir's regime (El-Gizouli, 2019). This coalition was led by its party leader *Umma* Sadiq El Mahdi. The political parties in this coalition are the *Moktamar Sudan* party, Sudan's Liberation Movement *(Harakah Tahrir Sudan),* Justice and Equality Movement *(Harakatul Adli Wal Musawah),* and Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North *(Harakah Tahrir Sudan Qita Shimal). Ittihad Muarid* is the second opposition party after Sudan Call. Its base consists of lower and middle-class people from Omdurman and Khartoum. This coalition consists of the Sudanese Communist Party, *Baths* Party, *Nashereen* Party, and the New Forces Democratic Movement. These two oppositions became the most dominating political oppositions to Bashir due to their massive militant base. Sadik Mahdi, the chairman of the National Umma Party and initiator of the Sudan Call Coalition, is a figure from Kabilah Mahdi that dominated Omdurman, the most populated city in Sudan. Meanwhile, El Mirghani, the head of the Democratic Unionist Party *(ittihadiy demokraty)*, is a famous Sufi in Sudan. Even though these oppositions have different perspectives, Raslan (2019) argued that they have the same goal: to reform the economy and improve the welfare of the Sudanese people.

Meanwhile, the pro-government forces are the *Thaluf Hiwar Wathani* coalition led by Bashir's party *Muktamar Wathani, the Quwal Ijmaa Wathany* coalition, and the *Tajammu Ittihadiy* coalition. Moreover, all defense agencies of Sudan, which are the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), Sudanese Police Force (SPF), and the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), were sided with the government (Hassan & Kodouda, 2019). Based on these backgrounds, this research will examine the role of the Sudanese people, specifically the Sudanese Professional Association, as a civil society organisation and civil rights movement in driving the transition to democracy in Sudan, which was started by the end of Omar Bashir's regime in April 2018. A series of public demonstrations that caused the fall of President Bashir demonstrates the role of Sudanese civic society in materializing the salient changes in the Sudanese political system.

Method

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative, providing a specific illustration of the research subject's situation, social structuring, and relationships (Neuman, 2013). The primary data of this research are from interviews with Sudanese figures whether in a direct method utilising online communication platforms or through TV podcasting, and documents related to specific events such as agreement letters or releases by parties. This research also uses secondary data from several works of literature, such as books, magazines, scientific journals, governmental documents, previous research related to the discussed topics, and credible online sources. These will help the author illustrate the situation in the field and strengthen the arguments made in this research.This research will begin by outlining previous research and presenting the success of democratisation in the hands of civilian actors, systematically describes the events of movements initiated and coordinated by the Sudanese Professional Association in the process of ousting Bashir in the period of December 2018 until the announcement of Bashir's fall on April 11, 2019. The presentation will serve as analytical material to see how the SPA's strategy in its ability to use social capital and articulate civilian demands to bring down Bashir's militaristic government regime and demand a government that is fully controlled by civilians.

Results

The Just Fall protests not only demonstrated the presence of previously suppressed civil power but also demonstrated the success of the SPA's recruitment efforts to engage civil power in achieving common goals. These protests also demonstrated the process of mobilising the masses to bring about change and ensure their well-being. This mobilisation successfully put pressure on Sudan's security institutions to abandon Bashir's rule, and the masses were determined to remain at the demonstration sites until their goals were achieved, even if it meant suffering significant casualties. This makes the April 6 Just Fall protests a possible explanation for why Sudan's security forces, both the army and other security institutions, did not intervene and use violence against the demonstrators.

The social trust identified in this study is the commitment of civil society organisations to join the SPA initiative upon its formal formation as civilian and political networking in the process of overthrowing Bashir, reflected in the national FFC alliance that combines civil society and political forces in Bashir's opposition. The reciprocal norms, or set of values and expectations, represent a shared agreement outlined in the FFC declaration, which demands economic and political change toward civilian rule.

SPA movements are collective action with an interest in opposing or replacing a military political system of government. Although at first, the aims of these movements were more economical in nature, demands for regime change have articulated civilian desires and demands in instilling the value of democracy as a source and hope for the development of the country. These demands were well articulated by SPA as an association that has never been recorded as having formed a coalition or being a part of the Bashir regime; thus, the association has received great trust from the Sudanese people. The SPA initiative in forming an alliance can be accepted by the opposing forces because of the same goal, specifically to overthrow Bashir by forming a temporary movement *(the Force of Freedom and Change)*.

