

**THE TUSSLE BETWEEN DEMOCRACY AND  
DICTATORSHIP IN SUDAN 1956-1995**

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Date : 22 July, 1996

### *Certificate*

*Certified that the dissertation entitled "THE TUSSELE BETWEEN DEMOCRACY AND DICTATORSHIP IN SUDAN 1956-1995" submitted by BABIKER ABBAS in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY of this University, is his original work. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this or any other University.*

*We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiner for evaluation.*

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(Chairperson)

**(PROF. K.R. SINGH)**  
(Supervisor)

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Place: New Delhi  
Date : 22 July, 1996

**(Babiker Abbas)**

## PREFACE

The Sudan is a veritable microcosm of all of Africa. It occupies the largest territory of any state on the continent and within its borders it harbors a variety of people who represent-in pure form and in mixture- every racial community to be found in Africa at large, besides a variety of people who represent in pure form and in mixtures Arab racial community.

In chapter one an attempt has been made to portray a brief background about the physical context of the Sudan. Being the largest country in Africa, it has a variety of physical features ranging from arid desert in the North to Equatorial forests in the South. That has been supplementary by a brief information on the tribal and ethnic grouping in the Sudan. Religion has been an important aspect of the Sudanese life, and a brief background about the religious cleavages in the country has been given. Finally the chapter concludes with a brief historical background. These factors have their impact upon the Sudanese politics. Scholars and social philosopher alike have observed from ancient time that man's behavior is in large measure a product of his

environment.

Since religion has been and continues to be an important aspect of the Sudanese life, the theme has been discussed in some details in Chapter two. The original base of Islam in the North was sufiyya. Two religious sects that dominated Sudanese politics were the Khatmiyya and the Mahdiyya. They have been the base of support of the two main political parties, namely the Umma Party and the Democratic Unionist Party. These parties had led the nationalist movement. The Muslim Brotherhood had started as an elite movement in early fifties. By mid-seventies it assumed a larger role. It has been a source of controversy as it has been dominating the political scene since 1983.

In Chapter three, we have discussed the performance of the three civilian governments, their achievements as well as their failure. The two centrist parties have been partners in the coalition governments during the two parliamentary periods. However, during the third parliamentary period, the Islamic National Front entered the scene of coalition government. Coalition has been characteristic feature of the civilian regimes and hence one of the causes of instability during these regimes.

Chapter four, analyses the role of the military regimes. The Sudan has witnessed the intervention of the army thrice. During these three interventions, coup leaders used arguments like solving the economic situations, finding solution to the problem of the South and to put an end to anarchy, corruption and instability. However, they not only failed to tackle these issues but they aggravated them. In this process of tussle between adventurous army officers and the Sudanese politicians and sectarian leaders, the real victim were the Sudanese people. The outcome of this tussle is the present miserable situation; the lowest per capita income, one of the five poorest country in the world, a shorter life-expectancy, mass migration tens of thousands of displaced persons and thousands of refugees, lost identity and the erosion of the sense of nationhood and oneness.

The last Chapter summarises the study by emphasising on democracy as the most suitable form of governance to the country due to its diversity as well as the very complexion of the Sudanese people. However, it needs some modification and pre-requisites so as to create harmony between the rulers and the ruled.

## CHAPTER 1

### AN OVERVIEW

#### 1.1 THE PHYSICAL CONTEXT

'Sudan' is part of the Arabic phrase 'Bilad-al-Sudan', meaning 'The country of the Blacks', and of, properly speaking, consists of the whole area which corresponds approximately to the section of Subsaharan Africa north of the Equator. It stretches from Senegal in the west to Upper Nile Valley in the east.<sup>1</sup>

During the nineteenth century, the Sudan was equated with the area conquered by the Egyptians in 1820 and before the revolt under the leadership of Mohammed Ahmed al-Mahdi in 1885. It was an independent state under the leadership of Khalifa Abdullahi till the reconquest in 1898-99. After that it remained an Anglo-Egyptian Condominium till the independence in the end of 1955.

The Sudan is Africa in miniature. It extends from Egyptian frontier at Lat. 22 North over a distance of approximately 1,400 miles as far south as lat. 4 North. The east-west distance is about 1,200 miles, and the total area

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1. L.A. Fabunmi, The Sudan in Anglo-Egyptian Relations, (London, 1960), p.1.

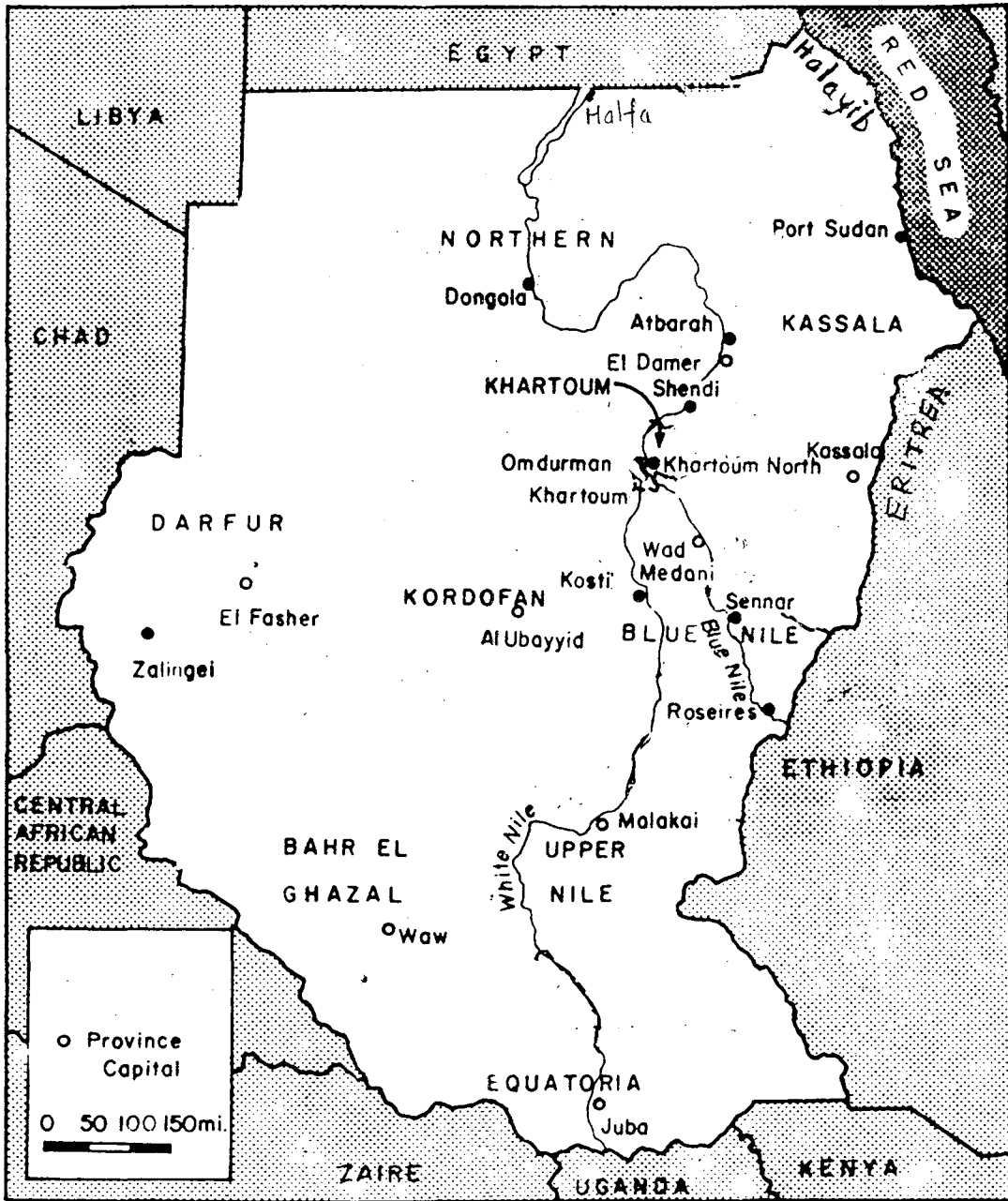


of the country is nearly one million square mile. Beside the northern frontier with Egypt, the Sudan has boundaries on the east with Ethiopia and Eritrea, on the south with Kenya, Uganda and Zaire, and on the west with Chad, the Central African Republic and Libya. The Sudan also has a coastline on Red Sea extending to 400 miles facing Saudi-Arabia.<sup>2</sup> (See map 1.)

With its area of about a million square miles, (2.5 million square kilometers) the Sudan is the largest country in Africa. This is more than double the size of Egypt, or about the size of Britain, France, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, Norway, Sweden and Denmark put together.<sup>3</sup> While the area is double the size of Egypt, the population is only half that of Egypt. The Sudan is a land of great geographical variety, stretching from the sand desert in the North to tropical rain forests, barely three degrees from the Equator, in the South. Patterns of seasonal changes vary by region and include tropical, continental, moist coastal, and arid desert. Similarly, there is a variety of soils

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2. Ali Mohammed al-Hassan, An Introduction to the Sudan Economy, (Khartoum, 1976), p.3.
  3. Dunstan Wai, The Southern Sudan, The Problem of National Intergration (London, 1973), p. 30.

MAP OF THE SUDAN 1



from sandy to alluvial and a wide range of vegetation in direct proportion to the amounts of annual rainfall, beginning with the desert scrub in the northern region and becoming both lusher and thicker in concentration as one moves southward, featuring steppe, savannah, bush, and thick jungle, respectively.<sup>4</sup> The climate is too warm, the mean annual temperature is above 80°F. January is the coldest month, and June the hottest. However, the dryness of the air makes the climate healthy. Broadly speaking, the soils of the Sudan are sandy in the northern part of the country, clayey in the central part, and lateritic in the southern part.

