

Analyses

"The Russian thaw" In West and East Africa



3

Opinion

The Impact of Media no Foreign Policy



5

Africa in Focus



Why are Nigerians Protesting

7

THE CITIZEN
Credible Outlet



Editorial



Dreams Might Come True after Getting Rights

I don't dream - like some others – to collect money or become a business partner or have a new career or obtain a new car or own a nice apartment.
I dream to wake up to find the abbreviation IDPs removed from the Sudanese dictionary.
I dream to see all the IDPs in their home villages.
I dream to see Sudanese of all ages get quality and free education, primary health care, and be able to cover their daily expenses.
I dream that we bring an end to hate speech and replace it by the domination of tolerance among all the components of the Sudanese community.
Look! I did not say that I am dreaming that Sudan takes part in World Cup Tournament, a dream perceived by many as unattainable and possible for some others in years to come if we only plan for it well like other nations.
In short, I dream to see Freedom, Peace, and justice implemented on the ground.
A guy from the developed world was said to have asked another man from the third world about what his dreams are?
"A decent house, lucrative job, and wife" replied the man.
"These are your rights, I mean your dreams?" reiterated the first man.
Man is always expected to respect his mind, and realize that he is a citizen with rights and duties.
He should draw a line between his dreams and rights.
Dreams might come true after getting rights or a secure and safe house provided with the basic needs and services.
He can yet dream of a decent job according to his qualifications and not according to affiliations.
He can dream after the marriage of a good environment to have and raise children.
Is that too much for a resident to perform his duties and beyond whenever asked?
We have the right to wonder: Who made them see their rights as dreams?
One may be quick to blame governments' policies.
But we would like to argue that it is the opportunists, who are all over media outlets who always maintain the wrong persons in the right place.
Those opportunists are misleading the citizens by depicting that their rights, now perceived as dreams, will not come true unless they are more obedient, and overlook being robbed of their potential and messing in their names.
Those flatterers, are almost characterized by being smart, mentally-retarded, good at kissing up to people, misleading and complimenting, have yielded nothing but squandered their rights.
A bootlicker was said to be ready to swallow his pride to gain the heart of the chief of the village (Umda). The bootlicker found no other way to the heart of the Umda except to serve his donkey, feeding it every day, preparing it for the Umda, and cleaning its stable regularly.
We have thousands of similar guys who are ready to swallow their feelings of pride. They are not preparing mounts for chiefs to ride, but they are YES officials to mount the residents, they are not cleaning stables, but filling everywhere with their rubbish, justifying their stooping down to officials as being in charge of some committees.
Is it reasonable for residents to expect rights from such committees to consider their rights for years?
Can you imagine citizens expecting their rights to be provided drop by drop whereas resources are enough for all if distributed fairly?
Would it be sensible for people to expect rights from a bootlicker? The stripes of the latter are the ones that have contaminated people's minds with perceptions to see their rights as dreams.

Al-Burhan grants Al-Sadiq Ismail, the rank of Lt. Gen.

Head of the Sovereignty Council, 1st. Lt. Gen. Abdul Fattah Al-Burhan, yesterday evening decorated the special presidential envoy of the Head of the Sovereignty Council, Lieutenant General Al-Sadiq Ismail - who was his former office manager - with the rank badge of the Lieutenant General on his shoulders.
In the military context, the commander grants the new rank to the promoted by placing the new rank badge on his uniform.
Therefore, Al-Burhan granted Al-Sadiq Ismail the rank of Lieutenant General because he is under his direct management.
Lieutenant General Al-Sadiq Ismail is the first graduate of the (36) batch of the Military College, and he is the oldest Major General in the armed forces. He enjoys



the confidence of the Head of the Sovereignty Council, who previously assigned him several military tasks and files, including visits to a number of countries since the beginning of the April war last year. He has held the position of Director of Al-Burhan's Office since the period of the Military Council, and was previously a military attaché in Jordan.

It is important to note that Lt. Gen. Al-Sadig faces many external files that require great diplomacy and skills, in the context of global and regional interventions, as (10) external initiatives were held aimed at finding a solution to the Sudanese crisis.
It is expected that he will conduct external tours related to the current situation in Sudan in the near future.

SLA-M Repels RSF Attack on El-Fashir



The Sudan Liberation Army/ Movement (SLA-M), led by Commander Minni Arko Minnawi announced repelling the largest ground attack launched by the Rapid Support Militia on El Fasher since the death of Ali Yaqoub.
The statement indicated the elimination of the attacking force yesterday, Saturday, and the killing of the commander of the movement, Lieutenant Colonel, Musa Hamdoun. The Sudanese Armed Forces and the joint force had repelled the attack outside El Fasher by a distance of 70 kilometers.
This Janjaweed movement that attacked El Fasher today was prepared and equipped since the death of Ali Yaqoub, so the attacking force was eliminated and the rest of them were pursued and fled.

RSF Intentionally Destroyed Gezira Scheme Infrastructure, Says Governor

Governor of the Gezira Scheme, Engineer Ibrahim Mustafa, revealed the impact of the war on the decline in the percentage of areas planted with main crops targeted for cultivation for the current summer season to 505 thousand acres out of the total proposed areas of 1.1 million acres. He pointed out during his speech today in the working session to discuss the document of prospects for reconstruction for the agricultural sector that the Rapid Support Militia destroyed the infrastructure of the Gezira Scheme, starting with the irrigation network system at the level of the main bridges, irrigation canals, workshops, ginning plants, seed preparation units,



storage containers, fields, and agricultural engineering mechanisms, indicating the destruction of 50 tractors with their accessories and 100 workers' vehicles, looting of warehouse spare parts and a quantity of stocks of seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, calling for urgent intervention to save the season so that productivity does not decline by a percentage of up to 60%, especially the corn crop, and thus food insecurity.
Ibrahim pointed

out the importance of the Gezira Scheme as the backbone of the Sudanese agricultural economy and a solid base of natural resources.
He revealed the total support required to rebuild what was destroyed at about \$12 million, in addition to the requirements for urgent maintenance of the irrigation network at \$15 million, and the total funding required for the summer season at \$36 million and \$65 million for the winter season.

