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The Conflict Research Programme at the London School of Economics (LSE) aims to understand why contemporary violence is so difficult to end and to analyze the underlying political economy of violence with a view to informing policy. The research sites include Iraq, Syria, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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HUNGER IN SUDAN'S POLITICAL MARKETPLACE

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Abstract

The Sudanese people are suffering a protracted nationwide crisis of food security. Its contours follow location and socio-economic status. The crisis is more than just a shortage of available food or a collapse in entitlement to food. Rather, Sudan's entire political economy is structured in an unequal and exploitative manner that generates both widespread chronic hunger and intermittent humanitarian emergency and famine. The political marketplace framework (PMF) is an analytical tool that explains the working of 'real' politics in a situation in which institutionalized politics is subordinate to transactional politics. In the case of Sudan, the logic of the political marketplace establishes a hierarchy of political priorities in which the rulers must first of all secure political finance and loyalty within the political elite, secondarily attend to the demands of the most influential constituencies, and only thirdly deal with public goods such as equitable and sustainable food policy. This priority regime becomes especially evident in times of austerity or crisis. The slowly unfolding crisis of the post-2011 traumatic adjustment of the Sudanese economy was one such occasion. The government of President Omar al-Bashir failed to reconcile its need for a large political budget with financing food security for its core constituencies if supporters, thereby contributing to the 2018-19 revolution. During the 26 months of civilian-military cohabitation, August 2019-October 2021, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok had neither the material means nor the coordinated political strategy to dictate an alternative priority regime, and was reduced to managing the symptoms of the enduring structural pathology. General Abdel Fatah al-Burhan's October 2021 counter-revolution confirms that the previous priority regime remains in place, indicating that Sudan's political market will continue to obstruct any effort to reform its hunger-generating political economy.

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