

ELITE



Meeting Senator Samaa Soliman



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ELITE



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Happy New Year

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ELITE Magazine, its board, management and editors mourn the passing of Professor Dr. Nevin Abdel Khalek, a member of the magazine high board and a professor of political science at our faculty. She was a supporter of all the ideas and goals represented by this magazine, and was a contributor to it with her writings and opinions before becoming a member of its board. May God Almighty shower her with His abundant mercy and admit her into the highest paradise.



Interview with Senator Samaa Soliman

Rana Ahmed & Farida
Ibrahim

Elite magazine editors held a meeting with Senator Samaa Soliman, undersecretary of the Foreign, Arab, and African Affairs Committee of the Senate and Secretary of political affairs of Homat al-Watan Party. At the headquarters of the Senate.

Q1: How did your relationship with the Faculty of Economics and Political Science begin? How did the political science major affect your personality?

The reason for choosing the faculty was my intense love for reading, especially with regard to the fields of geography and history. I was fond of reading Al-Ahram newspaper because of the political analysis it provides. However, at the same time, I was not a fan of memorization and indoctrination, so I preferred to join the scientific department at the school. Enrolling a scientific faculty was not the motivation behind this, but my goal was to get a high score that qualifies me to join the Faculty of Economics and Political Science. Indeed, I became among the top achievers in Kafr el-Sheikh governorate and then joined the faculty. I preferred the Department of Political Science. However, being convinced that international relations aren't managed only by politics, I chose economics as a minor. I have always been grateful to my professors,

especially professor Dr. Ali al-Din Hilal, whose lectures were characterized by great respect, in which he instilled a lot of values and good teachings, and I am grateful to many of my professors, such as Dr. Salwa Soliman, Dr. Fatma Al-Zenati, Dr. Ahmed Youssef, Dr. Nevine Mosaad, Dr. Ahmed Al-Rashidi, Dr. Ahmed abdelwanis, Dr. Mohamed Shawqi, Dr. Mohammed Kamal and many others. Then, I graduated in 1997, and my goal was to become a political researcher.



Q2 : How did your relationship begin with the political and parliamentary life in Egypt?

I have already become an intern at the Gulf Center for Strategic Studies, a center that has branches in various countries such as the United Kingdom, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and others.

I spent almost ten years there, starting as a security researcher and then being promoted until I became the executive director of the center, deputy editor-in-chief of the Gulf Affairs magazine, and head of the Women's Studies Unit. After that, I worked at the Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC) affiliated with the Cabinet, specifically in the Future Studies Unit, in which I participated in the establishment of Egypt's Vision 2030 and the sectoral studies emanating from it to facilitate its implementation. Also, I issued a book on the values of Egyptian society. After that, I moved to the Political Studies Unit at the center and then became Responsible for the Early Warning Unit. I spent about 13 years at the center.

This helped me gain many experiences in several fields, either within the framework of developing comprehensive visions and strategies or developing my ability to predict potential crises before they occur in addition to the ability to come up with solutions to problems. Then came my appointment to the Senate, which was a different experience, according to which I moved from research and theoretical work to practical application. Fortunately, my experience at IDSC previously prepared me for this; due to the preparation of policy papers for the prime minister and thus its direct connection and communication with the rest of the state

institutions. Thus, I did not find It difficult to engage in practical political life. This actually was reflected in my performance in the Senate, whether by participating in amending laws or contributing to "Ekterahat B Raghba", a mechanism by which the Senate makes suggestions on various social issues, whether educational, media, or others. All this was in line with my master's degree from the Institute of Arab Studies and PhD from the Faculty of Economics and Political Science, as well as a fellowship at the National Defense College.

Q3: We would like to congratulate you on assuming the position of undersecretary of the Foreign, Arab, and African Affairs Committee of the Senate. we would like to know the nature of its work and its role, especially in light of the changes taking place in the region.