Cabinet approves the National Strategy for Child Protection and Care



The Council of Ministers approved, in its session of yesterday, headed by Osman Hussein, Acting Prime Minister, the National Strategy for Child Care, Protection and Development in Sudan. The Secretary-General of the National Council for Child Care, Dr. Abdul Qader Abdullah Abu, said that the Council approved all recommendations that help children and achieve their goals with partners at the level of national policy and sustainable development within the Child Protection Strategy. The Secretary-General of the National Council for Child Care considered the approval of the Child Strategy in Sudan an indication of the executive body's interest in children, indicating that there are 24 million children in need of care

NVU Promotions Committee recommends promotion of a number of professors, refers some requests to Arbitrators



Professor Hassan Al-Sa'im, Vice Chancellor of Nile Valley University (NVU) chaired the meeting of the RNU Promotions Committee at the university in the presence of Dr. Al-Amin Al-Tayeb Al-Tahir, Pro- Vice Chancellor of the University, Dr. Muhammad Ahmed Abdel-Majeed, Secretary of Scientific Affairs, Rapporteur of the Committee, Professor Abdel-Rahim Abdel-Wahab, deans of a number of colleges, and the rest of the committee members. The committee reviewed the submitted requests for promotion. During the meeting, it was recommended to the Vice-Chancellor to promote a number of faculty members to the rank of Associate Professor and refer a number of requests to Arbitrators from outside the university. Dr. Muhammad Ahmed Abdel-Majeed, Secretary of Scientific Affairs at the Nile Valley University, indicated that the committee will continue to meet to consider requests to promote a number of faculty members to the rank of Professor. The committee praised the efforts of the promoted professors in enriching scientific research at the university and their dedication to teaching students, in addition to their efforts in serving the community. Professor Hassan Al-Sa'im, the University Vice-Chancellor and Chairman of the Faculty Promotions Committee, congratulated those who were promoted, wishing them further progress in the field of scientific research, teaching and community service.

Al-Burhan Addresses Graduation Ceremony in Jabait

Hesf of the Transitional Sovereignty Council, Commander-in-Chief of the Sudanese Armed Forces, 1st. Lieutenant General Abdul Fattah Al-Burhan, said : “We will not lay down the gun until the country is cleansed of any rebel and mercenary, and we are proceeding to crush the terrorist militia of Al-Dagalo. And eliminate it.”

Addressing the graduation ceremony of the graduating batches of military students today, he added that the graduation of these officers today is a gift to the Sudanese people and a real addition to the heroes who are fighting the battle of dignity.

Al-Burhan said: “Our battle with the enemy continues, and we will not retreat or surrender, and we will not negotiate with any party, no matter who it is.”

He indicated that he does not mind reaching peace, stressing his welcome to all sincere efforts towards peace, but it must be a peace that preserves the pride and dignity of the Sudanese people.

He added, “We want the war to stop while our heads are high



and victorious. The war cannot stop while the enemy is present in the homes of citizens and besieged in Babanousa and the villages of Gezira and Al-Fasher.

1st Lieutenant General Abdul Fattah Al-Burhan stressed that as long as the rebels are present in these areas, the war will continue and will not stop.

His Excellency said, addressing the graduating officers, that your joining the ranks of the armed forces at this time when the country is exposed to conspiracies confirms the readiness of the armed forces to move forward to thwart

these plans. He added, “We are capable of destroying and eliminating this enemy.”

Al-Burhan reiterated his welcome for any peace negotiations, but said that they must include all popular sectors and armed struggle movements participating in the Battle of Dignity.

He indicated that the army is not the only one fighting in this battle, so any negotiations must be accompanied by the visions of the popular bases.

He explained that any party calling for negotiations must recognize the Government of

Sudan and its sovereignty over its lands.

Al-Burhan said that we want to warn the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ramadan Lamamra, not to adopt any vision of the rebels and that he must consult with the Government of Sudan regarding any initiative, indicating that even the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States of America, if they want to help in the issue of peace in Sudan, should talk to the Government of Sudan and listen to its point of view regarding stopping the war and achieving peace.

He stressed that an agreement had previously been reached with the terrorist militia in Jeddah, but it did not abide by it, but rather persisted in its aggression against the Sudanese people and violated their honor and property.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces said that there is no escape from fighting this battle until the end and we will defeat the enemy, stressing that this land has proven the fathers and grandfathers who preserved it with blood, and we are following in their footsteps.

Sudan and Iran agree to strengthen relations

The Sudanese Foreign Minister briefed the Iranian President on the developments of the military situation in the country and «the near-end of the rebellion».

This came during the meeting of the Sudanese Foreign Minister in charge, Ambassador Hussein Awad, with the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Masoud Pezeshkian, in Tehran, according to a statement issued (Thursday) by the Sudanese Foreign Ministry.

The statement said that the minister briefed the Iranian President on the overall situation in Sudan and the great progress made by the armed forces and the near-end of the rebellion,



then spoke about the prospects for joint cooperation between Sudan and Iran due to their potential and capabilities, and Sudan's aspiration to benefit from these good relations for the benefit of the two peoples and countries and to serve the issues of the region and the Islamic nation.

The minister conveyed the

congratulations of the Head of the Sovereignty Council and the government and people of Sudan to the Iranian President on gaining the confidence of the Iranian people and taking the constitutional oath, wishing him success and guidance in ruling Iran and serving its people.

Since mid-April last year, a war broke out between the

Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces in the country, after those forces rebelled in an attempt to seize power, and after the attempt failed, the rebel forces turned into a militia practicing killing, looting and all forms of violations against international humanitarian law.

For his part, the Iranian president thanked the minister for participating in the inauguration program and the leadership and people of Sudan for the congratulations and good feelings, and expressed his happiness with the return of bilateral relations between the two countries and stressed the need to strengthen and develop them.

Popular resistance in Sennar State praises the steadfastness of Mayerno area citizens

Head aof the Popular Mobilization and Resistance Committee in Sennar State, Major General Abdul Azim Fadlallah, praised the steadfastness and resilience of the honorable fighters from the sons and daughters of the Mayerno area, who confronted the brutal aggression at the entrance to Sennar city opposite Mairno Bridge.

Major General Abdul Azim confirmed, in a mass public speech at the home of Mayero Chieftain in front of the gathering and crowds of the people of the area involved in the front lines of the defenses and contact



areas, their readiness to repel any attack on the axes and entrances of Sennar. The representative of Mayerno Chieftain, Abdul Rahman Mohamed Saleh, praised the efforts of the Popular Mobilization and Resistance

Committee in Sennar State in supporting the mobilized and standing side by side to support the armed forces and other security agencies, along with the Counter-Terrorism Authority, and the Special Action

Forces, who carry the concerns of the homeland, stressing the steadfastness of the people of Mayerno and their support and backing for the battle of dignity until every inch of the homeland is liberated. The commander of the moral guidance of the Sennar motors, Major General Maash Al-Zain Abdul Rahman, gave an extensive lecture in the presence of Mayerno Chieftain and representatives of the Crisis Management Committee in Sennar Locality, in which he discussed the meanings of jihad and the value of defending the land and honor and protecting the homeland.