The country forms an immense basin, sloping gently down toward the north, with high land on the other three sides - the Red Sea Hills and the Ethiopian highlands on the eastern side, the Jebel Marra range (reaching 10,070 feet) on the western side and the Imatong range in the far south.<sup>5</sup>

The dominant physical feature of the country is the Nile system, running through it for two and half thousand

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4. John Obert Voll and Sarah Potts Voll, The Sudan, Unity and Diversity in a Multicultural State (Colorado, 1985), p.4.
  5. Middle East and North Africa Survey and Directory, (London, 1967), p.643.

miles. The White Nile starts in Lake Victoria, enters the Sudan through rocky gorges and then flows through the large swampy areas of the Sudd regions, where it is joined by the Sobat and Bahr El Ghazal rivers. The white Nile then flows northwards till it reaches Khartoum, the capital city, where it is joined by the Blue Nile which originates in the Ethiopian Highlands . Downstream of Khartoum the river is simply called the Nile. The main contributions to the Nile come from the Blue Nile, Sobat and Atbara rivers, while the White Nile contributes only 30 per cent to its average annual flow since it loses large amounts of water through evaporation in the Sudd region. Khartoum is situated at the confluence of the White and Blue Niles. Khartoum means elephant's trunk. The location of the old city near the river junction resembles the shape of an elephant's trunk when viewed from above. The Nile has a total length of 4,166 miles.<sup>6</sup> Between the White Nile and the Blue Nile lies an open tract known as the Gezira (island), which has a deep fertile soil, and being almost - but by no means entirely - surrounded by rivers, offers potentialities for irrigation. The network of the Nile, as a means of transportation and a

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6. Al-Hassan, n.2, p.4

source of water for agriculture, provides common link with different parts of the country.

In terms of climate the Sudan may be divided into three general regions:

The country north of latitude of Khartoum is desert or semi-desert with rainfall ranging from virtually none in the extreme north to less than eight inches in the vicinity of Khartoum. Agricultural activity in this area is only possible with irrigation along the banks of the Nile.

The central zone, covering an area of about half the country, south of a line roughly joining Kassala and Geniena, has rainfall ranging from eight inches in the northern part of the zone to about thirty inches in the southern part. The most important rainfed agricultural areas, including mechanized farming and animal production, lie in this zone. The Gezira scheme, which is supported by the Sennar Dam on the Blue Nile, is one of the biggest in the world. It is located in this zone. It provides half of the nation's total income. It produces cotton, the main cash crop, and foodstuffs in irrigated area of about two million acres. Irrigation has been developed to a considerable degree, so that this central zone is economically and politically the most advanced and active

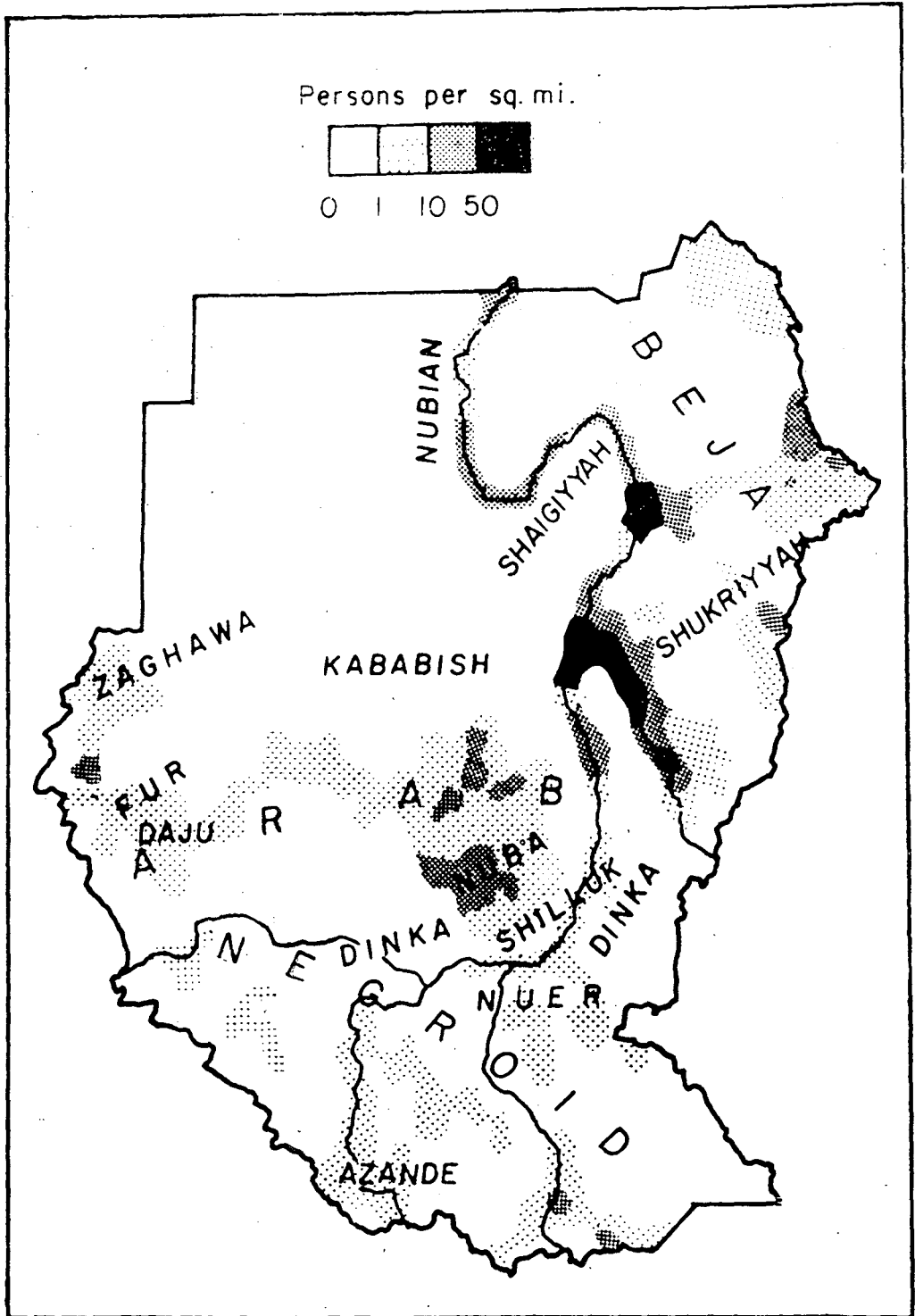
part of the Sudan. The southern zone, lying south of  $10^{\circ}\text{N}$ , has a large area of swamp including the Sudd region. There are also expanses of savannah and tropical forests. This region has rainfall which varies from 30 inches to 60 inches per year.

In order to get a proper picture of Sudan our study must contain such factors as demographic and geographic variables, economic condition and foreign influence. Scholars and social philosophers alike have observed from ancient time that man's behaviour is in large measure a product of his environment. Natural barriers have a tendency to separate and isolate peoples from one another, just as fertile plains tend to bring them together.

It is natural that in a country with diverse geographic features like Sudan we find diverse behaviours. For instance we cannot expect a high degree of social or civic awareness from nomadic tribes which constitute 13 per cent of the total population of the country. People living in Angasana Hills, isolated in the south-east and the inhabitants of the swampy region of Sudd are lagging far behind, largely due to geographical setting of their respective regions.

MAP 2.

Population and Tribal Groups



The impact of physical features could also be noticed in the rainy season which affect all those who live in the rain belt except those in Khartoum and its surroundings. Due to the absence of all-weather roads, towns and smaller settlements are cut off from one another because of the sheer impossibility of moving any vehicles through the mud.<sup>7</sup> Even rail service are heavily curtailed because of the frequent washout along the tracks. The vastness of the country makes the communication a difficult and expensive task, which in its turn poses difficulties for the development of the economy as well as the political system of the country as a whole.

## 1.2 ETHNICITY AND TRIBALISM

Ethnically, the Sudanese represent a cross-section of all Africans. Some are Arabs, some Hamites, and some Negroid-Africans; yet most are a mixture of all the three. There are 597 tribes in the Sudan comprising 56 tribal groups.<sup>8</sup>

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7. Peter K. Bechtold, Politics in the Sudan, Parliamentary and Military Rule in an Emerging African Nation (New York, 1976), p. 5.

8. Ibid, p. 10, p. 9.



The total population of the Sudan is estimated to be half the number of people in Egypt and only about one-fifth of those in the United Kingdom. The population increases at a rate of 2.8 percent a year. The inhabitants are distributed unevenly, with a fairly heavy concentration along the Nile and the Gezira. (See map. 2) There are three modes of living the in Sudan. According to recent estimates, 15 per cent of the population live in urban centres and 72 per cent are settled farmers. The remaining 13 per cent are nomads.

The northerners, inhabiting the area north of 10°N, overwhelmingly have acceptable command over the Arabic language. Almost all of them are Muslims. These factors shaped a type of identity among northerners and have created a kind of common heritage. There are however, exceptions. The Beja, occupying the Red Sea coast, are Muslims, but do not speak Arabic. The Nubas are largely neither Muslims nor do they speak Arabic.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the most complex cultural indeification in the Sudan is "Arab". Arab nationalists and intellectuals and non-Arab scholars have frequently

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9: Both the Nuba and the Beja have their own dialects but they also speak Arabic when communicating with others.

defined an Arab by two dimensions namely language and history. In the Sudanese context a person must be identified with a tribe that is believed to have come originally from the Arabian Peninsula or with a group that has been so arabized in culture and customs that it has no other visible or publicly known identity. Muddathir Abd-al-Rahim emphasizes the linguistic definition of Arabs. This definition hinges not on biological integration but on cultural assimilation.<sup>10</sup>

Roughly 40 per cent of the population in the Sudan is Arab, as defined by language and accepted genealogy. They are mainly concentrated in the northern part of the Sudan. This is the product of at least a millennium and a half of tribal migration and interaction with surrounding areas. Since the ancient times, Arabs have moved from Arabian Peninsula to the Sudan. They used two routes; either across the Red Sea, or through Sinai in Egypt. There are some monuments in Halayib that support this. There are also some scripts in Arabic language found in Khor Nubat (a village near Haya Junction in north-eastern Sudan). They date back to the fourth century A.D. This village was a

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10. Wai, n.3, p.55.

very important centre for camel trade at the Beja lands.<sup>11</sup> There were many reasons that led Arabs to migrate to the Sudan. Arabian Peninsula was arid while the Sudan was rich in terms of pasture and waters. Sudanese people were hospitable and land was vast.