As for the work of the committee, it hosts intellectuals from various think tanks and research centers, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to shed light on the most important current issues and events and discuss them with the members of the committee; to submit policy papers to the president of the Senate and then to the concerned ministries or directly to the presidency. So, we are aware of everything happening in the region; and our work comes as an early warning to the decision-maker to deal with the repercussions of accelerated events in the area.

The committee is also mainly concerned with topics related to Egyptian national security from the perspective of foreign policy. The Arab, African,



and European relations are at the forefront of our priorities. We are also interested in strengthening ties with regional organizations such as the League of Arab States, the African Union, and the Conference on Islamic Cooperation, as well as international organizations such as the United Nations, all in line with Egypt's Vision 2030 which aims at utilizing foreign policy to achieve the highest return from economic development. For example, under the guidance of the political leadership, we are currently working on conducting many agreements that would attract foreign investments and diversify import sources so that we don't completely and solely rely on a single source but provide diverse alternatives. In this context, we are strengthening relations between Egypt and India, Latvia, and Kazakhstan to import strategic goods instead of relying entirely on countries such as Ukraine or Russia. In parallel, we are working on other issues, such as self-sufficiency and localization of industries.

Q4 : Both regional and global tensions affect the stability of countries. From your point of view, what policies should be followed to maintain cohesion and stability?

In fact, since 2011, the Egyptian political leadership has been able to read the scene and the various plans to divide the region into states and promote it to a "New Middle East" and has

also taken steps to maintain the state's resilience under these changes, whether by strengthening the army, working to increase and diversify its sources of armament, adopting economic reform programs, working to strengthen infrastructure, trying to maintain self-sufficiency, in addition to the development of political life and the existence of strong political parties and working to raise awareness; which contributes to maintaining internal cohesion against any extremist attempts to undermine our national security. Personally, I am not worried because of my belief in the existence of strong and cohesive people, bodies, and institutions.

Q5 : According to your point of view, what is the role of parties in promoting political participation in Egypt In your opinion? Do parties have a role in changing internal public opinion?

If we come across the definition of political parties, we find that they are social organizations seeking power, formulating governments, producing youth political leaders and competencies, raising awareness on various issues,



as they try to find solutions to existing problems, and therefore have an important role in strengthening democracy and promoting good practices such as the peaceful rotation of power. Therefore, parties must build structures and programs that enable them to spread and mobilize. Indeed, there are examples of such powerful parties as Homat El Watan, Mostakbal Watan, El Shaab El Gomhoory, and El Wafd. Their efforts to raise awareness and strengthen internal cohesion come as they prepare for the upcoming legislative elections. There are also numerous examples of many other parties on the ground, more than eighty parties, so I think that the entry of these small parties into coalitions enables them to unite the fronts and thus compete effectively with the rest of the parties in the electoral process.

Q6 : What are the expected challenges for small parties in forming such effective coalitions? How can they overcome these obstacles to ensure better representation?

I believe that the main problem is the lack of flexibility in changing leadership in case of mergers. To overcome this problem, it must be known that the permanence of the situation is impossible and that the rotation of power, whether inside the party or outside it, is inevitable. Therefore, making concessions in this regard is necessary to organize Egyptian political life especially during this time.

Q7: According to your point of view, what role can the legislative branch (the House of Representatives and the Senate) play in solving economic problems?

In general, any economic problem is associated with the need to amend existing laws or to develop new ones, which is the core function of the two chambers. I would like to note that any law being discussed seeks to achieve economic development both directly and indirectly. In the end, these laws aim at building a good citizen. In that framework, the human building strategy was launched under the auspices of the Ministry of Endowments, this is in addition to the human rights strategy and the strategy of Egypt 2030.

Q8 : With the existence of constitutional provisions that mandate the representation of youth and women in the Legislature, what measures can the parties adopt to ensure that these quotas are achieved, in addition to enabling these groups to effectively influence the formulation of policies?