“The Russian thaw” in West and East Africa..

Khaled Taha

The realistic description of the current geopolitical processes in Africa is that they are witnessing a noticeable shift in the balance of power in the region. The relations of some Western countries have begun to decline, while the Russian role and presence are growing at rates that put all Western countries at risk of losing more of their influence in Africa. The biggest of these transformations was manifested in France reducing its military presence in Africa, both in the West and the East, as part of a new strategy that France found itself forced to adopt. The new strategy is based on reducing its direct military interventions, and allows the entry of multinational forces or the establishment of military bases for other countries - other than France - in its areas of influence, which until recently were exclusively French, such as (Mali, Chad, Gabon, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger, Gabon, and Djibouti). In contrast, Russia is accelerating its expansion of its influence by consolidating diplomatic, economic, and military relations, while adopting “psycho-political” lines and activating the effects of psychological factors and their implications on political decisions and the behavior of individuals and societies in the political sphere, while adding a dimension that takes into account not provoking (cumulative anger) among African peoples who have suffered for decades from exploitation, plundering of wealth, and imposing dependency. It is worth noting that one of the reasons or justifications for coups was that humiliating stigma (dependency). Moscow Plan



The Russian role has clearly emerged in strengthening relations with the new governments resulting from the West African military coups, by providing military support and promoting economic cooperation, and presenting a model that qualifies it to become an attractive alternative for African countries looking for “new partnerships” that will rid them of Western influence, ensure its continuity as a new authority at the same time, and maintain popular support stemming from the rejection of the Western role in general based on the history of resistance to colonialism, and achieve progress for Russia in the race of international interests.

Racing arenas

Many see the West African coast as one of the hottest spots in the conflict of interests between the major powers now, and Russia considers it a stage and an opportunity to expand its influence by dealing positively with the leaders of many of the coups that have taken place recently - in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger -

But due to other driving factors, the East African coast is also witnessing races that began muted at first, then rose in a somewhat moderate tone, and calls to establish a Russian-East African alliance were launched from Asmara, but the escalation of events in Yemen, the southern Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, will clearly show the dimensions and extent of the competition between the Western powers, which seek to maintain their traditional influence, and Russia, which seeks to benefit from the changes that have occurred in the two regions - West and East Africa - and is also working to employ political unrest and wars to strengthen its strategic and economic presence, and it will have a better chance if the West continues with the old approach.

Demands.. Stirring the Stagnant

Apart from the possibility of actual implementation, and the challenges on the practical and diplomatic levels, and without going into details, comes the proposal of the Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council, Dmitry Medvedev, calling for “overcoming” the West by raising issues related to historical justice, and increasing political pressure, by demanding compensation for African peoples - including the slave trade - to the extent that if implemented, it would harm Western countries.

It is true that the realistic approach confirms that the process of paying compensation for historical damages or colonial acts is a very complex endeavor, and requires the approval and cooperation of the countries concerned, as well as determining the precise aspects of the damages and reaching fair financial assessments.

These demands may also be rejected, which may lead to diplomatic tensions and may be seen as a political strategy rather than a practical one.

Justified compensation, but.. The Russian proposal may cause a political shock and impact in some African countries, and may also lead to strengthening national and nationalist sentiments in the affected countries, and may lead to growing controversy and political pressure on the authorities within the country and Western countries, but its impact on Western economies will be limited. This limitation is due to the complexity of the process of identifying and compensating for damages that occurred over many years, and the need to adopt a fair and just approach.

On the African side, there is no doubt or disagreement about the availability of strong arguments to support the idea of compensating countries affected by colonialism or the slave trade, and

Western countries will not deny it, as this recognition represents part of the quest to achieve historical justice and restore balance, but there are opinions - on both sides - that do not push towards achieving compensation in its punitive form, but rather prefer to focus on building future relations and effective cooperation instead of immersing themselves in the problems of the past.

New Model

It is clear that Russia has recently adopted positions and policies that seem prudent in its dealings with African countries. It has focused on the idea of acceptance, presenting an alternative model to the Western colonial model, and strengthening cooperation through economic partnerships, diplomatic coordination, military cooperation, and humanitarian aid. However, its influence will remain limited compared to the major Western powers that have a long history of investments and political ties in Africa. Therefore, the cornerstone of Russian foreign policy is maintaining a balance between (cooperation and influence) and emphasizing the lack of tendency to control, which is an attractive factor for many African countries seeking relations free from traditional domination. However, the effectiveness of this approach in achieving real and sustainable independence remains a matter of important questioning.

The current Russian position in Africa appears as a means of promoting an alternative cooperative model that respects the independence of African countries, but it faces challenges related to its effectiveness and sustainability compared to the old and renewed Western presence on the continent, and the intermittent history of Russian presence and support for African experiences that were allies of it.

Disaster Gains

By: Mohammed Ahmed Al-Filabi

A natural disaster occurs here and its devastating effects extend far in geography and deep in history. But for a disaster to have positive effects is something that is not usually discussed in writing. Floods are often followed by studies, reconstruction plans, and programs to mitigate negative effects, as happened with us in terms of engineering changes and reviews of buildings and irrigation canals following the floods of 1910, 1946, and 1988.

Likewise, when the war broke out on April 15, 2023, everyone talked about the huge losses in lives, property, and natural resources, and only a few mentioned what people can gain from wars, and what the environment can gain despite its huge losses, in addition to the awareness that the disaster leaves behind. After the war in the south stopped in 2005, we visited the Kadalao areas in southern Blue Nile (southeast Sudan), and we found that the forests had regained their health during the war due to the cessation of timber traders' activity. The locals there told us about the return of many types of animals and birds that were displaced due to the encroachment on their habitats by shepherds and woodcutters, and those who covet cultivating large

areas without legal justification, and under the protection of military officials, most of whom are retired military personnel and their families, in preparation for owning those lands later, and no consolation for biodiversity, nor for the indigenous people. The war stopped these activities, although it brought many environmentally destructive activities, some of which can be removed within life restoration and peace-building programs. When the goal is to establish a value and reject an existing behavior, it remains for those who have the tools to strive to bring about change based on acknowledging the existence of a defect, and starting to plant the seed



of abandoning it, and pushing the target group to try to remove the ideas and beliefs in the soul that hinder progress, and replace them with sound ideas. Among the programs implemented, we worked to establish the principles of peace from an environmental perspective. When we talked about the destruction of ecosystems, we aimed to approach the matter with those who were displaced from their homes by war, to reflect on the relationship between the destruction of life and the destruction of the environment. In an educational program based on songs and short plays, children chanted: "The universe was created by Muzron, before the entry of those who corrupt, they killed...