Discussion

A. Characteristics of the military government under Bashir's leadership

After its independence from Egypt and England in July 1956, Sudan had gone through three coups before President Bashir gained power. The first coup happened on 25 May 1969, led by President Gaafar Nmiery to overthrow Ismail Azhary. Hasyim Atta attempted the second coup on 19 July 1971 to overthrow Nmiery. This coup lasted only a few days due to the lack of support from the Sudanese people and other neighbouring countries (Voll, 1995). The third coup happened on 26 April 1985, attempted by the Minister of Home Affairs Abder Rahman Swar al-Dahab to overthrow Nmiery.

The condition of post-independence Sudan, prone to conflicts on state ideology and the territorial status of South Sudan after colonialism, was a fundamental problem that drove Sudan to political instability and economic crisis (Idris, 2005). These two issues became the factors that motivated Bashir to attempt a coup and overthrow Prime Minister Sadik El-Mahdi and President Mirghany in 1989.

A.1 Military Government

Omar Bashir, supported by National Islamic Front (NIF), an Islamist fundamentalist group led by Hassan Turabi, was successful in his peaceful coup to overthrow Sadik El-Mahdi. This coup started with a movement intending to reform the economic crisis and incompetencies of the government. This movement, called the *Inqaz Wahtaniy* Revolution or the National Salvation Revolution, is the main driving force of the coup in 1989. This coup succeeded in overthrowing El-Mahdi and forming the National Salvation Council, which ultimately brought Bashir to power in 1993.

After succeeding in overthrowing El-Mahdi, Bashir announced a national emergency, which would become the foundation of emergency laws that allowed him to assume posts of the Chief of State, Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, and Chief of Armed Forces during the transition period. Bashir also suspended the Constitution, dissolved parliament, and imposed emergency regulations and a national curfew. Bashir then formed The Revolutionary Command Council for National Salvation (RC CNS-Sudan), a council introduced by Bashir as an emergency government to save Sudan from the economic crisis. It functioned as the national legislature during the transition. RCC was led by Bashir and 14 military officers involved in the coup. The 14 officers are Major General Az Zubair Muhammad Salih as The Chairman, Major General At Tijani Adam at Tahir as Vice Chairman and Deputy Prime Minister; Colonel Salah ad Din Muhammad Karrar as The Head of The Economic Committee; Colonel Muhammad al Amin Khalifa Yunis, Colonel Bakri Hassan Salih as The Head of Foreign Affairs Committee; and Major Ibrahim Shams ad Din as The Head of Youth and Civic Community Committee. Two members, Brigadier Uthman Ahmad Uthman the Head of the Political Committee and Colonel Faisal Madani, were elected by Bashir privately. Bashir did not specify their term of office (Collins & Burr, 2003).

In 1989, RCC dissolved the cabinet of Sadik Mahdi, Prime Minister of Sudan, who was elected by the General Election. RCC banned political parties and civic associations and introduced Sharia law as the state law. In 1993, RCC was disbanded after appointing Bashir as President of Sudan (Simone, 1994). RCCNS also ran a mission to minimise any potential dispute, separatist threat, and economic instability.

After his appointment as President in 1993, Bashir made the defence apparatus a government agency with various privileges. These privileges were noticeable on policies that funnel a large portion of the government budget for both Sudan's national and regional defence apparatus. There has not been an accurate approximation of government funding for the Sudan military. However, in 2016, a record shows that Sudanese's defence agencies received 25% of the government budget. In reality, there is a possibility that the number might reach 70% of the nation's budget through additional allocations (Hassan & Kodouda, 2019), Meanwhile, the funding allocated for education and health was only 3.3 percent from the same fiscal year.

The government stated that the high funding allocation will provide the resources needed to resolve various civil conflicts in Sudan. These conflicts include the South Sudan conflict (1983-2005), conflicts in West Darfur (2003-2011), regional conflicts in South Blue Nile, conflicts in South Kordofan (2011-now), and various small rebellions in the eastern region.

