

Review of: "Political Transition in Sudan"

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Text: Political Transition in Sudan,

Review:

On the example of Sudan, author deals with one of the most important questions in today's political science and theory in general, which is how to create sustainable institutional and democratic political framework for accommodation of plurality of our societies. Or in words of quoted South-Sudanese philosopher Francis Deng, it is the question of how "to bring together disparate peoples with a history of animosity into a framework of one state". Models of uniformity, or 'we-the-people' concerning one unified body-politic, usually based on domination of one distinguished ethnic, religious, or racial background to act as a 'host-nation' seem to fail such expectations not only in Sudan but also elsewhere. I believe that we, as humanity, will have to provide an efficient answer to this crucial question for the future of 'polis' as such.

Through a comprehensive review of Sudanese political history author shows that it has been a history of such attempts to uniformity which regularly failed to, as author says, "create a true democracy that embraces the nation's diversity".

Instead, such attempts to 'construct one nation' resulted in "mismanagement of identity", they relied on "the politics of exclusion" which only benefitted "a small portion of population, while excluding the majority from political decisions", that is, in the case of Sudan, they ended in authoritarian, or even worse, military regimes. In return, it resulted in various identity movements and separatisms, a 'polity-seeking' entities (Brubaker, 1995), again based on similar attempts to uniformity. One must agree with author's conclusion that "[P]olitical elites and the military have in the past hijacked political change brought about by mass protests to promote their own limited political objectives".

In addition to this context, author rightfully involves economic aspects, as well as wider regional, geopolitical context, including the involvement of the world's great powers always to the benefit of a powerful, 'small portion of population'.

Nevertheless, author suggests possible measures that would help to create a flexible, democratic framework that would go beyond the 'quest for uniformity', and remain opened to plurality. Author suggests initiation of "an inclusive constitutional drafting process that garners wider lays the foundation for democratic institutions; Uphold principles of inclusivity and participation of all communities, regions, and marginalized groups in the peace negotiations, the constitutional drafting process, transitional justice, and other political transition processes; initiate the constitutional dialogue process as a matter of urgency to avoid regional fragmentation and state collapse; establish a peace commission as per the Constitutional Document to help bring the different negotiation tracks under one comprehensive peace process for Sudan and address major issues that have hindered other armed groups from taking part in negotiations; and align community level peacebuilding, national reconciliation, transitional justice, and the constitution-making processes to overcome the long-lasting and deep-rooted problem of Sudan political culture".

This is indeed a draft for “an alternative paradigm for thinking about what it means to manage and create a plural society”. But, and I am convinced that author is aware of this paradox, that exactly here where the text finishes, true problem just starts. Constitutional conventions of the greatest possible inclusion, dialogue process involving reconciliation etc. as a kind of rerun of a social contract process is based on previous recognition of all participants as equals. Economic stratification and regional geopolitical constellation are usually the enemies of ‘alternative paradigms’ for inclusive and plural societies. They effectively undermine equal leverage of participants and unalterably determine the course and outcome of the dialogue. But this ‘critical remark’ is just a discussion point, or better put a reflection, and not a suggestion for re-writing of certain portions of the text.

The text is acceptable also in terms of methodological requirements as well as in terms of consulted literature. It is informative and thought provoking. **Therefore, I would recommend the text titled as “Political Transition in Sudan” for publication in your magazine without any additional corrections.**

Sincerely,

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