Such early contacts were limited but the flow of the Arabs into the Sudan increased immensely after the beginning of the Islamic era in the seventh century A.D. As the Sudanese states of classical and medieval antiquity crumbled, Arabs became increasingly important in modern Sudanese society in the North. New Arab states emerged in the Sudan like the Funj Sultanate, Tagaly and Musbàat in Kordofan and the Fur Kingdom in Darfur. By the eighteenth century Arabic culture was dominant in the North.<sup>12</sup> By tribal migration and intermarriage a Sudanese Arab society was well formed.

Sudanese traditional geneologies define some groupings of clans, which reflect different lifestyles in the North. Some of them are important.

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11. Yusif Hassan Fadl, Dirasat-fi-Tarekh-al-Sudan, (Khartoum, 1975), p.18.

12. Voll and Voll, n.4, p.8.

Jàaliyyin are named after their forefather, Ibraheen Jàal. They live in the northern part of the Nile Valley. They are settled villagers and depend upon the Nile to maintain their crops, flock and herds. They are historically important since they established small principalities and were an important force in political systems and governmental structure in the Sudan. Tribal relationships provide a reliable basis for commercial and political ties.

The Shaigiyyah are named after their forefather, Shaig. It is one of the important tribes in northern Sudan. Sometimes they are categorized as a part of Jàaliyyin. They migrated to Sudan in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries through the Red Sea. They were more aggressive and restless than their neighbours. They established small states in the eighteenth century and were a major pillar of the Egyptian administrative structure in the Sudan during the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup>

East and west of the Nile dwell the nomadic Arab tribes known as the Juhayna, a general term embracing those

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13. Dr. Ab-al-Majid A'abdin, Qabayil min al Sudan, (Khartoum, 1972), p.11.

Arab tribes who do not claim Jàali origins. Included in this category are tribes like Baggara, Kababish, Shukriyya etc.<sup>14</sup> (See Map 2)

The Kababish live west of the Nile. They are a camel-owning and cattle-herding tribe. They roam deep into Kordofan and Darfur with their camels and sheep. They once controlled the Darb al-Arbàin (the Forty-Days Road), the great caravan route from the western Sudan to Asyut in Egypt. This tribe participated in the major historical developments of early modern and modern government institutions through their tribal leadership.<sup>15</sup>

Shukriyya is a part of the Juhayna group. They live east of the Nile, between the Atbara and the Blue Nile. This area is known as Butana. It has sufficient rainfall to provide for seasonal grass. They remain close to the Blue Nile during the dry season to feed their camel and sheep. (see Map 2)

The Baggara are cattle-owning Arabs. The term 'Baggara' is derived from the word Bagar which means 'cattle'. Baggara means 'people of cattle'. They live west

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14. Voll, and Voll, n. 4, p. 9,

15. Robert Collins and Francis Deng, The British in the Sudan, (California, 1984), p.14.

of the Nile in southern Kordofan and Darfur. Rains permit limited cultivation and extensive grazing on the grasslands. They are excellent horsemen and fanatical fighters. Chief among the Baggara are the Rizagat and Tàaisha tribe. Khalifa Abdullahi, who was a follower of the Mahdi Mohammad Ahmad and subsequently the ruler of the Sudan after the death of the Mahdi, came from the Tàaisha tribe.

The Fur live in the far western region<sup>16</sup> They are a relatively small group comprising of about 2 per cent of the total population. But they have historical significance. Though Muslims, they maintained their identity against the Arabs and preserved their own dynastic Muslim State in Darfur (the land of the Fur) until 1916. The Fur Sultans united much of Darfur within a single state that lasted from the fifteenth century to 1916.

Important non-Arab tribes in the North are the Nubians, the Beja and the Nuba. Nuba live on hills called Nuba Mountains in Kordofan, west of the Nile. They make up slightly more than 5 per cent of the total population of the Sudan. They live in groups under the leadership of their traditional chiefs and the rain-makers. There are some

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16. Gabriel Warburg, Islam, Nationalism and Communism in Tribal Society, (London, 1978), p.2.

Muslims as well as Christians among them. They have been using their own dialects. The Nuba soldiers have played an important role in modern Sudanese armed forces<sup>17</sup> since the days of the British rule and even after the independence of the Sudan.

The Nubians occupy the Nile valley in northernmost section of the Sudan in the area called Nubia. Nubians live in the area between Dongola and Halfa. They are Hamites. The population emerged with a special identity as early as the time of ancient Pharaohs of Egypt. In medieval times, Nubia was the home of prosperous kingdoms, and throughout history Nubians have been actively involved in the Sudanese affairs. With a long heritage of small-scale urban life, Nubians have provided leadership in economic and political life of the Sudan. Although in national and international affairs they frequently operate as "Arabs", in internal affairs, Nubians maintain a special identity. They make up an estimated 3 per cent of population.

The Beja are also Hamites. They occupy the north-eastern quarter of the Sudan along the Red Sea coast and the

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17. Mekki Shibeika, The British Policy in the Sudan 1882-1902, (Oxford, 1952), p. 4.

eastern highland regions. They are often traced back to ancient inhabitants of the region and have their own special linguistic and cultural heritage. They make up an estimated 7 per cent of the total Sudanese population. They are camel and sheep owners. Some of the major Beja tribes are Ababda, Bishariyyin, Hadandowa, and Bani Amir. Collectively they act as pressure group with potential political influence.<sup>18</sup> In 1965 elections their political party, the Beja Congress, won 10 Parliamentary seats out of 173.

Between the Bahr aL-Arab and the Great Lakes of Central Africa is the land of the southern tribes. Due to the geography and climate these tribes have been protected from outside invasion as well as interaction.<sup>19</sup> They are generally called Nilotic (inhabitants of the rivers and the swamps in the heart of the South). There are a very large number of tribes in southern Sudan. Some of them are Azande, Fertit, Moru, Annuak, Bari etc. However, the most important, in terms of political influence and population, are three tribes; namely the Dinka, Nuer and the Shilluk. They are powerful and dominate the South. Mainly the tribes

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18. Beshir Mohmmad Said, The Sudan: Crossroads of Africa, (London, 1965), p. 13.

19. Bechtold, n.7, p.11.



of the South own cattle, smaller groups also do limited cultivation. To all southern tribes, cattle are very important. They dominate their economic, social, and religious life.<sup>20</sup>

The Dinka is the largest ethnic group in the South. It is also the largest single tribe in the Sudan. It represents 10 per cent of the total population of the country. They live in the eastern and northern district of Bahr-el-Jabal and west to Renk. The Nuer live in the most inaccessible areas of the great swamps of the Nile. The Shilluk inhabit the west bank of the Nile north and south of Fashoda. Unlike Nuer and Dinka the Shilluk keep only a few cattle and cultivate the land. Perhaps it is their settled way of life or the fact that Shilluk land is concentrated near the river that accounts for the distinctive *lifestyle*.

Shilluk institutions of political organization revolving around the Reth, or the Divine King. The total number of languages spoken in the South is eighty.<sup>21</sup> These diversities portray the distinctive character of the Sudan. The interaction of all the elements of variety "creates the

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20. Collins and Deng, n.15, p. 12.

21. Ibid, p. 18.

special mood of the Sudan". At times this mood is characterized by conflict, at other times by reconciliation. The Sudanese identity emerges in modern times as a product of conflict and compromise. The diverse ethnicity in the Sudan is also reflected in the political set up as we shall see later. Though ethnicity renders richness and interaction to the political institutions, at times it affects them adversely.

### 1.3 RELIGION

Religious cleavages in the Sudan are almost as pronounced as ethnic ones and have their deep impact in politics. Religion is an important part of the identities of Sudanese peoples. It is difficult to isolate religion from other aspects of Sudanese life.

Although there is no formal religious census, the proportions of the population indentifiable as followers of specific religions are known. Roughly two-thirds of the Sudanese are Muslims. The Muslims are concentrated in the northern part of the country.<sup>22</sup> This does not imply that there is comparative homogeneity because Sudanese Islam is

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22. Voll and Voll, n.4, p. 16.

based on different turuq (plural of tariqa) organization of religiously-minded people united by a common faith in the peculiar spiritual virtue of some particular teacher who acts as intermediary between the follower and the Deity.<sup>23</sup> There are numerous turuq in the Sudan. The most widespread of them is the Khatmiyya tariqa, brought to the Sudan by Mohammad Othman al-Mirghani (1793-1853). Approximately 5 per cent of the population is Christian. This is primarily the result of Western missionary activity during the nineteenth century in southern Sudan. The largest Christian group is Roman Catholic though there are Protestants also. The third major religious grouping is based on adherence to tribal customs and tribal pattern of belief. They can be termed as pagans and animists. About 29 per cent of the population, primarily in the southern region, follow this type of practice and faith.