The responsibility of training these groups lies with the political parties through the training and Education Secretariat located within each party in order to enable them to practice political work and assume various positions both inside and outside the parties. With regard to the empowerment of women, for example, there is a strategy for the empowerment of women, which was issued by the National Council for women to empower them economically, politically, and legally and to protect them from violence. This all comes in line with the required percentage of representation in the House of Representatives, which is 25 % for women and 25 % for youth, as well as 10 % for women in the Senate, as stated in the Constitutional Amendments of 2019.



Inauguration of the “Artificial Intelligence Economic Observatory

Design&Translation by: Lydia Amir, Political Science, 4th Year

Under the auspices of Dr Mohamed Samy Abdel-Sadek, president of Cairo University, Dr Hanan Mohamed Ali, Acting Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Political Science has inaugurated the “Artificial Intelligence Economic observatory” on Monday November 11th 2024. Dr Adla Ragab, director of the Center for Economic and Financial Research and Studies at FEPS presented the Observatory’s vision, the objective behind its establishment and its importance, in light of the implementation of the Cairo University AI strategy.

She proceeded to showcase examples of AI applications in various domains, showing how it solved economic problems in specific, realistic, feasible and measurable ways. Dr Adla Ragab highlighted the importance of obtaining and analyzing data using digital technologies to build simulation and prediction models,

predicting the future in such a way as to allow the mobilization of modern technologies and AI to serve the decision-making process.

Dr Hala El-Said, Economic Advisor to the President, Dr Maged Othman, ex-Minister of Communication and Information Technology, Dr Rabab El-Sherif, Dean of the Faculty for Graduate Studies in Nanotechnology, Dr Aly Fahmy, Dean of the Faculty of AI at the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport, Dr Nevine Makram Labib, Director of the Information Technology Sector at Sadat Academy for Management Sciences, Dr Adel Fathy, director of the Technological business and solutions sector at the National Bank of Egypt, Mr Mohsen Sarhan, executive director of the Egyptian Food Bank, Dr Ayman Ghoneim, Director of the Arab Federation for Digital Economy and FEPS alumni,

all participated in the discussion of the presentation. Equally present were Dr Hala Abu Ali, director of the Economics Section, Dr Kamal Selim, director of the Social Computing Section, Dr Ola El Khawaga, Dr Mona El Garf, Dr Taghrid Hasouba, Assistant Professor Haidy Aly, vice director of the Center for Economic Studies, Dr Shahinaz Gamal, director of the FEPS business incubator, and Dr Ola El-Sayed, director of the Center for Surveys and Statistical Applications.

Pathways for financing and future partnerships between the Economic Observatory and various research institutes were explored.

Furthermore, all the guests underscored the importance of the Observatory taking on the task of observing and analyzing economic phenomena using AI, as well as raising awareness of the technologies of AI and its uses, building the capacities of researches and students, and offering innovative learning solutions for people of determination.

In the end, all the guests agreed on beginning to formulate an executive plan for the Observatory and selecting the team, as well as specifying the necessary technical requirements to begin the Observatory's work.





Seminar on Egypt's Economic Journey and Path to Sustainable Development

To foster academic discussion and the exchange of ideas on contemporary economic issues, the Department of Economics at the Faculty of Economics and Political Sciences, Cairo University, held a seminar presented by Professor Mahmoud Mohy ElDin, a faculty member and UN Special Envoy on Financing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. During the seminar, Professor Mohy ElDin delivered a concise presentation on his new book, *The Political Economy of Crisis Management and Reform in Egypt*, a significant scholar contribution that highlights Egypt's economic policies over the past seventy years. He provided a comprehensive analysis of key milestones in the Egyptian economy, along with the reform and development policies adopted throughout its history.



Additionally, he highlighted the foundational ideas that shaped the field of political economy, discussing the challenges and misguided policies many nations face in managing their economies. The seminar emphasized pillars of sustainable growth and inclusive development, including macroeconomic stability, future-oriented fiscal management, resource allocation based on market mechanisms, and economic openness to the global market, among others, as essential components of achieving sustainable development and inclusive growth.