A.2 Laws and regulations of civic society organisation under Bashir administration

Sudan is a member of *the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR).* These treaties bind Sudan to the provided international and regional laws, especially laws concerning freedom of association and the right to peaceful assembly (Davis, 2017).

However, the rights to freedom of association and freedom of speech could not be exercised significantly under Bashir's administration. In 1989, the Sudanese government passed a law called Emergency Law 1989. The government cited the urgency to issue laws that could give legal protection to Sudan's defence and military agencies when limiting and supervising organisations that might threaten Sudan's sovereignty. However, the law was used not only to secure the country. According to Bashir Ali (Ali, 2010) the law had given the legal basis for the authority to control and limit activities of the public, suppress freedom of speech and association, and arrest suspected parties. Bashir dissolved all political parties that became the opposition. Trade unions, workers, and civil society organisations were required to re-register under a new condition that prohibits political involvement (Ali, 2010).

Bashir formed a coordination agency under the Ministry of Social Affairs to oversee a civic activity called the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC). With the enactment of Emergency Law 1989, HAC, which initially functioned as the overseer of the enforcement of civic activity laws, was changed to a government defence organisation. It enforced massive limitations on the people's activities to encourage them to not be involved in political issues such as human rights, civil, administrative, and government service issues (UNDP, 2009).

In 1991, these laws went through revision by adding a new clause that requires any non-government organisations to re-register. The UNDP in 2009 reported that this new law caused the regulation of civic activity to be stricter under bigger control. It caused more convoluted bureaucracy in CSO registration and extensive reporting on donations (UNDP, 2009). The government was persistent in limiting CSOs' independence, especially those involved in human rights issues, by requiring approval from the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs on every proposal before submitting it to a donor (Ati, 2002).

These laws were applicable until the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, or *Naivasha Agreement*. After this agreement, the laws regulating civic engagement were changed to the Organisation of Voluntary and Humanitarian Work Act 2006, passed on 5 March 2006. This law, in a broader scope, defines voluntary and humanitarian work as any voluntary, humanitarian, and non-profit activity performed by a non-government national organisation, non-government international organisation, or charitable organisation to provide humanitarian aid, relief assistance, public service, human rights service, and environmental protection service to improve the social and economic standard of the people and perform voluntary and humanitarian work in the mentioned region.

Despite the spirit of the democratic transformation of Bashir's administration after the signing of Naivasha, the 2006 law is still regarded as a repressive regulation and blocks civic engagement (UNDP, 2009). Several articles in practice are prone to violations: (1) different treatment from the government on the non-government national organisation and non-government international organisation concerning legal certainty and administrative decisions; (2) ambiguous registration procedure, where HAC still has the massive authority in decision-making; (3) the lack of transparency and coherence on institutional regulations, particularly regulations related to the registration procedure, where CSO has to register in various agencies including HAC, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Education; (4) convoluted and long selection process of individuals and organisations due to political reasons; (5) diminution on access to funding, where a proposal from CSO has to be approved by HAC before its submission to a donor; (6) confusing conflicts and overlaps in the registration procedure in government institutions.

The broad definition of CSO adopted by the 2006 Organisation of Voluntary and Humanitarian Work laws gave the government the ability to restrain almost every CSO in Sudan to the law. Therefore, every organisation that provides humanitarian help, relief assistance, and public and environmental service would be declared as part of organisations not allowed to interfere with Sudan's internal affairs by influencing its sovereignty, as stated in Article 5 (Interview with Dr. Muhammad). It should be a main concern for the civic society, given how strong the government's control is on various aspects, from the registration to license revocation. This excessive control caused some CSOs to find a loophole by registering under other viable laws, such as the Cultural Groups Law and Company Registration Law (UNDP, 2009).

From the independence aspect, HAC as a special unit to control civic engagement was regarded as non-independent because the 2006 Law does not specify how and who the HAC members are, which opens the possibility for non-independent members to penetrate the organisation. The laws only state the creation of a special commission that runs functions stipulated in the law (point 18, article 4). Meanwhile, the highest authority in voluntary and humanitarian work is the commissioner-general, while the highest authority in the humanitarian organisations is the registrar general. It is stated in Article 20 of the law, "The President, based on the recommendations from the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, appoints a general commissioner to supervise the activity of humanitarian and voluntary work and regulate honorarium and special rights (FIDH, 2006).