The present Sudan is relatively a new entity, but Sudanese societies have deep historical roots. This has created diversity within religious traditions that results in some distinctively Sudanese expressions of particular beliefs and practices. Although most of the northern Sudan

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23. Mohammad Omer Beshir, The Southern Sudan - Background to Conflict, (London, 1968), p.7.

is a part of the Islamic world, some of the specific practices of the Muslims within the Sudan reflect earlier religious traditions. Islamic life of the Arab nomadic tribes reflects the special traditions of Saharan people, whereas the ancient and medieval traditions of Nubia are still noticed in the customs of modern Nubian Muslims.

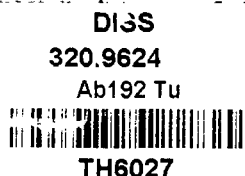
Another source of diversity within religious experience is the difference between the popular religion of the ordinary people and the religious practices and beliefs of people who are part of an elite, either as rulers, scholars, educated individuals...etc.<sup>24</sup> Popular religion reflects the need of the people in premodern societies and deals with basic human issues like healing, fertility and emotional consolation. Scattered throughout the Sudan are special places - for example, the tomb of a holy man - that are centers of popular religion.

The development of Islam in the Sudan has created special set of attitudes and institutions. In medieval times Islam came to the Sudan with migrating Arab tribes and itinerant merchants.<sup>25</sup> Over a period it became

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24. Shibeika, n.17, p.6.

25. Voll and Voll, n.4, p.17.



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established as the dominant religion of many different groups, each with its own unique development as an Islamic community. As a result there was hardly a sense of centralized organization for Islamic life. On the contrary, the key figure in premodern Islamic life was the local teacher-healer-comforter called the faki.<sup>26</sup> He was usually aware of the broader Islamic world but was not a part of any organization that could command or discipline him. Islamic life in the Sudan was decentralized and focused on autonomous units.

Islamization in the North is a result of evolution rather than revolution. It was a long process of interaction and intermarriage. People in the North did not convert to Islam by coercion. Rather they embraced Islam voluntarily impressed by the standard of behaviour, ethics, and the treatment of migrating tribes and itinerants. Moreover, these migrating tribes and itinerants were concerned with livelihood, pasture and vast hospitable country rather than spreading Islam. Most of these newcomers were ignorant of the detailed teachings of Islam. That is why Muslim Sudanese were not aware of the

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26. Ibid, p.18.

intricacies of religious principles and practices till the sixteenth century. A collection of biographies of the holymen of the time stated: "No schools for religious learning or the study of the Quran were known in the land. It is said that a man might divorce his wife and marry another on the very same day without waiting for the required period. This was so untill al-Shaikh Mohamud al-Araki came from Egypt and taught the people about the required waiting period in the sixteenth century."<sup>27</sup> There were, however, some Muslim leaders who were concerned with strict adherence to the rules and priciples of Islam and eliminating the non-Islamic practices of popular religion. However, these efforts did not take militant form. This reflects the complexion of the Sudanese which tends tends towards accommodation. It is worth noting that when two cultures interact, the result would be synthesis of these two cultures. In the process of interaction of the indigenous culture and the imported culture, the Arabic language itself borrowed a lot of words and notions from the indigenous culture. Dr. Aon al-Sharif Gasim, a learned

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27. Mohammad al-Nur bin Dayf Allah, Kitab al-Tabaqat, Khartoun University Press, 1971, p. 40. Translated by John O. Voll.

linguist, noticed that the African influence in the Sudanese dialect is very evident and distinguishes it from other dialects in the Arab world.

Thus the Sudan is very diverse; physically, religiously, ethnically, linguistically and culturally. The Sudanese identity implies that these diverse elements should be respected and left to interact smoothly, quietly and without interference. The future of the Sudan depends on this principle.

#### **1.4 HISTORY**

Though the Sudan is a new state it has an ancient past. Over thousands of years it developed not only an independent personality but also several regional, religious, ethnic and socio-political diversities which exert their influence even today. A brief historical account will thus enable us to understand the modern Sudan with all its diversities.

The geographic position of the Sudan, between the Arab-African world on the one hand and Central and Eastern Africa on the other, has played an important role in determining the character and politics of the country since the Biblical times. In almost all the contacts between the Sudan and the outside world Egypt has been the most

important link. Thus the Pharaohs, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Arabs, the Turks and the British, all of those who governed or conquered Egypt in the past, have in turn found it either necessary or desirable to extend their influence, if not their power, beyond the traditional boundaries of Egypt into the lands which now constitute the Republic of the Sudan.<sup>28</sup> Conversely, the inhabitants of the northern part of the country, have always had to choose between three alternatives: domination by Egypt; independence from Egypt, or conquest of Egypt. From the time of Tuthmosis 1 (1530 -1520 B.C.) until the eighth century B.C. northern Cush (As the area as far as Gezira was called in ancient times) was dominated by the Pharaohs. The political mastery of the Pharaohs in Cush gradually diminished from the tenth century onwards, and by 725 B.C. the balance of power was finally turned by a series of competent Cushite leaders who established themselves as the twenty-fifth Pharaonic dynasty. The most renowned Pharaoh of this Cushite dynasty was Tirhaka (688-663 B.C.) under whose leadership the empire extended from Cush to Syria and whose wars in Syria and Judea are recorded in the Bible.

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28. Wai, n.3, p. 31.



Tirhaka's name is also mentioned in the Bible in more than one passage.<sup>29</sup>

The Kingdom of Cush survived for a thousand years, during which it expanded to the south; the capital being transferred from Napta, near the Fourth Cataract, to Meroe, near Kaboshiya, about 100 miles north of Khartoum. About the year 660 B.C. the same rulers were finally driven out of Egypt by the Assyrians. Napta, however, remained the religious centre until about 300 B.C. and the kings and queens of Meroe continued to be buried there during this period. The Kingdom of Meroe reached the height of its prosperity at about the beginning of the Christian era, and thereafter gradually declined. The Kingdom finally succumbed to the Kings of Axum (Abyssinia) in about A.D. 350.<sup>30</sup> The invasion of the Axumites did not lead to permanent occupation, and for the next two hundred years the Northern Sudan was ruled by a number of independent Kinglets.<sup>31</sup> In A.D. 542 the conversion of the Sudan to Christianity began with the arrival of the first two

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29. Ibid, pp. 30-1.

30. Directory, 1967, n. 5, p. 645.

31. Government of Sudan, Sudan Almanac, (Khartoum, 1965), p.41.

missionaries from Egypt.

Politically, the country was divided into two Kingdoms; the northern one, Maquarra, had its capital at Old Dongola, and the southern one, Alwa, had its capital at Soba, south of Khartoum. By A.D. 639 the Arab Islamic conquest of Egypt was followed by attacks on Dongola, but a treaty was signed in A.D. 652 which lasted for six centuries. During this peaceful era there was little Arab penetration into the Sudan until the rise of Bahri Mamluk Sultans in Egypt about 1250. After that the policy changed towards the Sudan, and numerous raids during the next fifty years led to anarchy in the northern kingdom, the sack of Old Dongola and the overthrow of the Maqurran dynasty in about 1340.<sup>32</sup> This was followed by rapid immigration from Egypt and the rapid Islamisation of the Sudan as far as Shendi. The southern Kingdom of Alwa survived longer. It was overthrown in 1504 by the invasion of Negroid people called the Funj who also defeated the infiltrating Arabs.

The Islamic Sultanate of the Funj, otherwise known as "the Black Sultanate",<sup>33</sup> was in effect, a confederation of

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32. Warburg, n. 16, p. 3.

33. Fadl, n.7, p.18.

smaller Sultanates or tribal chieftain, each ruled by a "mek" or prince, who owed allegiance to the Sultan at Sennar, the new capital, about 170 miles south of Khartoum. The authority of the Sultan was recognized throughout the former lands of the Cush and Nubia including the Gezira.<sup>34</sup> The Funj Kingdom lasted for three hundred years. The influence of the Kingdom extended from the Third Cataract in the north to Fazagli in the south. In its early days the Funj Sultanate appears to have reflected local and African traditions of monarchical rule and it was only gradually that it assumed the form of an Islamic state.

Originally, Islam had come to the Sudan through the immigrants and Muslim merchants rather than through military conquest. Their readiness to mix, coupled with the matriarchal system of the Nubians on the one hand, and the Arabian patriarchal organization of the family and the tribe on the other, had the effect not only of facilitating the assimilation of the immigrants but also of spreading of their culture and religion in the host society.<sup>35</sup> The introduction of Islamic practices into the Sudanese life

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34. Mohammad Said al-Gadal, Tareekh-al-Sudan-al-Hadeeth (Cairo, 1993), p.24.

35. Wai, n.3, p.30.

started before the establishment of the Funj Sultanate. The habits, practices, and beliefs of the tribal and trading Muslims were not particularly vigorous in adherence to the specific requirements of the faith, and they reflected little scholarly sophistication. The Islamic dimension of life within the Funj state came to be centered around individual teachers and local Islamic educational centers.<sup>36</sup> By the eighteenth century, these teachers became the major coordinating forces in their various localities. The Majdhub family in the city of Ad-Damar, for example, established "virtually independent community - state that was centered around the family's school."<sup>37</sup> Many of the holy families who established themselves in the sixteenth through eighteenth century continue to be influential in the modern Sudan.

The Funj state was not the only major state to emerge in this era. In western region other small states helped to define the special regional identities of Kordofan and Darfur. The Daju gained control of Darfur.<sup>38</sup> They were

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36. Voll and Voll, n.4, p.31.

37. Ibid, p. 32.

38. Ibid, p.40.

succeeded by the Tanjur, who were replaced by the Keira. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the northern part of the Sudan had been incorporated into the Islamic world.