Professor Mohy ElDin also reviewed the stages of Egypt's economic evolution since 1952, offering an analysis of mechanisms for addressing challenges and setting priorities for economic policies beyond crisis management. The seminar was moderated by Professor Hala Abo Ali, Chair of the Department of Economics, who emphasized that the event reflects the faculty's commitment to advancing academic research and fostering dialogue on economic development and contemporary economic issues.

The seminar also featured commentary from prominent figures, including Professor Aly ElDin Helal, a distinguished political science scholar and former dean of the faculty, Professor Samia Fawzy, an economics professor and former Minister of Trade and Industry, and Dr. Adnan Mazarei, a non-resident fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics and former Deputy Director at the International Monetary Fund who participated virtually.



The event was held at the Faculty of Economics and Political Sciences, attended by a select group of professors, experts, researchers, and students interested in the subject matter. At the conclusion of the seminar, Acting Dean Professor Hanan Hassan honored Professor Mahmoud Mohy ElDin, acknowledging his academic contributions and his role in enriching economic discussions that enhance the understanding of development and reform issues in Egypt and the region.





Ten Years of the African Union Agenda 2063: Achievements and Challenges in the Development Journey

Huda Nada - level four - Statistics

On Tuesday, December 3, 2024, a panel discussion was held at the Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University, titled "Ten Years of the African Union's Agenda 2063: Achievements and Failures." The discussion was moderated by Dr. Hala El-Rashidi, Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Law and Director of the Center for Political Research and Studies. Hosting Dr. Mohamed Ashour Mahdy, Professor of Political Science at the Faculty of African Studies, Cairo University, and Ambassador Nader Fath El-Alim Ser El-Khatem, Head of the African Union Permanent Mission to the Arab League.

Dr. Hala El-Rashidi began by thanking the attendees and then introduced a speech by Prof. Dr. Hanan Mohamed Ali, Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Political Science, who also expressed gratitude to the attendees and welcomed Dr. Ali El-Din Helal, Professor of Political Science and former Minister of Youth, and Ambassador Laila Bahaa.

She mentioned the late Dr. Abdel-Malek Awda, former Dean of the Faculty, who had a research chair named in his honor through the collaboration between the faculty and the Kemet Botros Ghali Foundation for Knowledge and Peace. She also highlighted the chair's activities, which include organizing seminars, events, and competitions in the field of African studies, overseen by Dr. Ali El-Din Helal and Dr. Hala El-Rashidi.

Ten years after the adoption of the 2063 Agenda, launched by the African Union during the 50th anniversary of the Organization of African Unity, the agenda carries the slogan "The Africa We Want." The agenda aims to address many goals, including eradicating poverty, achieving sustainable development, and ensuring justice.



This led to the need to study the achievements and identify the obstacles faced in achieving the goals and the ways to overcome them.

Dr. Mohamed Ashour Mahdy discussed the evaluation of the decade-long plan of the agenda. His presentation answered the following questions: What is the agenda? Why the agenda? How the agenda? And where is the agenda headed?

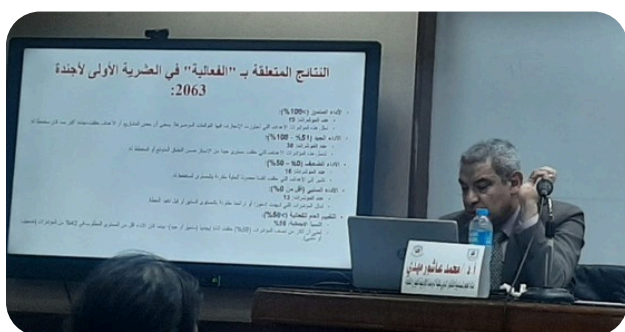
The agenda is a 50-year developmental strategy that began in 2018 and will continue until 2063. It is divided into five phases: the first decade (2014-2023), the second (2024-2033), the third, fourth, and fifth phases, each ten years. The agenda was created to address the challenges faced by previous experiments in African and to continue successes achieved by some of them.