Academia as Partner of Digital Diplomacy

The digital diplomacy of Indonesia primarily advanced through research and training together with policy development at academic institutions, including Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM), Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB), and Universitas Indonesia (UI). For example, the Center for Digital Society, which belongs to UGM's Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, has organized multiple forums and workshops, including the Digital Diplomacy Must Respond to Global Challenge forum. This forum evaluates the modern digital foreign relations pattern, which shows how digital foreign relations might become essential for worldwide diplomacy during fast-paced globalization processes. This forum also points out the necessity of digital diplomacy effectiveness to overcome worldwide problems and enhance international relations (UGM, 2017). Besides, ITB learns digital diplomacy development through public lectures, which describe the rapid digital communication evolution and present its advantages and risks while emphasizing traditional diplomatic methods (Rayadi, 2017). Ideally, academic institutions develop strategic road maps for Indonesia's digital diplomacy while providing evidence-based policy recommendations through their relationships with other entities. Through joint research initiatives and capacity-building programs and joint seminars, the government obtains continuous updates of the latest academic ideas for its strategies. As a result, the mutually beneficial relationship between academics and government establishes, creative knowledgeable, and resilient diplomatic practices that enhance Indonesia's digital diplomatic position.

B. The Role of the Sudanese Professional Association (SPA) in Dismantling Bashir's regime

The Role of Sudanese Professional Association (SPA) in Dismantling Bashir's regime will utilise Robert Putnam's Social Capital Theory in his work *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy.* Putnam suggests a more specific category for social capital, which he calls Elements of Social Capital: Networks of Civic Engagement, Norms of Reciprocity, and Social Trust (Putnam et al., 1992). Putnam's theory states that these three elements facilitate the coordination and co-operation of social organisations to achieve common interests as features of that organisation, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.

Putnam's approach will be used for analysing how the SPA utilises his social capital where eventually became a resource for building its image as a civil society organisation in the perception of the public, consolidating its efforts with opposition forces, and forming networks to mobilise protest movements against Bashir.

B.1 The Network of SPA

The origin of the Sudanese Professional Association was an association formed in 2012 by lecturers at various universities in the Khartoum, Omdurman, and Bahri regions coordinated by Mohamed Yousif Mustafa. The association is called the Sudanese Journalists Network. This network was led by Mohamed Yousif Ahmed al-Mustafa, a journalist and lecturer at the Department of Social Anthropology & Sociology, Khartoum University. Several attempts to form a formal association were made in 2012 and 2014. However, both failed to achieve their goals due to the regime's unilateral policies and the persecution and arrest of the main founding members. Although it was not officially registered due to the government's crackdown on the formation of CSOs, as stated, in October 2016, the association was formed formally after joining The Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors, The Sudanese Journalists Network, and The Democratic Lawyers Association.

Since 2016, the association has been working purely to improve the welfare of Sudanese private workers. As of June 2018, the Association has succeeded in becoming the umbrella of 17 different Sudanese trade unions such as Teacher Committee, Central Committee of Sudanese Doc-

tors, Democratic Lawyers Association, Sudanese Journalists Network, Association of Democratic Veterinarians, University Professors Association, Sudanese Doctors Syndicate (the legitimate), Committee for the restoration of the Engineers Syndicate, Central Pharmacists Committee, Sudanese Engineers Association, Sudanese Plastic Artists Association, Association of Animal Production Specialists, Health Officers Association, Central Committee of Medical Laboratories, Professional Pharmacists Assembly, Association of Professional Accountants and the Association of Agricultural (SPA, 2019).

B.2 The Role of SPA s an Actor of Change

The role of the Sudanese Professional Association (SPA) in overthrowing the Bashir regime can be viewed through the context of the discussion of civil society as the main actor for movements demanding a democratization process in a country. Civil society is the main focus of various studies on the democratization process because civil society is defined as an area of social interaction that includes all the most intimate social groups (especially families), associations (especially voluntary ones), community movements, and various other public communication platforms created through forms of self-regulation and self-mobilisation, both in terms of institutions and activities (Hadi, 2010).