A different line of development took place in the southern Sudan.<sup>39</sup> Arabs were prevented from entering this region by swamps, flies, and tropical humidity, none of which were suitable for camel-breeding or were attractive to desert people. A major tribal migration brought most of the southern groups, called Nilotes, to their present-day locations. They developed their own distinctive culture by the fifteenth century. They did not develop centralized political institutions due to the absence of external threats.

By the start of the nineteenth century the special identities of the regional states and societies of modern Sudan were clearly defined. Though local units were preserved, a pattern emerged in which unity and diversity interacted. In the nineteenth century, under the Egyptian influence, the country transformed itself from a collection of local and regional groupings into a single unit.

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39. Wai, n.3, p. 32.

Since 1805, Egypt, as a province of the Ottoman Empire, had been ruled by Mohammad Ali Pasha. He established himself as a virtually independent ruler. He set out to modernize Egypt as rapidly as possible. In order to get resources he decided to conquer the Sudan. He had two main objectives: gold and slaves.<sup>40</sup> The Egyptian army moved into the Sudan in 1820 and brought an end to the Funj Sultanate. A new capital was founded at Khartoum. The administration of the Sudan was put under a Hikimdar (Governor - General) to whom provincial governors were responsible. The country was divided into provinces. The personnel of the new regime was a mixture of Circassian, Turkish, European and Armenian officers of the Ottoman - Egyptian army who were assisted, especially at the lower levels, by Sudanese Shaikhs and tribal leaders. The administration was corrupt and far from efficient. Attempts were made by the new regime to create a centralized government in the Sudan. The attempts to do so by outsiders, however, reinforced the natural reluctance of tribal and village people to submit to the central government control. The damaging effects of the nineteenth century heritage were felt in the southern Sudan.

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40. Shibeika, n.41, p. 23.

Number of private armies had been created by slave traders who raided many parts of the South. The Egyptian rulers sent their armies into the South to extend the area under their control.<sup>41</sup> This resulted in mistrust in the minds of the people of the southern Sudan for outsiders coming from the North.

In 1881 a Muslim teacher with a reputation for piety and integrity proclaimed himself to be the long-awaited Mahdi (literally means the "rightly guided person") who would fill the world with justice and eradicate existing injustice. Mohammad Ahmad al-Mahdi was inspired by a vision of a truly Islamic society and was deeply offended by what he felt was the infidelity of the Egyptian rulers. He travelled about in the central and western parts of the country, where he won many supporters. He attracted many followers. Initially, the government did not take his movement seriously. However, when the followers of the Mahdi, known as the Ansar, armed with sticks and spears, were able to defeat a well-armed government force, many of the people in the Sudan saw this event as a sign of the divine approval. Soon various group who had reason to

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41. Shibeika, n.17, p. 23.

oppose the Egyptian regime were joining the banner of the Mahdi. The strength of the Mahdiyya movement continued to grow and the Mahdi made effective use of the force available to him. After many defeats the Egyptian military forces and administrators were driven out of the Sudan. By early 1885, especially after the defeat and death of Gordon Pasha, who was commanding Egyptian forces, the Sudan had come under the rule of Mohammad Ahmad al-Mahdi.

The Mahdiyya ideals advocated a return to the fundamental principles of Islam. The Mahdi demanded a strict and literal adherence to the rules of the faith.<sup>42</sup> However, the Mahdiyya did not reject contemporary technology. The Mahdi died in 1885, and was followed by his successor Khalifa Abdullahi. The Sudan remained an independent state from 1885 to 1899. The state, although primarily Islamic by self-definition, became the first national state in the Sudan. Modern Sudanese nationalist frequently cite the Mahdiyya as the real beginning of the process of national unification.<sup>43</sup> The Mahdi died five months after of the liberation of Khartoum. During these

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42. Voll and Voll, n.4, p. 14.

43. Ibid, p. 16.



months he transferred the capital city to Omdurman. He was the first Sudanese ruler to issue coinage at national level.

Since the newly founded state was a theocratic state the Khalifa (Caliph) Abdullahi enjoyed absolute authority. There were rivalries based on tribal and regional motivations and over control of political power. In order to enhance his grip Khalifa Abdullahi reposed political, administrative and military posts to his relatives and clan. There were hardly any foreign political, commercial, and diplomatic relations. Though Khalifa's reign continued for thirteen years, yet it was a very unstable period.

Instead of achieving national unity and establishing economic infrastructure internally, and establishing friendly and constructive relation externally, Khalifa committed many blunders. Internally he antagonized a lot of tribes, and executed and exiled opponents. One of the most resentful blunders was al-Matmma massacre in July 1897.<sup>44</sup> While anticipating the advancement of the Anglo-Egyptian army via al-Matmma, Khalifa ordered people to evacuate al-Matmma so as to deter the invading forces at this spot.

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44. Al-Gadal, n.35, p. 208.

People refused to leave their home. Khalifa arrested their leaders. They were from Jàaliyyin tribe, well reputed and highly dignified. Khalifa sent an army of ten thousand soldiers. Their leader, Abdullah Wad Sàad, decided upon resistance. Massacre took place. Over two thousand tribesmen were killed. Property and belongings like gold, silver, cattle etc. were confiscated. Ladies preferred suicide to being captured as concubines.<sup>45</sup> It was a black day in the history of the Mahdiyya. Externally Abdullahi created hostilities with Abyssinia and Egypt. He involved the armies in wars with both these states. It is generally said that the Mahdiyya regime was in a state of continuous war. Therefore, though Khalifa's reign lasted for more than thirteen years yet it was unstable.

It is interesting to note that the history of the Mahdiyyastate is to some extent similar to the Islamic state in Arabian Peninsula. The founder of the state, that is, the Mahdi, was able to pacify tribal and regional rivalries by his fascinating personality. After his death these rivalries came up to the surface, but his successor, Abdullahi, failed to mitigate them. That led ultimately to

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45. Ibid, p. 209.

the defeat of his regime. There were also some political rivalries in the very first Islamic state during the third Caliph that resulted in his death and subsequently the war launched by Mâawea (his relative) against Imam Ali Ibn Abi-Talib. In turn, this led to the disappearance of the Islamic state in the theocratic sense of the term.

In order to safeguard its own position in Egypt and to ward off the Italians, the Belgians and the French, Britain decided that the Sudan should also be brought under its effective control. The reconquest was executed by the combined Egyptian and British forces. The Sudan came under the Condominium, as the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement was called.<sup>46</sup> The Agreement established an administration which was nominally Anglo-Egyptian but was actually a British colonial administration. All the Governor-Generals of the Sudan, Provincial Governors and District Commissioners were British.

The process of creating a centralized Sudanese government under the British patronage was firmly began in the first two decades of this regime. The British introduced the indirect rule through the agency of tribal

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46. Shibeika, n.17, p. 447.

Shikhs and Chiefs. Tribalism, which had been greatly weakened during the Mahdiyya period, was revived not only for the purpose of administrative decentralization but also, and more importantly, as alternative to bureaucratic government which necessitated the creation and employment of more educated Sudanese. These, because of their education, were politically more conscious than tribal leaders and therefore more difficult to control.

The introduction of Native Administration in the northern Sudan was paralleled in the South by the launching of the government's "new Southern policy". Until then, official policy was largely limited to the provision of various form of assistance to Christian missionary societies. The "Southern Policy" had two main objectives: the prevention of the spirit of nationalism from spreading from the northern Sudan to the South; and the separation of the three southern provinces from the rest of the country.<sup>47</sup> There were some opposition movements to this regime. In 1908 a large rebellion broke out in the Gezira which was led by a former Amir of the Mahdiyya period, Abd al-Qadir Wad Habuba. In 1924 there was another movement, the White

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47. Collins and Deng, n.15, p.12.

Flag League, led by Ali Abd al-Latiff, which fought for the independence. There were demonstrations and military mutiny in 1924 but they were ruthlessly crushed. While some of their leaders were executed, other were exiled. The major reason for the failure of this revolt was that while Egyptian troops had agreed to join the revolt, they did not fulfill their commitment.

Under the Condominium Agreement, Egyptians were also involved in the administration of the Sudan. Also, many Sudanese went to Egypt for their study. This was a period of rise of nationalism in Egypt. The Sudanese were, thus, directly and indirectly influenced not only by the concept of nationalism but also by the concept of the Unity of the Nile Valley. Many of them saw it as a means to remove the British influence from the Sudan. The British, to counter this new trend of an Egyptian - Sudanese unity, began to support the Mahdiyya group that it had suppressed after 1898. The British also cut off all Egyptian official links with the Sudan in 1924 after the Sudanese Governor - General, Sir Lee Stack, was assassinated in Cairo.<sup>48</sup> These links were re-established only after the Anglo-Egyptian

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48. Shibeika, n.17, p. 480.

Treaty of 1936. This British-sponsored policy of divide and rule had a major influence on the Sudanese politics.

Egypt had formally become an independent state in 1936. But the question of the future of the Sudan, which was governed under the terms of the Condominium, still had not been resolved. Egyptian nationalists insisted upon Unity of the Nile Valley.

A major landmark in the development of the Sudanese nationalism was the establishment of the Graduates General Congress in 1938. This was partly a reaction to Anglo-Egyptian negotiations that discussed the future of the Sudan without consulting the Sudanese. The Congress continued resistance to the regime by peaceful means. It aroused the nationalist awareness among the Sudanese.

Though the founders of the Congress thought of creating an umbrella group to include all sects, tribes, ideologies, and regions, differences within the Congress eventually led to its split into two rival groups. One felt that independence could be achieved by co-operating with the government. This group, was led by the Ansar followers of the Mahdi, and their motto was "the Sudan for the Sudanese". The others, being more distrustful of the British, felt that independence could best be achieved

through cooperation with Egypt.<sup>49</sup> They, therefore, stood for "The Unity of the Nile Valley". They were supported by the Khatmiyya Sect, the chief rival of the Ansar.<sup>50</sup> This group organized itself subsequently as the National Unionist Party (NUP) under the leadership of Ismail al-Azhari. There was controversy between Egypt and Britain whether the Sudan was to be united or it should become an independent state.