cut... perished... removed," one mother stood up to say: "The killing went beyond endangered animals to killing humans with all kinds of weapons. The cutting of forests went beyond severing relations between citizens and their institutions, and people were removed from their homes, security from souls, and children from their mothers' breasts." It became clear to us that it is possible to penetrate ethnically diverse societies with a message of peaceful coexistence, and to ensure its acceptance by many. "What do you say when you find your daughter with children in the street chanting things that remind you of the values of love, peace, rejection of racism, and protection of the environment?" as one of them put it. (Environmental Affairs Specialist)

UK Gov Begins Rapid Review to Hit

Environment Act Goals

The Government has on 30 July announced a rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) to be completed by the end of the year to deliver our legally binding targets to save nature. The Government will develop a new, statutory plan to protect and restore our natural environment with delivery plans to meet each of our ambitious Environment Act targets. This will focus on cleaning up our waterways, reducing waste across the economy, planting millions more trees, improving air quality and halting the decline in species by 2030.

The review will engage with stakeholders across environment and nature, farming, resources, waste and water sectors, working hand in glove with businesses, local authorities and civil society across the country to develop new ambitious plans to save nature. Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Steve Reed, said: "Nature is dying. Britain is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world. Our animal species face extinction. Our precious landscapes are in decline. Our rivers, lakes and seas are awash with sewage and pollution. Air pollution continues to plague our towns and cities. "Nature underpins everything - the economy, food, health and society - but we stand at a moment in history when nature needs us to defend it. "That is why today we begin to chart a new course. Working with civil society, business and local government, we will develop an ambitious programme to turn the tide and save nature." The announcement comes as the government publishes the Environmental



Improvement Plan Annual Progress Report. The Government is committed to protecting and restoring nature and delivering the Environment Act targets. This review is an important step in turning the page on nature recovery and will provide the foundations for delivering these targets. This includes

the Government's manifesto promise to expand nature-rich habitats such as wetlands, peat bogs and forests so people can enjoy and wildlife can thrive, including on public land. Additional information: The announcement comes as the government publishes the Environmental

Improvement Plan Annual Progress Report. This covers the actions taken under the previous government to deliver the EIP between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and reveals that dire state of the natural environment. The all-species indicator has shown an overall decline to around 69% of its starting value in 1970. In Great Britain, 16% of species are threatened with extinction. Beach litter remains abundant on UK coastlines, with plastic items constituting over 88% of the total litter collected. The Government is committed to improving the environment, and the Secretary of State has set out five new priorities for this next parliament to: clean up rivers, lakes and seas; create a roadmap to move Britain to a zero waste economy; boost food security; ensure nature's recovery and protect communities from the dangers of flooding. The Environmental Improvement Plan was published in 2023 as the first revision to the 25 Year environment plan.

The Impact of New Media on Foreign Policy

A Systematic Look at Social Media Algorithms

“When, in most cases, foreign policy is sailing through hostile waters, like in the case of Sudan, it is an understanding of the algorithms and using them to the best that makes a serious difference in international perception and engagement.

Such provisions on algorithmic literacy and transparency place Sudanese policymakers in a better position to navigate global discourse and stiffen their diplomatic strategies.”

In the age of digital communications, social media has changed everything about sharing and consuming information. The effect is seismic on the practice of foreign policy; today, both governments and policymakers are forced to navigate endless digital channels. At the very heart of this sea change are the algorithms of social media companies, deciding what content users see and how that travels. The understanding of these algorithms holds the key to understanding the new dynamics of international relations in our digital age.

Social media algorithms use user preferences, behaviors, and interactions to curate information. While personalization enhances user experience, filter bubbles reduce the likelihood of users being exposed to a wide array of opinions. The confining of users in an echo chamber, in which their existing beliefs are further

solidified, extinguishes the type of broad and diverse discourse needed for informed public opinion.

By design, algorithms drive the virality of social media toward high-engagement content. This often means sensational, polarizing, or even false information. The emphasis on engagement often means that popular content overshadows the less sensational yet hitherto more important voices, thus skewing public perception and debate.

The use of these algorithms comes with some huge concerns over ethics: major privacy concerns, algorithmic biases, and potential for manipulating user behavior that are quite troubling. Algorithmic bias can further enhance social inequalities and entrench existing prejudices. Content ranking will thus likely focus on amplifying harmful content at the root of many mental health issues and political polarizations.

The foreign policy consequences are enormous. It is incumbent upon diplomatic and political circles to really understand how algorithms shape public discourse. Algorithmic literacy is no longer a choice, it is a necessity. There needs to be advocacy by policymakers for more transparency in how these algorithms function and to adjust their



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Academic and Journalist

communications accordingly. Public diplomacy needs to be aware of the ways in which digital platforms shape narratives and affect international relations.

This puts the evolving landscape into future research and proactive regulation on the importance of ensuring that social media algorithms do not undermine global public discourse. Policymakers ought to strive toward transparency, adjusting their strategies to address these powerful technologies. In countries like Sudan, where the foreign policy is sailing in hostile waters, understanding the algorithms and utilizing them to the best can make a serious difference in international perception and engagement. By creating conditions for algorithmic literacy and transparency, Sudanese policymakers are better placed to navigate global discourse and stiffen their diplomatic strategies.

The sophistication of managing the influence of social media algorithms makes it required to deal with an age of digital diplomacy. If we are to ensure that such algorithms serve the public good and work to enhance, rather than detract from, the effectiveness of international relations in moving forward, it will be a task of paramount importance.

Where do you think South Sudan is headed?

South Sudan is on an unknown path.

After several civil wars and a long struggle by marginalized Sudanese for the right to self-determination, freedom and equality in Sudan, South Sudan seceded from Sudan and gained its independence from Sudan in 2011. Therefore, South Sudanese hoped that after becoming a sovereign state enjoying their inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, the reality was contrary to the hopes of the people.

South Sudanese return home in thousands from different countries where they were residing as refugees and foreigners hoping to have a homeland where they are treated as first-class citizens without segregation and marginalization. In addition, South Sudanese return home expecting the services that their sovereign government will provide them and yearning to enjoy life in their new nation which they named after the biblical land of Canaan flowing with honey and milk, because of its natural, human and animal resources and many other blessings that the country possessed.

Contrary to the expectations of South Sudanese for their new nation, the reality shows something else that was very unfortunate, few months after the start of the second anniversary of the establishment of the state, tension erupted between



Chang Jock O. Otwang

greedy politicians which pushed the smallest nation into its first civil war after its separation from Sudan, the civil war ended with the victimization of thousands of citizens to cause their lives and properties.