Dr. Mahdy outlined the seven aspirations of the agenda: a prosperous Africa, a politically integrated and united continent, good governance and democracy, peace and security, shared cultural identity and common values, citizen-led leadership, and empowering Africa to play a key global role. Based on these aspirations, twenty goals were set, with twelve programs and projects designed to drive the achievement of these goals and hence the strategy. The goals were highly ambitious, such as the creation of a virtual African university, silencing the guns, and developing an African space strategy, and other ambitious goals.

Four indicators were set to evaluate the first decade's plan: alignment, relevance, effectiveness, and intensity. As for the level of alignment, the goals and programs were in line with the national development plan. However, in terms of responding to the specificity of each country, there was weakness, as the plan was framed in a general manner that did not consider the specificities of some countries. This explains the performance disparities between the North and South on one hand, and between the East and West on the other. Regarding the alignment between the agenda's goals and other strategies, the goals were in harmony with the Sustainable Development Goals and the five priorities outlined in the African Development Bank Group's program. The criteria set for efficiency were weak. Overall, the results related to effectiveness showed that ten indicators were achieved beyond expectations, particularly in areas such as free trade, enhancing infrastructure, and increasing awareness of the agenda at the political level.

Thirty indicators showed good performance, particularly in health, nutrition, education, technology, and some aspects of security and peace. Sixteen indicators showed weak performance, and three indicators showed negative performance, such as silencing the guns in Africa, climate change, natural resource management, poverty, and inequality.

Dr. Mahdy ended his speech by stating that ten years was not enough to judge the agenda's success, as some objectives require longer periods to be fully realized.



Ambassador Nader Fath El-Alim started by thanking the attendees and then took the audience on a journey discussing the practical side of implementing the agenda. He explained the seven aspirations of the agenda and stated that it was built on two key principles: helping African countries emerge from colonialism and achieving minimal economic integration. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) helping to implement free trade effectively. He also emphasized the importance of avoiding Western-imposed terms, such as "sub-Saharan" and "North of the Sahara," stating that Africa is one entity and should be treated as such. One of the goals of the 2018 agenda was freedom of movement, with the ambition to achieve a unified African passport that would allow its holders to enter many African countries without a visa, which is part of the African integration programs.

One of the key goals of the agenda in 2018 was the freedom of movement, with the ambition to create a unified African passport that would allow its holders to travel freely across many African countries without a visa. He also discussed good governance and democracy, as well as the imposition of sanctions on countries that violate constitutional systems, such as through unconstitutional changes.



He then continued his discussion on agricultural programs, which aim to prevent the export of raw African materials and instead use them for manufacturing. Africa produces sixty-five percent of the world's raw cocoa but does not produce chocolate, produces more than seventy percent of rubber but does not make tires, and produces over eighty percent of Arabic gum, which is used in more than ninety percent of industries worldwide, yet Africa lacks its own industries. He added that the longevity of nations is not measured in years but in generations; ten years mean nothing. The Africa we want extends to 2063 for two reasons: the first is the youth, as the agenda relies on them for its implementation, and strengthening the youth is one of the strongest programs. The second reason is advocating for women, as women are the backbone of this continent. He ended his speech by wishing us a successful journey with Africa, one that will not end until the desired hopes are achieved.

Dr. Hala then opened the floor for questions, and one of the main questions was about whether there are internships for youth in the African Union. The question was answered by the Ambassador, who pointed out that there is indeed a program for youth called "Youth Volunteer," but it is for graduates, not students. When asked why, despite having raw materials, Africa does not produce, Ambassador Nader Fath Al-Alem responded that Africa does produce, but it lacks the production mechanisms that would lead the continent to prosperity. Additionally, it cannot produce with the same quality as Western countries, and he called for encouraging African-made products. Dr. Hala El-Rashidi then thanked the attendees and concluded the session.