An Anglo-Egyptian Agreement was signed in 1953 without consulting the Sudanese. According to Article 9 of the Agreement, there was to be a transitional period of three years. By the end of the transitional period the Sudanese, in accordance with Article 12, had the choice to be united with Egypt or to become an independent state. Election held under the supervision of an international commission, resulted in the victory of the NUP, whose leader Ismail al-Azhari, became the first Sudanese Prime Minister in January 1954.<sup>51</sup> Egyptians had supported the NUP during the election and it was naturally expected that Azhari would try to lead

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49. Wai, n.3, p. 99.

50. Directory, 1967, n. 5, p.644.

51. Shibeika, n.17, p. 490.

the country in the direction of union with Egypt. However, after the withdrawal of the British and Egyptian troops, it was clear that he stood for independence.<sup>52</sup> There were several other reasons also that led to this reversal of the attitude. One major reason was the strong opposition by the Ansar to this union. It could have led to a civil war. It was also the fact that the overwhelming majority of the NUP had looked upon solidarity with the Egyptian as a means for achieving the independence of the Sudan.

The deposition of General Neguib by Nasser was another factor, Mohammad Neguib's father was posted in the Sudan and he was born in Khartoum of the Sudanese wife. He was educated at Gordon Memorial College in Khartoum along with many leading Sudanese politicians. He possessed a first-hand knowledge of the Sudan and its people.<sup>53</sup>

His deposition on 14 November 1954 aroused considerable resentment in the Sudan. Moreover, the military regime of Egypt had started crushing political opposition; especially the hanging of some of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood. Till 1954 there was more faith in the Egyptian

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52. Fabunmi, n.1, p. 480.

53. Fabunmi, n.1, p. 349.



Government. As General Mohammad Negiub said, "the military government in Egypt must convincingly demonstrate to the Sudanese, that we had nothing in common with oppressive regimes that had misruled the Nile Valley in the past".<sup>54</sup>

However, in his overanxiety to influence the choice of the Sudanese; in favour of union with Egypt, Salah Salem, "the dancing Major" pursued certain policies which alienated several Sudanese elements. That strengthened the idea of complete independence. Azhari, supported by all Sudanese parties declared the Sudan as an independent republic in the Parliament on 19 December 1955.<sup>55</sup> Britain and Egypt had no choice but to recognize Sudan's independence, which was formally celebrated on 1 January 1956.

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54. Ibid, p. 351.

55. Shibiaka, n.17, p. 492.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN THE SUDAN

#### 2.1 THE SUFIYYA TURUQ IN THE SUDAN

Religion has played a crucial role in the Sudan. Sufiyya movements have left their deep imprint upon the society. The outstanding feature of Islam in the Sudan for several centuries has been the strength of the sufiyya. There is little doubting the hold of popular Islam in northern Sudan, and it has been described as one of the most devout societies of the Muslim world.<sup>1</sup> Probably the most significant feature of this character, from the stand point of the Sudanese politics, is that while the sufiyya movements may have considerable political capacity, as a result of devotion of their adherents, the essential interest lies in the cultivation of a spiritual relationship rather than the attainment of a specific social and political order in the temporal realm. There is potential here for the formal separation of church and state. Though

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1. Gabriel Warburg and Uri Kupferschmidt, Islam, Nationalism and Radicalism in Egypt and the Sudan, (New York, 1983), p.93.

religion involves essentially a private relationship between the individual and the supernatural there is always a public manifestation to this relationship, when applied to the community of which the individual is a part, and this manifestation always has some effects on social forces, and frequently on political ones as well.<sup>2</sup>

The sufiyya may be considered as a reaction to the austere nature of orthodox sunni Islam which tended to be dominated by legalistic beliefs, emphasizing on the organization of the Muslim community rather than the spiritual fulfillment of the individual. The orthodox Islam of the ulama placed greater emphasis on the transcendence and omnipotence of God than on God's immanence.<sup>3</sup> The remote and legalistic religion of the ulama could not easily constitute a living creed for the masses. The sufiyya came to fill an important human need: providing the path (tariqa) whereby individuals could attain experience of God. The

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2. Peter K. Bechtold, Politics in the Sudan, Parliamentary and Military Rule in an Emerging African Nation, (New York, 1976) p. 73.
  3. Tim Niblock, Class and Power in Sudan, (London, 1987), p. 100.

sufiyya attracted lot of followers.<sup>4</sup> They constituted brotherhoods based on mystical ideas which became an important form of social organization. Each tariqa was committed to a particular method of contemplative mysticism and other rituals which they practiced so as to attain direct experience of God. Other means were common prayer and collective act of dhikr.

These turuq began to spread in the Sudan in the twelfth and thirteen centuries. By the sixteenth century they had become major social force providing a way of organizing the common people as well as the religious elite into effective groupings.<sup>5</sup> But most of the turuq remained loosely organized. However, during the eighteenth century new types of turuq began to emerge. They were more centralized in organization and were concerned with mobilizing the general population. The Sudanese, like other traditional societies, are characterized by a substantial fusion of religion and state in the community of believers. This means that recognized religious leaders also acquired political

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4. John Obert Voll and Sarah Potts Voll, The Sudan, Unity and Diversity in a Multicultural State, (Colorado, 1985), p.17.
  5. Yusif Hassan Fadl, Dirasat-fi-Tarekh al-Sudan, (Khartoum, 1975), p. 73.

influence among the followers by virtue of their baraka. This influence also pervades social and economic relationships in addition to the religiopolitical ones. In fact these relationships become mutually reinforcing to such an extent that the entire community acts as one bloc.

The first major tariqa to be introduced in the Sudan was the Qadiriyya tariqa, following the path laid down by its founder, Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani (1077-1166).<sup>6</sup> In the organization of the all turuq the Shaikh was at the top of the hierarchy. Below him with the reasonability of guiding the masses of followers were a number of Khalifas, each responsible for a particular region. Generally regional Khalifa developed a following of his own, or developed a new tariqa. The founder of the Qadiriyya was born in Iraq. The Qadiriyya tariqa was prevalent in Iraq, India and some other Middle Eastern countries.<sup>7</sup> It was introduced into the Sudan by Taj al-Din al-Bahari, who lived in the Gezira for seven years around 1550. He had travelled to the Sudan from Baghdad - where the Shaikh of the tariqa resided - and before he left the country he appointed Khalifas to take

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6. Ibid, p. 101.

7. Almanac, Khartoum 1965, p. 46.

charge of the tariqa in central Sudan.<sup>8</sup>

Some claim that it has the largest number of adherents among the various turuq of the Sudan. It has diverse elements. Due to the looseness of this tariqa it has not carried the political weight of some smaller but more centralised turuq. It has several subsections; chief among them being, Qadiriyya proper, tariq al Shaikh el-Jaili with followers only around Berber and Shendi areas, north to Khartoum. The second one was al-Kabashia founded by Ibraheem al-Kabashi in 1867 with followers mostly in Khartoum rural areas, Omdurman and Dar Kababish. The third was Wad Hysona, followers of Shaikh Hassan Wad Hysona who is buried in Abu Delig and was prevalent in the area east to Khartoum North.<sup>9</sup> The fourth, Arakiyyin in the Gezira was founded by Dafa Allah al-Araki. The fifth tariqa belongs to the followers of Shaikh Idris Wad Arbab at Ailafun in the east of Khartoum North. The new sufiyya style gradually entered the Sudan during the Funj Sultanate. One of the major turuq of that time was the Sammaniyya, which had been established in the Arabian Peninsula and was brought to the

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8. Fadl, n. 5, p.66.

9. Almanac 1965, n. 7, p. 9.

Sudan by Ahmad al-Tayyib al-Bashir in 1800.<sup>10</sup> The founder of it was al-Sayyid Mohammad al-Hassan al-Sammani. Its followers were in the Gezira, the White and Blue Nile, the Hamar of Kordofan and among the Fadniyya, a sub-tribe of the Jàalyin. The Shadhiliyya, follow the path of Abu-al-Hassan al-Shadhili, (died 1258 ). It is said to have been brought to the Sudan by Sharif Hamad Abu Dunnah, who settled in Berber district in 1445. Its followers were in Berber, Sennar and people of Hijazi origin on the Red Sea Coast. There were three families that occupied positions of particular influence within the Sammaniyya tariqa in the Sudan.<sup>11</sup> First, the Nur al-Dàim family, the direct descnedants of al-Bashir, based at Tabat. Second, the Qurashi family. Mohammad Ahmad (al-Mahdi) was among its adherents before he pronounced himself the Mahdi. This family was based at Tayyibah. Third, the Al-Hindi family, was led during most of the Condominium period by one of the most influential Sudanese religious leaders of the era, Sharif Yusif ibn Mohammad al-Amin al-Hindi (1865-1942). This branch of the Sammaniyya was steadily taking an

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10. Niblock, n. 3, p. 102.

11. Ibid, p. 13.

independent character, becoming known as the Hindiyya.<sup>12</sup> It enjoyed strong support among the Kawahla tribe and in the Gezira area.

There were, however, some turuq which were founded inside the Sudan. Among them was the Majdhubiyya which was founded by Hamad Mohammad al-Majdhub in the first half of the eighteenth century.<sup>13</sup> Though a minor tariqa it enjoyed wide-spread influence and respect in northern Sudan. The Majdhubiyya laid stress on religious learning and education. During the time of the Funj ad-Damar, the centre of this tariqa became the main centre of education in northern Sudan. The Majdhub (plural of Majdhub) has a centralized character that enabled it to act as a coherent political force. They actively resisted the Egyptian occupation of the Sudan in 1821.<sup>14</sup> Apart from ad-Damar its adherents could be found on the Red Sea Hills and in major towns.