The government is falling short of the aspirations of its citizens. But the failure of the government to manage the affairs of the sovereign state and its failure to provide basic services to the citizens such as clean water, sanitation, quality education, good health care and infrastructure. It led the government to change its strategies with the same strategies used by the British colonies in Sudan during the colonial period which was known as the “divide and rule policy”. “

Therefore, the government has been able to divide the people of South Sudan on the basis of their ethnic groups, turn them against each other, create hatred between the ethnic groups, and have been able to dismantle the social coexistence that existed among the various classes in the country, using some ethnicities against others for their own common interests, dividing the country into a class system.

In addition to favoring some ethnicities over others.

Therefore, as a result of all these failures and divisive plans by the government and some greedy

elites, the country is in great chaos today, with a disintegrated social coexistence among its people, the worst levels of health care in the world, no quality education and the worst roads ever in Africa, no access to clean water, South Sudanese live as second-class citizens in their own country, are going through economic hardship, thousands are dying due to floods around the country, many are dying of hunger and thirst, thousands are suffering in neighboring countries due to the difficulty of life without a return plan from the government.

The country is going through high prices in every corner and economic distress. The South Sudanese pound has collapsed in favor of the mighty US dollar, moreover, the dollar has become a means of exchange in The markets are succeeding in dollarizing the country and milking its resources which will lead to the complete collapse of what we call South Sudan if we do not save it from this chaos.

The bottom line to all my fellow South Sudanese, what we need at this time is unity among ourselves, let us spread peace among ourselves, put aside our nationalities and unite as South Sudanese to save our nation, the country is in dire need of our service, our motherland is about to collapse and we watch without doing anything. Let us wake up from our slumber and take action.

The UAE’s Secret War in Sudan

Foreign Affairs

In the next four months, two and a half million Sudanese could die of hunger-related causes. That’s twice as many as Pol Pot’s regime starved in Cambodia over four years, and two and a half times as many as died in the 1983–85 famine in Ethiopia that inspired the charity recording “We are the World.” As Martin Griffith, the United Nations’ top humanitarian official, recently put it: “I don’t think we’ve ever had this kind of number at risk of famine.”

The explosive expansion of graveyards in Sudan’s Darfur region and the genocidal violence marking the battles for its main cities are the visible tip of a mountain of human suffering. Even as wars rage elsewhere in the world, there is no parallel to the intensity and scope of conflict in Sudan. Since civil war erupted in April 2023, ten million Sudanese have fled their homes. One out of every eight internally displaced persons in the world is Sudanese, and more children have been displaced from their homes in Sudan than anywhere else.

And yet the world seems to hardly notice the agony of Sudan and its people. Donors have contributed only 31 percent of the \$2.7 billion the UN has requested for Sudan—a shortfall that is worsening the hunger crisis. Occasionally governments will announce sanctions or world leaders and international organizations will make statements expressing concern. For the most part, however, they are not taking meaningful action to stanch the bloodshed.

No country is doing enough to end the suffering, but some countries are actively fueling and benefiting from Sudan’s civil war. Egypt, Iran, and Turkey have provided military support to Khartoum, despite evidence that the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) engages in indiscriminate bombing and torture, and that it uses starvation as a weapon of war. Russia initially backed the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), the other party to the conflict, which has roots in the Janjaweed militias that committed genocide in Darfur two decades ago. But Moscow is now playing both sides; in May, it entered an agreement with the SAF to establish a Russian logistical support base on the Red Sea in exchange for weapons and equipment. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia, which has historical links to the SAF leadership, spent months undercutting efforts to restart negotiations between the warring parties that had stalled in late 2023. It took until this July for the United States to gain Saudi agreement to restart the talks, which will take place in August in Geneva.

The outside actor that bears the most responsibility for the starvation and ethnic cleansing, however, is the United Arab Emirates. As the RSF perpetrates genocidal attacks on civilians in Darfur and other regions, Abu Dhabi is delivering arms to the militia. Meanwhile, unscrupulous companies smuggle Sudanese gold into Emirati markets, fueling the conflict. The UAE has been able to act with impunity, as its oil reserves, its strategic importance as a counterweight to Iran, and its role in diplomatic efforts to end the war in the Gaza Strip make Western leaders hesitant to lean too hard on Abu Dhabi.

Given the UAE’s large role in stoking the crisis in Sudan, it is imperative that outside actors compel the Emirati leadership to change course. Even if the United States and its partners remain unwilling to take bold action, such as by imposing sweeping network sanctions or investing in new peacekeeping forces in Darfur, public and private actors can make use of other points of leverage over the Emirati leadership, including its trade in conflict gold, its financial interests in sports teams and leagues, its purchase of



U.S. weapons, and its reliance on Washington lobbyists. If it faces sufficient pressure, Abu Dhabi might conclude that its support for the RSF is more trouble than it’s worth.

CONFLICT GOLD

Gold has been a major driver of the war in Sudan. The RSF is more deeply involved in the gold trade, but both sides have smuggled and sold large volumes of gold to fuel their war machines. The UAE currently benefits from this trade. Statistics for 2023 are not yet available, but in 2022, the UAE imported 39 tons of gold from Sudan, valued at more than \$2 billion, and direct shipments of Sudanese gold continue today. Bad actors also smuggle Sudanese gold into Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Uganda—all of which end up selling much of it to the UAE. According to UN trade data, over 60 tons reached the UAE through these routes in 2022. In a May 2023 business risk advisory, the U.S. State Department noted that the UAE receives “nearly all” the gold exported from Sudan.

The UAE is a global hub for gold laundering and by far the biggest destination for gold trafficked from Africa. A recent report from the Swiss nongovernmental organization Swissaid estimated that 405 tons were smuggled from sub-Saharan Africa to the UAE in 2022, making the UAE the biggest importer of illicit African gold that year. Industry experts say that large volumes of smuggled gold that are never declared in their countries of origin suddenly become legal when transmitted through the UAE, solidifying the nation’s leading role in gold laundering.

The UAE benefits from the conflict gold trade, a major driver of the war in Sudan.

Between 2020 and 2022, the London Bullion Market Association, an influential global gold-trading organization, and the Financial Action Task Force, an intergovernmental body that combats money laundering, pressured Abu Dhabi to address gold and money laundering. In response, the Emirati leadership took some steps toward reform, requiring refiners to be audited according to international standards. But important loopholes remain, particularly in the country’s gold souks, where gold is traded for cash.