Third edition of FEPS-UNICEF Conference

Kenzy Tamer, 2nd year, Political Sciences

Children and adolescents' well-being has been a preoccupation for politicians and economists all over the world and especially in Egypt. In the light of its partnership with UNICEF, the Faculty of Economics and Political Sciences has hosted its third annual conference on "Child and Adolescent Wellbeing in Egypt." It is important to say that the FEPS-UNICEF partnership has been a key element for fostering dialogue and opening the channels for cooperation between those distinguished organisations.

Held on the 28th of November, the conference gave the opportunity for junior and senior researchers including "Fepsians" to present their papers on issues related to child welfare. The 3 sessions of the conference discussed various topics including, the socio-economic pressures and education; the implications and dynamics of child labor; and finally the impacts of technology and social media. Which all derive and affect the wellbeing and development of children.

In addition, the sessions were very eye opening especially while the researchers were presenting their papers and received feedbacks from discussants, experts and policymakers from the field. This was mainly marking during the last session concerning the last paper about integration among orphaned youth in Egypt. In fact, the speaker Ms. Fatma Talaat met Ms. Rasha Mekky the founder and executive director of the NGO "Yalla Kafala" for fostering and adoption, and they discussed about the potential collaboration and work in that field, as they both share the same passion for that topic.



Not only that, but the panel discussion between Dr. Asmaa Ezzat: Assistant Economics Professor at FEPS, Ms. Hala Abu-Khatwa: Advocacy and Communications Manager for UNICEF Egypt, and Prof. Mervat Abou Oaf Professor of Practice at the Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, AUC, was very fruitful. And personally this was one of the best sessions, because it was very related to the evolutive Egyptian context, and based on their different yet complementary fields of expertise. They discussed several dimensions of the impact of social media - and generally of screens- on child development and wellbeing. For example, the key role of parents, teachers and educators in ensuring the well-being of children and adolescents, but also the methods that can be used by parents if they try to support and protect their children from the rapid and sudden evolution of technology and media. Furthermore, the speakers also highlighted that the considerable impact of media is not only implicated on children but also on the parents. The discussion has also shed some light on the considerable role of drama and cinema, and also of media literacy, in order to raise awareness about certain topics and issues and be able too understand and have the correct tools to understand certain matters related to our day-to-day life.



Moreover, the 3rd session's papers discussed remarkably interesting and recent topics, particularly the impact of TikTok on child wellbeing, especially on child influencers, and the consequences of ChatGPT among university students. These papers had a considerable weight as they discussed fairly new and modern topics that are not as present in literature, especially in the Arab/Middle Eastern context. On one hand, for the paper about TikTok, the researcher explored the moral and psychological implications of being a child influencer, which are not letting them live a so-called "normal" childhood. On the other hand, the methodology used in the ChatGPT paper was the most striking because they used multiple experiment methods to evaluate the impact of the AI chatbot on creativity and innovation, problem solving skills and risk tolerance. This timely paper is very relevant to our context and especially studying its implications on university students is important.



Discussing the socio-economic implications on child welfare is crucial. In the first paper, the researchers discussed the repercussions of food price increase on children's education and the parents choosing certain schools over others, due to financial strains and difficulties.

In addition, the paper explores the impacts of these coping mechanisms on dietary patterns and choices. One of the main recommendations in this paper are the provision of balanced school meals, facing this increase.

The second one, studied the implications of parental educational attainments and mental wellbeing and socio-economic factors on giving their children high quality education. Finally, the last 2 papers provided insightful knowledge about the key factors and determinants of child labor, tailored for the Egyptian context. What was really interesting in this session was the nuanced definition of child labor based on the context and the socio-economic background due to the effects of globalization.

At the end of the conference, best research awards were announced and given to:

- Reem Abdelbassir Hassan (Egyptian Competition Authority), Aya Mosallam (United Nations Global Compact Network Egypt) for their research titled “Food Price Increase and its Impact on Children’s Education in Egypt from 2020 to 2024” (Young Researcher.