The Idrisiyya was founded by Ahmad Ibn Idris in the Hijaz. After his death in 1837 a struggle for the leadership erupted. The main contenders were Mohammad al-

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12. Bechtold, n. 2, p. 75.

13. Voll & Voll, n. 4, p. 32.

14. Gabriel Warburg, Islam, Nationalism and Communism in Tribal Society (London, 1978), p.4.



Sanusi and Mohammad Othman al-Mirghani. Ultimately they became two turuq. Al-Sansusiyya predominant in Libya and al-Mirghaniyya in the Sudan. It was supported by the Sharifs of Mecca. The Ismailiyya is another tariqa which is restricted to the Sudan. Its founder was Ismàil al-Wali ibn Abdullah al-Kordofani (1793-1863). It was a branch of the Mirghaniyya founded in Kordofan. It developed into an independent tariqa based in El-Obeid. A schism occurred in the tariqa at the time of the Mahdiyya. Ismàil al-Wali's eldest son, Mohammad al-Makki, who died in 1906, gave support to the Mahdiyya movement, while the second son, Ahmad al-Azhari, strongly opposed the Mahdi.<sup>15</sup> This family rose to prominence in religious and political spheres outside the tariqa. Ismail al Azhari, Ahmad's son became the first Prime Minister of independent Sudan. Other minor turuq were al-Badawiyya founded by Shaikh Ahmad al-Badawi of Tanta (Egypt).<sup>16</sup> It was introduced into the Sudan after the conquest by Egypt in 1821. These turuq undertook the task of spreading Islam. They gained respectability and popularity. It should be remembered that these turuq did

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15. Ibid, p. 11.

16. Almanac 1965, n.7, p.47.

not constitute religious sects, like Catholicism or Protestantism in Christianity, nor did they represent such serious cleavage within Sudanese Islam as existed between Shia and Sunni Muslims.<sup>17</sup> They have cut across tribal boundaries by emphasising and encouraging mutual co-operation among their followers.

## 2.2 THE KHATMIYYA SECT

The Khatmiyya (Mirghaniyya) was founded by Mohammad Othman al-Mirghani (1793-1853). Al-Mirghani, a native of Turkestan, travelled to the Sudan in 1817 as a proselytizing agent for Ahmad Ibn Idris, founder of Idrisiyya tariqa in the Hijaz.<sup>18</sup>

Although this visit appears not to have been outstandingly successful, the foundations were laid for future development. While in the Sudan al-Mirghani married a Donglolawi woman who bore him a son, al-Hassan. In 1819 Al-Mirghani returned to the Hijaz and served Ahmad ibn Idris through to the latter's death in 1837.<sup>19</sup> Struggle for the

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17. Dunstan Wai, The Southern Sudan: The Problem of National Integration (London, 1973), p.35.

18. Niblock, n.3, p. 104.

19. Ibid, p. 165.

leadership of the Idrisiyya followed Ahmad ibn Idris's death. The main contenders in the tariqa were the two most prominent adherents, Mohammad ibn Ali al-Sunusi and Mohammad Othman al-Mirghani. Four different turuq emerged from the contention: the Sansuiyya, the Mirghaniyya, the Idrisiyya, and the Rashidiyya. Only the Mirghaniyya was of real significance in the Sudan.

In developing the Mirghaniyya tariqa, al-Mirghani modified substantially the traditions of Ahmad ibn Idris and gave emphasis to the hereditary sanctity of his own family. Al-Hassan proceeded to the Sudan where he achieved considerable success in attracting following among the tribes of northern Kordofan and among the Dangala and Shigiyyah of northern Sudan.

The death of al-Mirghani in 1853 led to a further spate of contention within the Mirghaniyya itself.<sup>20</sup> Under al-Hassan's leadership the Sudanese branch of the Mirghaniyya became effectively independent, taking on the name of Khatmiyya. Al-Hassan settled in Kassala. On Al-Hassan's death in 1869 the succession passed to his son, Mohammad Othman Taj al-Sirr. The Khatmiyya virtually came to an end

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20. Ibid, p. 105.

in the Sudan during the Mahdiyya in the eighties of the last century. Since the Khatmiyya opposed the claims of the Mahdi and mobilized followers to support the Turko-Egyptian regime, its leadership fled the country after the Egyptian defeat and spent the years of the Mahdiyya era in Egypt.<sup>21</sup>

The organization of the Khatmiyya tariqa under the Condominium contained a paradoxical element: although the leadership was in theory diffused, in practice the tariqa retained a fairly centralized structure, with a coherent centre. The succession to Mohammad Othmum Taj al-Sirr (who died in 1886) was shared between different family members. The division of authority between these family members was arranged, once the tariqa had been able to re-establish itself in the Sudan after 1898, on the basis of regional responsibilities.<sup>22</sup> One of Mohammad Othman's sons, Ali (generally known as Sayyid Ali al-Mirghani), took responsibility for Khartoum, Kordofan, Berber, Dongola and Halfa while another son, Ahmad, (succeeded by his son Mohammad in 1928), held responsibility for the Kassala, Gedaref and Qallabat areas and for the Shukriyya and

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21. Voll & Voll, n. 4, p. 38.

22. Niblock, n. 3, p. 106.

Hadandowa tribes. A daughter of Mohammad Othman, Maryam al-Mirghani, was responsible for the Red Sea Hills area and a niece (Alawiyya al-Bakri) and nephew (Jâfar al-Bakri) were responsible in Eritrea. It is interesting to note the role played by the two women; an unusual aspect in a sufiyya tariqa.

While the division of responsibilities might seem to reflect disunity, the arrangement was given coherence by the political pre-eminence of one of the five regional leaders - Sayyid Ali al-Mirghani. Condominium government's support for the Khatmiyya, given in the hope that the tariqa's strong following in northern Sudan could be used to counter the re-emergence of an anti-British Mahdiyya movement, was channelled through Sayyid Ali. This strengthened the position of Sayyid Ali within the leadership and of the Khatmiyya as an organization.<sup>23</sup>

The Khatmiyya leaders were frequently in a position to accumulate funds. Such funds came mainly from the dues and contributions made by the followers and through the services which these followers rendered. The religious dues

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23. Ibid, p. 106.

generally came to one-tenth of the follower's income,<sup>24</sup> while the rendering of services usually involved the follower cultivating land owned by a religious leader - a service which was given free if done on a part-time basis.<sup>25</sup> Followers on occasions donated their landholding to their religious leader, sometimes continuing to work the land in return for the payment of a subsistence allowance. The leadership provide for the upkeep of mosques and for the provision of charitable services.

The Khatmiyya formed the main basis of support for the secular nationalist movement before independence. Yet its leader, Sayyid Ali al-Mirghani, maintained a determination to eschew political ambition other than the defense of the Khatmiyya interests, although this concern alone was to draw him deeply into preindependence politics. Sayyid Ali al-Mirghani enjoyed a clear advantage after the re-conquest in 1899. During his sojourn in Egypt, he had established close relations with Sir Reginald Wingate, who was to become

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24. Generally nomadic followers contribute some livestock, and settled agriculturists a portion of their crops.
  25. Sayyid Ali was granted land by the Condominium in the Red Sea province and the Northern province to develop agriculture.

Governor-General of the Sudan from 1899 to 1916.<sup>26</sup> The authorities therefore recognized him as the supreme Khatmiyya leader, favouring him over his elder brother Ahmad and other Mirghani notables. In the years before the First World War Sayyid Ali emerged as the strongest supporter of the anti-Egyptian policy adopted by the British administration in the Sudan. However, by 1924 Sayyid Ali had emerged as a patron of the pro-Egyptian group in the nationalist movement and he no longer stood in need of British support to strengthen his position. The Khatmiyya allied itself with the Unionist movement led by Azhari during the transitional period of 1953. The Khatmiyya provided an effective basis for political mobilization of the National Unionist Party (NUP) just as the Ansar did to the Umma Party.

### 2.3 THE MAHDIYYA SECT

As mentioned earlier Mohammad Ahmad the Mahdi was much concerned with strict adherence to the fundamentals of Islam. He strongly opposed a wide range of activities and customs. He opposed smoking of tobacco and drinking alcohol in any form. As a punishment for smoking, for example, he

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<sup>26</sup>. Warburg, n. 14, p. 22.

commanded that the smoker received eighty lashes and seven days in jail. The Mahdi also forbade various forms of music, especially at celebrations, prohibiting the beating of drums or the playing of horns. He also forbade women from going into the market, or being unveiled in public. He was even intolerant to few things which were prohibited neither by Quarn nor by Sunna. Amongst them were the wearing of jewelry by ladies, lavish expenditure for wedding and wearing of amulet. He objected to the wailing of women at funerals. These were all deeply embedded in the popular customs of the Sudanese and gave a distinctive flavour to the local religious practice. Even in terms of more generally Islamic teachings, the Mahdi abolished the recognition of four separate law schools, saying that the discipline of fiqh had been obliterated by the Mahdi's manifestation, and established a new legal regime. The Mahdi tried to abolish all turuq including those in which he had received his apprenticeship as a religious novice. However, in due course of time the Mahdiyya itself became, infact if not in theory, a new and militant tariqa.