SPA movements that are carried out collectively and aim to make certain changes can be assumed to be a civil movement organisation with a complex or formal organisational nature that identifies itself with one goal of the social movement and attempts to realise it (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). The movements carried out by the SPA conclude that democracy is not obtained by only developing the economic aspect of a country as a prerequisite for the welfare of society or by sharing resources or negotiating and agreeing with elite groups. However, the struggle for democracy is closely related to the mobilisation of masses and resources and strong community resilience. Apart from proving the great role of civil society as actors of democratisation, the events that occurred in the Third World have also proven that democratisation is a phenomenon that arises and is needed by people who live in totalitarian and militaristic countries.

To analyse SPA's role, the researcher used the theory of Robert D. Putnam, which provides a more specific category to the variables used by civil society to achieve its goals. Putnam calls it the Elements of Social Capital, particularly: Networks of civic engagement, norms of reciprocity, and social trust (Putnam, 1993). Using to Putnam's theory, SPA's relationship with various political forces can be examined from these three perspectives. The individual trust of various Sudanese opposition forces is one element that can bind one another to create solid support for a cause. The relationship between the Association and the opposition forces has created a sense of solidarity and cooperation in the community, marked by the joint declaration, i.e., The Declaration of Freedom and Change. The established relationship was a social network or networks of civic engagement tied to the same individual goals. As Putnam said, these social networks will act in organising social capital. Through this social network, APPS and the coalition will cooperate in reciprocal action where each sees the advantage of a greater opportunity to overthrow President Bashir. The exchange of benefits between APPS and various opposition forces granted rise to a common norm or what Putnam called the Norms of reciprocity, and this norm underlies the strength of the social network built because if the benefits are only experienced by one party, there will be no social network based on these norms. Based on this, the Association is very decisive in influencing participation for a political agenda's success, specifically changes in the Sudanese political system.

B.3 Declaration of Force of Freedom and Change (FFC)

On January 1, 2019, there was an attempt to unite the mass movements. Several SPA initiators held a series of closed meetings in Khartoum, Omdurman, and several other areas to explore the potential for forming a temporary alliance to overthrow Bashir. The main objective of the se-

ries of meetings was to convince all opposition political forces that society has become frustrated with economic policies and can only be resolved by overthrowing Bashir's regime (Ashom, 2020).

These meetings succeeded in facilitating and bridging the figures' agreement from those who mobilised demonstrations from the 3 opposition coalitions, particularly *(1). Sudan Call Coalition (Nidaa Sudan), (2). Ijmaa Wathaniy Coalition (National Joint) and (3). The United Opposition Coalition (Ittihadiy Muarid).* However, the challenge remains as Bashir supporters are still handing Sudan's vital aspects such public services, security, and bureaucracy. The map of Sudanese political and civil power is shown here:

Table 1: Map of Organisations during the process of Bashir's overthrow

Pro/Against Bashir	Entity	Organisation
Opposition	Parties	Nidaa Sudan (Sudan Call)
		Tajammu Ittihadiy (Unionist Alliance)
		Quwal Ijmaa Wathaniy (the National Consensus Forces)
	Civil	The SPA
		Mubadarah la Liqahrin Nisaa (the Initiative against Women's Oppression)
Supporters	Parties	*Thaluf Hiwar Wathani (the National Dialog Alliance)*
		Tahaluf Quwa Tsauriyyah (the Revolution Alliance)
	Civil	*Nusroh Syariah (Syariah Support)*
		Salafi Movement
		Supporter of Religious Leaders such as Abdul Hay Yousif and Muhammed Abdel Karim.
	Security and Intelligence	*Quwat Musallahah Sudaniyyah (Sudanese Armed Forces)*
		Jihazul Amni wal mukhobarot (Security and Intelligence Institutions)

Souce: (Awad, 2019)