Tougher action against the illicit gold trade would make it more difficult for the UAE and Emirati companies to profit from the war. The London Bullion Market Association should coordinate with other governments to push the UAE to allow independent monitoring of its gold souks—similar to the independent review missions that disrupt the trade of blood diamonds in what is known as the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. Without



independent monitoring of the gold souks, local reforms will do little to dent the trade in conflict gold.

Finally, the United States and the European Union should sanction more of the firms that buy and sell conflict gold from Sudan. In June, the U.S. Treasury Department blocked seven Emirati-based companies’ access to the U.S. financial system on the suspicion that they violated U.S. sanctions on Sudan. This is a good step, but to sway Emirati leaders’ thinking, the United States and the EU must ramp up existing sanctions, targeting the entire network of companies and individuals in the UAE involved in smuggling gold from Sudan. Because the owners frequently change the names of companies and use fake corporate directors to stand in for the individuals actually in charge, sanctions must be far-reaching.

Disrupting the trade in Sudanese conflict gold may be a particularly effective way for outside actors to peel the UAE away from backing the RSF, but it is not the only method at their disposal. Like Saudi Arabia, the Emirati government has invested heavily in sportswashing—laundering its reputation by financing, either directly or through private companies, sports leagues and teams around the world. Some of the biggest European soccer clubs, such as AC Milan, Arsenal, Manchester City, and Real Madrid, have received Emirati backing. So has Formula One, the international car racing league; Baseball United, a Dubai-based league whose ownership group includes former U.S. Major League Baseball players; and a number of U.S.-based sporting organizations, including the National Basketball Association, Ultimate Fighting Championship, and the U.S. Open Tennis Championships. Fans would be rightly dismayed to learn that the sponsors of their favorite athletes are also underwriting genocidal violence. If even a few sports teams, leagues, players, and fans were to use social media to call out the UAE’s contributions to Sudan’s crisis, the public embarrassment could make the UAE think twice about its policies.

The United States should also reconsider the billions of dollars in arms it sells to the UAE each year. Members of Congress and civil society groups, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have raised alarms about the UAE arming the RSF and urged countries that provide weapons to the UAE to do extra due diligence to make sure those shipments do not end up in Darfur. Representative Sara Jacobs, Democrat from California and the ranking member on the Africa Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, introduced a bill in May 2024 that would prohibit U.S. weapons sales

to the UAE until the U.S. president certifies that Abu Dhabi has stopped arming the RSF. The ban would affect both U.S. government and private sales and would include firearms, artillery, ammunition, missiles, bombs, explosives, military vehicles, and aircraft, among other types of equipment. If momentum builds behind the bill, the signal that Washington is making this problem a priority could send a useful warning to the UAE.

Finally, U.S. congressmen, journalists, and human rights advocates should call out American firms that Abu Dhabi has hired to influence U.S. policy and shape public opinion to its liking. For example, the strategic advisory group FGS Global has two contracts with the Emirati government totaling \$5.6 million, plus expenses, for 2024–25. Likewise, Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, a prominent Washington law firm, subcontracted a D.C.-based lobbying firm to advise the UAE on military sales in 2023 and itself collected \$3.8 million in fees from the UAE over six months the same year. As long as the UAE aids and abets the RSF, Washington lobbyists and law firms that do work for the UAE government are helping enable atrocities.

DIAL UP THE PRESSURE

Nearly two decades ago, amid the genocide in Darfur, the global activist coalition Save Darfur set its sights on influencing policy in China, which at the time was by far the largest investor in Sudan. Save Darfur accused China of ignoring the atrocities in Darfur and launched a campaign criticizing Beijing’s lack of action as it was preparing to host the 2008 Olympic Games. In early February 2008, Steven Spielberg, who had been hired as an artistic director for the games’ opening and closing ceremonies, resigned in protest of China’s links to the genocide. Rising international condemnation had an effect: by late February, Beijing joined the international chorus pressing Khartoum to allow humanitarian aid into camps for internally displaced civilians, which prevented hundreds of thousands of deaths by starvation.

As the Spielberg episode showed two decades ago, pressure from unexpected sources can make a difference. Today, advocacy groups, companies, sports teams, athletes, policymakers, and anyone with a public platform should use all the tools available to them to prevent an escalating famine and genocide in Sudan. The UAE is deeply entangled with the RSF and bears heavy responsibility for the crisis, but this means it also has enormous leverage—if Abu Dhabi is induced to use it—to shape RSF decisions. On the other side, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which have influence over the SAF, can help press for a cease-fire and an end to these forces’ obstruction of life-saving aid.

Without a lot more pressure on the warring parties and their benefactors in the region, an already dire humanitarian crisis in Sudan will only get worse. It should not take images of starving Sudanese babies filling the news for companies, athletic groups, and governments to put principle above profit or expediency.

“ The London Bullion Market Association should coordinate with other governments to push the UAE to allow independent monitoring of its gold souks—similar to the independent review missions that disrupt the trade of blood diamonds in what is known as the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. ”

In exclusive interview with Tehran Times

We aim to end Israel’s impunity: South Africa

Tehran Times

TEHRAN – South Africa’s genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) seeks to break Israel’s impunity and hold those responsible for the devastating humanitarian toll in Gaza accountable, South African Foreign Minister told the Tehran Times.

During an exclusive interview, Ronald Lamola spoke about the genocide case his country brought against Israel in December, reiterating South Africa’s commitment to making sure Israel understands it needs to comply with international law.

“South Africa took the step to put an end to Israel’s impunity. Many countries including the Islamic Republic of Iran have expressed their support towards this aim,” the top diplomat stated.

Since Israel began its war against Gaza on October 7, which followed a successful Palestinian operation into the occupied territories, the humanitarian situation in the enclave has exponentially deteriorated. In the past 10 months, the regime has razed the entirety of Gaza to the ground, pummelled all medical facilities, and caused widespread famine and disease by blocking the entry of food, water, and medicine into the region.



“We want to hold accountable the Israeli leaders that have murdered women and children, destructed Gaza’s civilian infrastructure, and decided to starve the people of Gaza,” the South African Foreign Minister added.

South Africa’s case against Israel argues that the regime has violated the 1948 Genocide Convention, which was established in the aftermath of the Holocaust and requires all countries to prevent the recurrence of such crimes.

Since October 7, more than 40,000 Gazans

have lost their lives. A recent study published by a leading British medical journal estimated that the death toll could ultimately exceed 186,000 (approximately 9 percent of Gaza’s population) due to the cumulative impact of Israel’s ongoing offensive. The study also points out that the current death toll is probably higher, as thousands of dead buried under rubble have not been taken into account. The main victims of Israel’s war in Gaza are women and children.

