

### Session Three

#### “Democratic Governance in Non-Western Context”



MC: Ms. Akiko IKEDA, Senior Administrative Officer of FAO Regional Office, Cairo

Ms. Ikeda earned B.A. from Waseda University in Tokyo, and M.A. in sociology from the New School for Social Research in New York. After UNV assignment in Geneva and Nairobi, she joined the United Nations Secretariat in New York as Associate Social Affairs Officer at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in 1995. In 2000, she joined the Mine Action Service, UN Department of Peacekeeping Operation. From 2007 to 2008, she worked as officer of the Office of United Nations Democracy Fund. In the mid-2010, she led the show case project on the UN PKO at the United Nations Pavilion of the Shanghai World Expo 2010. In 2011, she joined the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq as Senior Administrative Officer at the Office of Chief Mission Support. After serving in the UNMIL Liberia and the UN/FAO Rome HQs, she became Senior Administrative Officer in FAO’s regional office in Cairo in 2017.

Presenters: Ms. Halima Abdeen Abdalla and Mr. Koji SAKANE

Discussants: Professor SATO KAN and Professor Mitsugi ENDO

#### Presentation by Ms. Halima Abdeen Abdalla “Democratic Process in Sudan”



Geographic and strategic location of Sudan, located between the Middle East and Africa, has affected the entire region as well as the democratic process in Sudan. In Sudan’s population of more than 46million, many are young people with those under the age of 30 constituting almost seventy percent of the entire population. Young people are elements of both political stability and revolution. The large number of young people creates employment issue.

Since its independence in 1956, Sudan has gone through two types of governance system, liberal parliamentary system occasionally intervened by the military system. After the military coup d’état in December 2019 ousted former president Omar al-Bashir from power, who ruled almost thirty-three years, the transition period lasted till 2021 with some peace agreements among the military groups and civilian groups. In January 2022, president Hamdok of the

transitional government failed to appoint a government. Parties to the peace agreements hardly represented the voices of the public. Rather they focused on power distribution.

There has been negative impact of the coup d'état on economic and social conditions. About 211,000 people were displaced only in 2021 due to intercommunal conflict and armed attacks. Many donors stopped funding and suspended debt relief. JICA's support for the transitional government has also been suspended. Sudan's health system mostly depended on donor support. So the suspension has caused serious problem in the health system. Furthermore, the cost of living has sharply risen and many suffer from food insecurity. Some thirty percent of the Sudanese population face hunger. Ironically situations are worse than those under the Bashir regime. Moreover, mismanagement of natural resources in the gold mining and trade sector has been serious. Smuggling has flourished. This reduced funds from taxes and royalties, thus diminishing the government's ability to finance socioeconomic priorities.

Those who are against the coup d'état of 2019 are also divided. One part, such as the Force of Freedom and Change, wishes more negotiation and peaceful political solution while the others, such as Sudanese Professional Association and the communist party, want to overthrow the current regime.

Reasons for the difficulty of democratic governance in Sudan are the weakness of political parties and their inability to bear the consequences of the democratic process which is quite complex due to religious and social diversity. Furthermore, there exists a negative impact of external interventions particularly two regional actors competing control over Sudan, mainly between the group of UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt and the other group of Qatar, Turkey, and Russia. The former regime over thirty years controlled key sectors of economy. There is a strong public pressure for justice and accountability for the military leaders.

For the achievement of democratic transition in Sudan it is important that democracy culture is spread and corruption is addressed. Development and participation of society also matter. Moreover, pro-democracy vision for Sudan's future with unified Sudanese political actors is crucial. The integration of the Rapid Support Forces into the regular ranks of the army is necessary and the revision of agreements should be made to stop fighting among armed groups.

## **Presentation by Mr. Koji SAKANE “Democracy in Non-Western Context”**



Following the specific context of Sudan as explained by Ms. Halima, Mr. Sakane explained cases of Africa and the Middle East in general.

Ten years after the Arab spring, democracy has sustained only in Tunisia. But even Tunisia’s democracy has been shrunk into failure with this August’s political turmoil over the amended Constitution. The Global State of Democracy Report of 2021 shows that democracy in Africa and the Middle East is in a declining trend. Here we have the question whether democracy is incompatible with non-Western context.

The failure of the Arab spring is because new democratic regimes have not been able to satisfy people’s economic demands. Unemployment rates remain high even after the Arab Spring.

In Sahara Desert, terrorism and coup d’état are prevalent. People are often dissatisfied with government services, unequal policies, and discrimination against minorities, while authorities suppress these demands by force. This creates a vicious cycle though which dissatisfaction amplifies among people. It is important for governments to provide satisfactory services, especially to minorities and people living in remote areas.

The other hazard in democratization process in Africa lies in colonial legacy. National identities and ethnic identities are often incompatible in Africa. Election, as a core element of democracy, awakens people’s ethnic identities, thus social integration under national identity becomes loosen. Special social attentions have to be paid to minorities.

In spite of these challenges, democracy still has its comparative advantage over authoritarian regime, as the former guarantees fairness, transparency, and efficiency while the latter is often linked with corruption, inefficiency, and nepotism.