After the announcement of the alliance's formation on January 1, 2019, FFC immediately announced the signing of a joint declaration, i.e., The Declaration of Freedom and Change. The declaration has three main demands apart from economic demands, i.e., First: An immediate and unconditional end to the presidency of General Omar Al Bashir and his government. Second: Formation of the National Transitional Government. This transitional government will be formed of qualified people based on competence and good reputation, representing various Sudanese groups and accepting a majority consensus system. Their role is to rule for a period of four years until a healthy democratic structure is formed, and elections are held. The transitional government is responsible for the following purposes:

a. Ending the Sudanese civil war by addressing each root cause.
b. Reaching all warring parties to address remaining problems and provide fair and comprehensive security arrangements.
c. Creating a comprehensive constitution to discuss major national issues, to establish a National Constitutional Committee.
d. Implementing policies that improve the economy and the livelihoods of all Sudanese.
e. Overseeing efforts to dismantle the government structures formed by a totalitarian one-party regime and turn them into institutions based on the constitution and the rule of law,

in which the Sudanese people freely elect representatives

f. Developing an independent judicial system based on the constitution, protecting human rights, and the rule of law.

g. Empowering Sudanese women and working to end all forms of discrimination and practices of oppression against them.

h. Enhance Sudan's image globally and work to foster regional and global relations based on mutual respect and common interests.

i. Ensuring the state's commitment to human development, social welfare, and the environment through programs and subsidies in the health, education, and housing sectors.

Third: Immediately ending all violations against peaceful protesters, repealing all laws restricting freedom of speech and expression, and bringing perpetrators of crimes against the Sudanese people to fair trials following national and international law.

To carry out this goal, the Association, and all coalitions that are members of the declaration agreed to take the momentum of the downfall of President Jafar Numeiry, i.e., April 6, 1985, to carry out the same downfall against Bashir. Through social media, the Sudanese Professional Workers Association announced the April 6 demonstration in front of the Sudanese Military Headquarters *(Quwat Musallahah Sudaniyyah)* and the Presidential Palace.

B.4 A Series of Mass Protests Demanding Bashir's Resignation

The demonstration began with a series of protests on 19 December 2018 in Atbara City, where a group of local people expressed their disappointment with the government's performance in the economic sector by burning tires in front of the branch office of the *Muktamar Wathaniy* Party Branch Leadership Council. On the same day, protests also took place in several major cities, including Khartoum, Sennar, Port Sudan, Atbara, and Dongola. Hundreds of people in various regions took to the streets with demands from the Bashir regime to create improvements in the economic sector marked by lower food prices.

The government responded to these protests with repressive measures. The security agency arrested several field coordinators who gathered the masses. The government has also blocked various social media platforms and online chat applications. As a result of these repressive actions, the people became increasingly angry with the government and demanded Bashir and his associate's resignation. On December 25, 2018, SPA spokesman Mohammad Naji Al Ashom announced a change in the demands of demonstrators from initially demanding economic improvement to demanding the regime's immediate resignation. To achieve this goal, demonstrators used anti-Bashir slogans. The most striking slogan is "Just Fall" or in Arabic *"Tasqut Bass"*.

The announcement received positive responses from various communities. They were expecting a more structured and coordinated arrangement of demonstration actions. In mid-January 2019, SPA announced plans for an April 6 demonstration in front of the Sudanese Military Headquarters *(*Quwat *Musallahah Sudaniyyah)* and the Presidential Palace to demand Bashir's resignation, hold free and fair elections, and the release of detained demonstrators. The demonstration in front of the Sudan Military Headquarters was attended by hundreds of thousands of demonstrators and lasted for a week. A total of 6 people were reported killed, 57 were seriously injured, and about 2500 demonstrators were secured by the army (BBC, 2019). On the same day, the government contacted all media to confirm the number of demonstrators.

Figure 1: The campaign "Tasqut Bas/ تسقط بس"(Just Fall).

Source: (Ahmed, 2019)

On April 7, 2019, the demonstration started to receive a response; a spokesperson for the presidential family, Dr. Attayeb Mostafa, in a meeting with representatives, stated that Bashir was considering the demand for his resignation because Bashir was considerably surprised by the large number of people who had joined at the April 6 demonstration; hence, he pledged to comply with the demonstrators' demands immediately (TV, 2019).