Israel’s legal impunity granted by Western powers

The Israeli regime has been enjoying unwavering support from Washington and its European allies, which have disregarded their citizens’ calls for holding Israel accountable for its crimes against humanity. The U.S. and Europe continue to send weapons to Israel, and some have gone out of their way to make sure the regime would not face any legal reprisals.

In the United States, it was revealed that more than a dozen American senators have warned International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutors of potential sanctions against them and their families should they choose to issue arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and some of his ministers.

In Europe, many countries have banned a British-Palestinian doctor’s entry into their territories, with France keeping him at a holding zone in the airport for several hours before expelling him. Ghassan Abu-Sitta, who was scheduled to make a speech at the French Senate, spent 43 days in Gaza, helping treat those wounded in Israel’s war.

Before he was expelled from France in May, Abu-Sitta was also denied entry into Germany, where he was detained and questioned for several hours. The Palestinian doctor is one of the potential witnesses of Israel’s genocide in the enclave.

In their most recent attempt to insulate Israel against legal action, Western states reportedly tried to block an ICJ ruling which determined in June that the regime’s ongoing presence in the occupied Palestinian territory is illegal and should be promptly terminated.

The UK, for instance, submitted a 43-page legal opinion to the top UN Court which opposed the hearing of the case on Israel’s occupation of Palestine altogether.

While the ICJ has not yet rendered a final decision on the case brought by South Africa, analysts and legal experts anticipate that UN prosecutors will face significant challenges in delivering a fair ruling, given the pressure from Western states to overlook Israeli crimes.

Why are Nigerians protesting? Young people were roused by events in Kenya

The Guardian

A protest organised by unions and youth groups about the cost of living crisis on Nigeria’s Democracy Day in June passed off quietly, drawing just a few hundred people in the country’s biggest city, Lagos, and the capital, Abuja.

Then things started to kick off in Kenya. Young Kenyans angry at the prospect of increased levies on essential foodstuffs occupied parliament in Nairobi amid violence that claimed more than 20 lives. Kenya’s president, William Ruto, was forced to withdraw his finance bill and dissolved his cabinet.

Across the continent, that gave a shot in the arm to the young people in Nigeria, who announced 10 days of protests across the country for August. And it struck fear into government officials, still on edge after the protests in October 2020 against police brutality that cost more than 100 lives.

With one eye on securing re-election in 2027, Bola Tinubu, the first career politician to become president in decades, and officials in his government swung into action.

Tinubu, 72, approved a 70,000 naira (£34) minimum monthly wage against a backdrop of 40 per cent inflation, after weeks of prodding by the unions. On 25 July, he held several closed-door meetings with governors of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and his national security adviser Nuhu Ribadu, as well as traditional rulers from across the country, the justice and information ministers and police chief. The national economic council meeting due the same day was shelved.

In the days that followed, the military and secret police said they would take to the streets to forestall violence in Africa’s most populous country. Sources

say ruling party members gave money to ulemas (Islamic scholars) in the north and activated influencers in the south. Then ruling party members, several leaders of student groups, religious clerics and even opposition leaders began urging their compatriots not to protest.

“Why the news about the protest got to the highest point at the moment is because Kenya had an outing . . . Kenya is a small country compared with Nigeria,” Benjamin Kalu, deputy leader of the house of representatives said in parliament, while offering to slash his salary by half. “Tell your children to stay at home . . . the president is doing well,” said the women affairs minister Uju Kennedy-Ohanenye .

As rumours began to swirl in Abuja that their addresses had been handed to youth groups in order to target them, politically exposed people flooded the airports at Lagos and Abuja, heading for London, Riyadh and Washington with their families.

“It’s their modus operandi,” Oshioks Philip, a representative of Take It Back movement, one of the youth groups, said. “They suppress us and the moment we cry out, they set the country in flames and run to other countries where democracy in its true form is practised.”

The protests began early on Monday in the north-central state of Niger. Nigeria’s largest state by land mass, it is bigger than Belgium and Denmark combined, with lots of ungoverned space that has made it a hotspot of armed bandits whose kidnapping activities have become a national problem.

Beyond the lack of security, changes implemented by Tinubu from his first day in office in May 2023, triggered a rise in cost of everyday items. While his predecessor Muhammadu Buhari had paid a controversial fuel subsidy and pushed the central bank to stabilise the



naira and peg inflation, Tinubu did away with both.

Petrol now costs 1,000 naira (49p) litre or more. Bakeries in the north have shut due to increased operating costs and declining demand.

That made the president, who only won a third of all votes in a heavily disputed election and lost the popular vote in the northern states of Kano, Katsina, Kebbi and Kaduna – known as the Kardashians because of their capacity to deliver bulk votes – and Sokoto, deeply unpopular.

Analysts say northerners felt slighted as Tinubu, a southerner, dislodged the northern establishment to build a new base of allies that includes national security adviser Nuhu Ribadu, traditionally an outsider.

In January, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission raided one of the businesses of Kano-born Aliko Dangote, Africa’s richest man, who is involved in a spat with top officials of the state oil company over the sourcing of crude for his recently commissioned refinery.

Last month, Ali Ndume, an influential senator from the north-east, was also removed as chief whip for criticising the government’s handling of the economy.

The president’s allies claim the protests are being sponsored by his rivals: one governor claimed former ministers

are backing the protest, hours before a minister accused a serving senator of backing them too.

“Ndume has a horrible reputation for being a loose cannon and careless talker,” one presidential adviser said in July. “People like him only remember the poor and the fact that ‘Nigerians are suffering’ when their personal agenda and indulgences can’t be met.”

“This is Nigeria’s Magna Carta moment,” said Adewunmi Emoruwa, head of global policy at Abuja-based public strategy firm, Gatefield. “Amid the elite infighting, the struggles of ordinary Nigerians experiencing hunger and poverty are brought into focus. If this turmoil forces greater government accountability, the true beneficiaries would ultimately be the people.”

In the north, a region known for shunning socio-economic protests, citizens defied all the warnings, pleading and injunctions delivered to limit the protests to certain parts of cities, and turned out on Thursday.

By the end of the first day of protests, looting had begun and a dozen people had been killed across three northern states, forcing four governors to order dusk-to-dawn curfews. In Abuja, protesters were teargassed and some taken to holding facilities of the dreaded

Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), which the government had supposedly disbanded after the 2020 End SARS protests.

“One distinguishing factor of these protests is that I could see a more national representation at the protests,” said Afolabi Adekaiyaoja, research analyst at an Abuja-based thinktank, the Centre for Democracy and Development.