According to the survey by Afro Barometer, democracy is still aspired by people, although democracy has a potential to enlarge social division and may not pay due attentions to socially vulnerable people. Lessons from the Arab Spring indicate that economic and social challenges should be addressed rightly and inclusive policy for ethnic minorities is indispensable in order to maintain durable democracy. Control of weapons and armed forces is another important factor. Efficient government structure is also needed for democracy to work. Capacity building of civil servants is crucial needed.

## Comments by Professor Kan Hiroshi SATO



The names of authoritarian regime and terrorist are usually named by the westerners. Those who are called as authoritarian regime and terrorism never call themselves as such.

Many Arab leaders with authoritarian regime proclaim the value of democracy in their political speech to the people. They seek hereditary presidentship as in the case of Syria though it failed in Yemen and Egypt because of the Arab Spring.

The notion that the shift from authoritarianism to democracy is evolutionary comes with the sense that democracy is more advanced. But this is not for the Arabs. Before the Renaissance, Arab was more advanced than Europe. If democracy is evolution, the process is expected to be irreversible. But in reality, in the Middle East and Arab, experiences reveal reversal process from democracy to authoritarianism, particularly after the Arab Spring. So the question is whether democracy is a progress or not.

Nation-building in the Middle East can be understood in terms of democratization and social integration. After WWI, with the collapsed of the Ottoman Empire, social integration proceeded. With the Arab Spring, both democratization and social integration were aimed. But this reversed with scattered society infected with conflicts while the democracy system remained. There arose a nostalgic hope for stability in those days under integrated society with nondemocracy which guaranteed safety and food security. In Yemen, Sudan, and Syria, people need food even with weak democracy. Donors try to seek maximum human security with capacity building in search for ideal society, whereas there are voices for food and safety even though it only guarantees minimum human security with minimum democracy. This point needs to be held by outsiders.

Yemen suffers from civil war for more than eight years, as Syria and Sudan do. We should seek for not only post-conflict development but also in-conflict development along with emergency aid. Health and education are important for children even if situation is unstable. Otherwise, under such a long-lasting conflict, children lose whole primary school age. They cannot wait for post-conflict situation. Democracy is important but we need to do health and educational assistance before democratization.

## Comments by Professor Mitsugi ENDO



We are in the era of democratic recession. The latest report of Freedom House is titled as Global Expansion of Authoritarian Rule.

After the CW, democracy in Southern and West Africa had improved. With the notion of polyarchy, with the elements of competition and participation, there had been a dynamics leading dictators to transform regimes to very simple multi-party system.

Democracy is composed of complex components. Contestation and participation are divided among some other components. Contestation is guaranteed not only with political parties but also with press freedom. Participation is guaranteed by the fairness of voting as well as suffrage.

There has arisen a new type of authoritarianism, conceptualized as electoral authoritarianism or competitive authoritarianism without freedom of press freedom and/or fairness in voting. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, scholars found out problem in press freedom and fairness in voting. Scholars reevaluated it as a new form of political regime, competitive authoritarianism.

In competitive authoritarianism, election is easy to be manipulated. It is never fair or free. Press freedom is not always guaranteed. The incumbent regime is supported by the media. Opposition groups face unfair ground for competition in election.

In African cases, neopatrimonialism hinders democratic process. It has three dimensions of political practices of clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption. Project of V-Dem found out that African regimes have not been significantly more or less neopatrimonial than regime in other parts of the developing world. In particular presidentialist regimes exist as neopatrimonial democracy.

Lastly it is important to note the impact of external relations. Foreign aid is utilized to sustain authoritarian regimes, as in the cases of Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda. There is the emergence of illiberal autocratic modernities in recipients. Elites of donor recipient countries combine authoritarian politics with liberal discourse of efficiency, thus winning elections. In short, foreign aids contribute to the continuation and reinforcement illiberal regimes in Africa. Museveni of Uganda is particularly a case in point.

The roles of military and PKO could be also discussed in considering democracy in Africa, though these cannot be discussed in this panel due to time limitations.

## **Free discussion**

In the free discussion, there were questions and comments from the floor with regard to the importance of democracy for the people as well as by the people, the importance of respect for local cultural context for inclusive governance, the impact of external intervention and colonial legacy, the role of youth and women for democratization, the role of political leadership as well as well-trained civil servants.

Panelists made additional comments in the free discussion section.

Ms. ABDALLA addressed the importance of both young people and women for democratization. But she pointed out that during the transition government in Sudan power sharing system excluded women. She sees the significant impact of the external intervention on democracy and adds that leaders should think about resource distribution for the country, instead of distribution only among themselves or among the external powers.

Mr. SAKANE interpreted that neopatrimonial system explains the case of Sudan. He values the importance of shifting from neopatrimonial system to democracy. He also mentioned that external assistance should be reached even during the conflict. According to him, to stop the next generation from fleeing the country in pursuit of stability should be stopped. For this, building trust matters. For this, democracy with robust governance structure is important. As for social integration, Mr. Sakane pointed out the framework of impunity from the previous regimes so that the country can move on. In view of China's growing interest in Africa and prospect of creating anti-U.S. regime, he argues that Japan should pay attention to Africa and establish good relation through assisting in creating better society.

Professor SATO added that in case of Yemen, people become rather internally displaced persons. In Yemen, external intervention has just prolonged the conflict. What is important is that people choose their own regime, even if it is not necessarily democratic enough.