Mireille Maher (J-PAL MENA) for her research titled “Understanding Educational Attainment in Egypt: Key Socioeconomic and Parental Influences”, and

- Mazen Hassan (FEPS, Cairo University), Engi Amin (FEPS, Cairo University), Sarah Mansour (FEPS, Cairo University and National Defense College, Abu Dhabi), and Zeyad Kelani (FEPS, Cairo University) for their research titled “Is ChatGPT Detrimental to Innovation? A Field Experiment Among University Students”.





Why Regimes Fail?

Abdelrahman Sakr- Economics- Third Level

After 13 years of war in Syria, marked by bloodshed and displacement, Syria was liberated from the tyranny of Bashar al-Assad, the criminal, on December 8, 2024. Undoubtedly, the fall of Bashar represents a victory for justice and a manifestation of divine fairness. However, there is no denying that the potential division of Syria could bring further instability to the region, serving Israel's interests by isolating Hezbollah through severing supply lines from the Syrian borders. This could pave the way for greater expansion into Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. As a result, a mix of emotions dominates the scene: a release of anger against tyranny, hope for change, fear of division, and anticipation of what lies ahead. These events have reignited debates about who is responsible for the destruction and devastation, the Western and Turkish support received by various factions, and whether these factions are merely a group of treacherous mercenaries. It has also revived the dilemma of choosing between al-Qaeda or Bashar, chaos as a path to potential justice

or submission to oppression to preserve stability and a minimum standard of rights.

In their renowned book "Why Nations Fail", Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson explore how economic and political institutions shape economic prosperity, poverty, and power dynamics. One of the key points in the book revolves around the causes of political conflict and the determinants of its forms. They argue that one of the primary drivers of conflict is that authoritarian rulers will not create just institutions of their own volition. This compels various groups within society to engage in conflict with these rulers to force the adoption of more inclusive institutions. This conflict may take peaceful forms, such as struggles to change institutions through nonviolent means like strikes, peaceful protests, and electoral competition. Conversely, conflict can also take the form of violent, zero-sum clashes in which neither side is willing to coexist with the other, ending only when one party is entirely eliminated. The choice of conflict

form depends largely on the availability of peaceful channels through which various groups can voice their demands—a factor that was utterly absent in Syria. When the Syrian people, overwhelmed by repression, saw no hope for change on the horizon, they rose up in 2011. Bashar al-Assad's response was bullets, and the people's response to his violence came in the form of militias.

I do not advocate for violent change, given the destruction, bloodshed, and division it leaves in its wake. Nor am I in a position to theorize about a people who have suffered immensely under a brutal and bloodthirsty regime. This is not a justification for the fighting in Syria, but rather an explanation of the causes and an organization of the facts. Bashar's tyranny drove the people to peaceful revolution, and his violent response to that revolution paved the way for the rise of militias. His persecution of Sunnis facilitated the spread of al-Qaeda and ISIS. Systems fail when their foundation is built on oppression and exclusion.

Another important point highlighted in the book, and evident in the case of Sudan, is how the nature of institutions that limit economic growth to certain groups creates violent power struggles over the spoils of governance. The war in Sudan is neither a conflict between opposition and regime, nor a sectarian war. Rather, it is a war between two of al-Bashir's men, Hemeti and Burhan—a war in which the Sudanese people have no stake. This is a battle for control over Sudan's wealth and monopolizing its resources. If not for institutions that make the fight for power so tempting, the two factions might not have resorted to violence and could have found greater

rewards in stability.

Syria and Sudan serve as a lesson: freedom and the peaceful transfer of power are the cornerstone of long-term stability. The devastation brought by revolutions, even peaceful ones, can be avoided if the demands of the people are heeded. Justice and equality significantly reduce the likelihood of violent power struggles. Empty slogans drilled into youth and echoed in the media whenever there is a hint of public dissent—such as "rallying around the political leadership"—and the vilification of anyone exercising their right to free expression will be of no use. The region's nations are in dire need of a new social contract that ensures justice, equality, and freedom. Without such a framework, states will continue to collapse one after another, leaving occupation as the sole beneficiary. What is required is not the people rallying around political leadership but rather political leadership representing the will of the people and adhering to it.