In all of this, the south-east has been eerily quiet and in Lagos, bands of pro-government groups, some of whom confessed to being paid 5,000 naira (£2.42) each to protest, have taken to the streets.

Unlike previous protests, this one started with little buy-in from social media and there is little or no crowdfunding. And as demonstrations surged in suburban areas, analysts say there is a degree of uncertainty that could derail their momentum.

The Kenyan protest and the End SARS protests had specific agendas but “there are disjointed requests from different and uncoordinated groups”, said Adekaiyaoja. “Although this is a very difficult period for all Nigerians, the [groups] in the south have different asks from those in the north. If there is no clear ask, it is easy for the government of the day to get away with anything . . . we don’t know the point when we can say the protest is successful.”

Airports were shut and banks closed on the first day of the protest, while more security personnel were dispatched to the streets. But those on the streets say they are determined to face whatever the government throws at them.

“[This is] a protest that will make Nigeria a nation as against the banana republic that it is today,” said Oshioks Philip. “The protest is the rise of the oppressed asking for their destinies returned back to them.”

Triathletes swim in the Seine River in Central Paris



Olympic triathletes dove into the Seine River on Wednesday after organizers declared the water in Paris safe for swimming following days of concerns about elevated bacteria levels caused by heavy rains last week.

Boosts in Democratic excitement help Harris reset the race against Trump



CBS News

Boosted by Democrats, younger and Black voters becoming more engaged and likely to vote, and by women decidedly thinking she'd favor their interests more, Vice President Kamala Harris has reset the 2024 presidential race. She has a 1-point edge nationally — something President Biden never had (he was down by 5 points when he left the race) — and Harris and former President Donald Trump are tied across the collective battleground states. Looking ahead, voters are also defining why the next few weeks could be critical. On one hand, Harris has additional edges with the wider electorate that Mr. Biden did not: she's leading Trump on being seen as having the cognitive health to serve, a measure that was of course central to the campaign before Mr. Biden stepped aside. And on policy generally, Harris is seen as a little different from Mr. Biden, opening some possibility of defining her stances for the electorate now, either way.

Sam Smith portrait unveiled at London gallery



BBC

Sam Smith has said it was «an honour» to have a painting of them unveiled at the National Portrait Gallery in central London. The work, called Gloria, is part of the singer songwriter's own collection and shows them sitting in heavenly surroundings playing a harp, while wearing angel wings designed by JW Anderson. The artwork was created by art duo Pierre Commo and Gilles Blanchard, known as Pierre et Gilles, who have used painting and photography to depict celebrities such as Kylie Minogue, Madonna and Naomi Campbell. It will join pictures of singer Harry Styles, Pride In London co-founder Peter Tatchell and race campaigner Baroness Doreen Lawrence in the new History Makers gallery. «Dream come true» The space reopened last year after being closed for three years for refurbishment. The musician said: «I have admired the beautiful work of Pierre et Gilles for years, their incredible portraits of icons like Jean Paul Gaultier and Marc Almond are truly iconic, and to sit for them was a dream come true.

«I was so happy when the National Portrait Gallery asked me if they could loan the piece. «It's very important to me to support the arts. Being in their new History Makers section is an honour.» Smith, who uses the pronoun «they», first found fame on the 2012 Disclosure song Latch and Naughty Boys' 2013 track La La La. They have gone on to achieve eight UK number one singles and three UK number one albums, including Gloria in 2023. History Makers gallery I Pierre et Gilles created the painting in 2023, by first taking a photo of Smith posing before then hand painting and embellishing the image. The National Portrait Gallery says the image aims to mix «reality, daily life, dreams and fantasies». Clare Freestone, curator of photography at the gallery, said displaying the picture was an «amazing moment for Sam's fans to connect on a deeper level with the portrait». «Its display presents a unique opportunity for visitors to see a much-loved artwork, borrowed from the singer's own collection and on show for the first time in a public art gallery.»

NASA says it is “evaluating all options” for the safe return of Starliner crew

SpaceX is actively working on a plan to fly Starliner’s crew home

ArcTechnica

Boeing’s Starliner spacecraft is seen docked at the International Space Station on June 13. NASA It has now been eight weeks since Boeing’s Starliner spacecraft launched into orbit on an Atlas V rocket, bound for the International Space Station. At the time NASA officials said the two crew members, Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams, could return to Earth as soon as June 14, just eight days later. Yes, there had been some problems on Starliner’s ride to the space station that involved helium leaks and failing thrusters. But officials said they were relatively minor and sought to downplay them. “Those are pretty small, really, issues to deal with,” Mark Nappi, vice president and manager of Boeing’s Commercial Crew Program, said during a post-docking news conference. “We’ll figure them out for the next mission. I don’t see these as significant at all.”

Ars Trending Video

But days turned to weeks, and weeks turned to months as NASA and Boeing continued to study the two technical problems. Of these issues, the more pressing concern was the failure of multiple reaction control system thrusters that are essential to steering Starliner during its departure from the space station and setting up a critical engine burn



to enter Earth’s atmosphere. In the last few weeks, ground teams from NASA and Boeing completed testing of a thruster on a test stand at White Sands, New Mexico. Then, last weekend, Boeing and NASA fired the spacecraft’s thrusters in orbit to check their performance while docked at the space station. NASA has said preliminary results from these tests were helpful. Dragon becomes a real option One week ago, the last time NASA officials spoke to the media, the agency’s program manager for commercial crew, Steve Stich, would not be drawn into discussing what would happen should NASA conclude that Starliner’s thrusters were not reliable enough for the return journey to Earth. “Our prime option is to complete the mission,” Stich said one week

ago. “There are a lot of good reasons to complete this mission and bring Butch and Suni home on Starliner. Starliner was designed, as a spacecraft, to have the crew in the cockpit.” For a long time, it seemed almost certain that the astronauts would return to Earth inside Starliner. However, there has been a lot of recent activity at NASA, Boeing, and SpaceX that suggests that Wilmore and Williams could come home aboard a Crew Dragon spacecraft rather than Starliner. Due to the critical importance of this mission, Ars is sharing what we know as of Thursday afternoon. One informed source said it was greater than a 50-50 chance that the crew would come back on Dragon. Another source said it was significantly more likely than not they would. To be clear, NASA has not made a final decision. This probably will not happen until at least next week. It is likely that Jim Free, NASA’s associate administrator, will make the call. Asked if it was now more likely than not that Starliner’s crew would return on Dragon, NASA spokesperson Josh Finch told Ars on Thursday evening, “ NASA is evaluating all options for the return of agency astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams from the International Space Station as safely as possible. No decisions have been made and the agency will continue to provide updates on its planning.”