However, this statement was a regime ploy because, on April 10, Bashir attempted to adopt a repressive policy and use armed force to stop the demonstrations. Bashir ordered Brig. Gen. Kamal Ma'rouf, Chief of Army Unit of the Sudanese National Army, to meet with the Sudanese Police Chief and issue orders to take all necessary measures to disperse the masses, for whatever reason. However, the Police Chief rejected this and returned the army's responsibility as the party responsible for state security (TV, 2019).

Bashir's efforts to disperse the demonstrators failed. Moreover, on the night of April 10, the Sudanese security agency officials instead conducted negotiations with protesters. There was a meeting that night between Salah Gosh, Sudan's Head of Intelligence, Ahmed Haroun of the Presidential Staff, and demonstrators' representatives, specifically Sadik El Mahdi, Mohamed Wadaah, Yahya Alhassil, and several other unrecorded figures. The meeting resulted in an agreement that the army would grant the demonstrators' aspirations and would not use force (Ashom, 2020).

In the early hours of 1.45 am on April 11, Gosh presented the results of negotiations with the demonstrators' representatives that, basically, the Sudanese security institutions could not use the force of arms to stop the action. Bashir was disappointed with the result and removed Gosh from his post (TV, 2019). On the morning of 11 April 2018, the demonstration delivered results, and the Minister of the Interior of Sudan and Chairman of the Transitional Military Council (TMC) Lt. Gen. Ahmed Awad Ibn Auf announced Bashir's resignation. The military temporarily took over the government for 24 hours to await forming a transitional government (LeRiche, 2019). Auf also promised to try Bashir and his associates and return the state assets controlled by Bashir. A day after the announcement of President Bashir's coup by the military, the Sudanese Professional Workers Association expressed strong opposition to the announcement of the coup by alleging that Auf was Bashir's closest person and the military was not entitled to make changes (Team, 2019).

On this basis, the association stated that the demonstrations would continue until civilians completely took over the government. This condition forced Lt. Gen. Ibn Auf to resign from Chairman of the TMC and was replaced by Lt. Gen. Abdel Fattah Abdelrahman Burhan. The demonstrators more readily accepted Burhan's leadership because Burhan, at the time of the April 6 demonstration, was a military figure who came down and mingled with the demonstrators to listen to their aspirations. Burhan also promised in his speech that he would try Bashir and his associates.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis in the discussion, this study concludes that the Sudanese Professional Association (SPA) played a crucial role in the process of ousting President Bashir from December 2018 to April 11, 2019. This role was reflected in its success in mobilising the masses, combining

economic interests with political ones, and uniting political forces opposing Bashir to oust the regime.

As a democratising actor, the SPA's role in mobilising the masses was reflected in its ability to coordinate a series of protests that inspired other protests both in the capital, Khartoum, and in other major Sudanese cities. From December 2018 to April 2019, protests occurred almost daily, starting with the first one on December 19 in the city of Atbara. The increase in crowd size at each protest indicated strong civil society participation over the four months. The SPA's success in recruiting the public to take to the streets in these protests was supported by several factors: its precise selection of students as the young generation who would become pioneers in the protests, its precise selection of locations for the protests, and its ability to combine economic and political objectives.

To create a civil participation network, the SPA initiated the formation of the national alliance, the Force of Freedom and Change (FFC), which became the leading alliance in coordinating the "Just Fall" protests to pressure Sudan's security institutions to remove Bashir from power. When the protests to oust Bashir proved ineffective, the FFC declared a joint agreement on January 1, 2019, to combine the interests of economic reform with regime change.

This declaration received widespread public acceptance and support. To recruit people for the April 6, 2019, protests, the SPA used the occasion as a reminder of the 1985 civil war that had successfully brought down President Nimeiry. Furthermore, the strong public support for the April 6 protests was also due to the actions coordinated by the SPA that garnered public attention and sympathy the day before the protests, such as the hunger strike by doctors in the capital, Khartoum, and the strikes by the Sudanese Doctors' Committee *(Lajnat Atibba' Al-Sudan)*, the Central Dentists' Committee *(Lajnat Atibbaa' Al-Asnan Al-Markaziat)*, and the Central Pharmacists' Committee *(Lajnat Al-Siyadilat Al-Markaziat).*

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