The nineteenth century Mahdiyya certainly appeared to represent radical Islam in one of its most successful modern outpourings. The founder, Mohammad Ahmad al-Mahdi, combined



an attack on colonialism (in the form of Turco-Egyptian rule) with a determination to found a movement that would not only purify the then existing Islamic institutions in the Sudan but ultimately throughout the Muslim world. <sup>27</sup> Ideologically it has been suggested that the Mahdi's prayer book the ratib, which was considered the sacred book of the Mahdiyya, was more concerned with relationship with God than with the attainment on earth and indeed, more appropriate to the leader of a tariqa than to a Mahdi. The Mahdi died soon after the Egyptian withdrawal and Abdullahi succeeded as his Khalifa. Organizationally the Mahdiyya under the Khalifa Abdullahi has been seen as less than a tyrannical theocracy and more as a pragmatic autocracy.

However, the character of the twentieth century Mahdiyya assumed a revival under the leadership of Sayyid Abd al-Rahman, the Mahdi's own posthumous son. Ideologically there was little development of Mahdiyya in which the ratib continued to play a major part, except a possible watering down of traditional Mahdi's thinking in that the jihād was now depicted as an essentially peaceful process, (though a potentially violent body of men). The

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27. Warburg and Kupferschmidt, n. 1, p. 99.

followers, the Ansar were organized. It is perhaps more common to see what is sometimes referred to as the conservatism, rather than radicalism, of twentieth century Mahdiyya as due to the context in which Sayyid Abd-al-Rahman was operating.<sup>28</sup> The British were concerned during the First World War to counter a possible pan-Islamic appeal from the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire; while from 1922 until the end of the Condominium they had to oppose the repeated Egyptian claim to the Sudan. These circumstances provided the opportunities first for Abd-al-Rahman (as a Mahdist critic of orthodox Islam) to emerge from obscurity during the First World War, and subsequently (as a profound anti-Egyptian) to develop his position as a major prop to Sudan's British rulers. It is suggested that this political relationship with the British helped to temper the latent radicalism of Mahdiyya.<sup>29</sup>

In 1906 Abd al-Rahman made his first visit to Aba Island, where the Mahdiyya movement had started in 1881. It was there that he decided to renew his connections with the Ansar, his father's one-time supporters, and to make Aba

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28. Warburg and Kupferschmidt, n.1, p.89.

29. Ibid, p. 100.

Island the spiritual, social and economic centre of the movement. In 1908 he was allowed to start cultivating the family estates on Aba island. There the Ansar were reborn as a religious-political movement.<sup>30</sup>

In their efforts to recruit support against pan-Islamic proaganda originating in Turkey, the British authorities tried to win the loyalty of the Sudanese Muslims. Though the British propaganda was aimed primarily at the Sudanese leaders, it was also directed at every sector of the Sudanese people. It was however abundantly clear that leaders of popular Islamic organizations of the tariqa type enjoyed greater influence. Among them, Sayyid Ali al-Marghani reigned supreme, but it was realized that the Ansar, who were known to be both numerous and vehemently anti-Turkish and anti-Egyptian, could provide most welcome support for the new policy. Consequently Sayyid Abd al-Rahman was allowed to emerge from near obscurity and to tour the strongholds of the Ansar, preaching among his followers that the Young Turks were heretic, and the future of the Sudan would be best secured through loyalty to Great Britain. The Sayyid was however shrewd enough to realise

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30. Warburg, n. 14, p. 21.

that religious and political strength required financial power.<sup>31</sup> He therefore expanded his agricultural enterprises during the war, when both needs and prices ran high, and brought hundreds of Ansar, especially from the west, to cultivate his fields on Aba Island and on the banks of the Blue and White Nile.

In 1915 Sayyid Abd al-Rahman was given additional land on Aba Island. In 1925 he obtained together with Sayyid Abdullahi Al-Fadil and Mohammad Khalifa Sharief, a lease of about 600 feddans of land at Gondal for the growing of cotton. A loan of 4,500 pounds, later converted into a gift, was made to him in 1926. By 1933 he had some 13,000 feddans under cultivation in Aba Island, the Funj, the White Nile and Kassala. His annual income was estimated at between 15,000 pound and 40,000 pounds (Sudanese). On Aba Island alone he had a labour force of about 4,500.<sup>32</sup> Sayyid Abd al-Rahman also seems to have benefited from a supportive governmental attitude towards his contracting activities. The interruption in fuel supplies to the Sudan caused by the First World War led to him obtaining contracts

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31. Ibid, p. 24.

32. M.O. Beshir, Revolution and Nationalism in the Sudan, (London, 1974), p. 141.

for the supply of wood to government river steamers. Contracts for the supply of materials needed in the construction of Sennar Dam in early 1920's also went to Sayyid Abdal-Rahman. In all these economic activities Sayyid Abdal-Rahman's religious role was complementary to his economic role. Much of the labour force used on his projects consisted of Ansar who migrated to the Aba Island from Kordofan and Darfur, so as to benefit from Abd-al-Rahman's baraka. These Ansar earned no income; they were simply given food and clothing for subsistence. The religious role strengthened his economic effectiveness. So also was his economic well-being used to build up both the religious and political strength of the Mahdiyya movement.<sup>33</sup>

Because of his pragmatism and readiness to compromise the British encouraged him. His anti-Egyptian character was very useful; and there was significant political collaboration from 1914 to 1952 between Sayyid Abd al-Rahman and the British. The major places with Ansar popularity were Kosti, Singa, Sennar, al-Quadarif, Kordofan and Darfur.

Following the economic crisis in 1931 the British authorities decided to lower the starting rates of pay for

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33. Niblock, n. 3, p. 52.

newly-appointed Sudanese officials. There were protests, demonstrations by students and young government officials to reconsider the new measures but to no avail. On 24 November 1931, a general strike was declared at Gordon College. Sayyid Abd al-Rahman was the only one who was able to mediate and he brought the strike to an end. Since then he associated himself with every movement sponsored by the intelligentsia. Moreover, dairat al-Mahdi purchased a printing house, to assume overall responsibility for all the Ansar's publication.<sup>34</sup> This of course enhanced the Sayyid's position vis-a-vis the intelligentsia, as they could now publish their literary and political writings. In 1935 the Sayyid founded al-Nil the first daily Arabic newspaper in the Sudan. By the end of 1935 he had more adherents among the educated and politically-minded young men, than any other prominent native. Many politically-minded government officials and graduates like Abdallah Khalil, Mohammad Ahmad Mahgoub, Ibrahim Hamad etc remained ardent supporters of the Sayyid and regular participants in his political Salon. This intelligentsia allied itself with the Ansar sect led by Abdal-Rahman al-Mahdi and formed the Umma Party in 1945.

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34. Warburg, n.14, p. 38.

Their motto during the nationalist movement was 'Sudan for the Sudanese'. They were and continue to be rivals of the other sect, that is, the Khatmiyya, that had allied itself with the Unionists under the banner of National Unionist Party with its motto, 'Unity of the Nile Valley'.

Eventhough the Mahdiyya state had been destroyed by the Anglo-Egyptian forces at the end of the nineteenth century, yet by the third decade of the twentieth century the movement itself was revived as a highly visible and centralized Islamic organization. Before the Second World War the Ansar was the only organization in the Sudan which enjoyed mass support based on its popular Islamic mission, and at the same time sought to assume a leading political role. They could therefore appeal, with equal authority, to the ignorant tribesmen and to the sophisticated intelligentsia.<sup>35</sup>

#### **2.4 THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD**

There was much debate in Egypt by the turn of the last century about the role of Islam in politics, and whether the then existing political setup was able to solve the problems

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35. Ibid, p. 41.

of the society and its attitudes towards modernity.

Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1893) was among the several scholars who contributed to that debate. He sought to integrate Western materialism with Islamic spiritualism. He maintained that representative institutions were necessary because they were prescribed by religion under the general principle of shura and because they were essential to progress. To support his argument he recalled the Quranic story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, which set a precedent for consultation with people's representatives. It says "O my nobles, give an opinion in my affair; for I am not in the habit of resolving an affair until you are present with me" (Quran XXVIII, 1). More specifically, the principle of consultation is expressed in the Quran in the following term, "their affairs are subject to consultation among themselves." (Quran XLII, 36). These texts, cited by Afghani, can be taken as clear evidence that the Muslim rulers should call on people's representatives for advice before taking decisions on public affairs.<sup>36</sup>

However, 'people's representatives' in the Prophet's

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36. Majid Khadduri, Political Trends in Arab World, (USA, 1970), p.29.



society were few notables who could be described as elite in a limited and homogeneous society.

Mohammad Abduh, Afghani's disciple (1849-1905), made some further contribution. His thought was based on two fundamental assumptions. First, the inescapable role of religion in the life of the nation; and second, the need for new institutions and technical skills. Abduh argued that Western scientific and technical skill were not inherently incompatible with Islamic religious and moral values. Abduh was a reformer who was committed to modernization and yet did not find Islam a hindrance, but rather a catalyst in the process.

Under the influence of Afghani, Abduh came to see the necessity for supplementing the Azhar syllabi with readings in philosophy, logic and natural science. A modern society according to him demanded along with scientific knowledge, morality and a legal code. The Quran provided the basic principles of morality and law while leaving room for knowledge to add to those foundations. Abduh discouraged campaigns of persecution against individuals whose customs of beliefs did not completely correspond to those of the majority around them. He says "it was the practice amongst certain faiths to try to force people into their religion.

This is more politics than religion because faith is an internal matter that cannot be conquered by force. This is why God says, "There should be no compulsion in religion".<sup>37</sup> Abduh, in interpreting this stipulation goes on to say that a Muslim may not denounce other Muslims as heretic nor force non-Muslims to adhere to the faith.

Just as individual Muslims are not supposed to spout forth accusations of heresy, neither are institutions or Muslim leaders. In that sense, declared Abduh, there is no hierarchy in Islam. Even the Prophet was restricted by a Quaranic edict directed at him, "Remind them, for you are a prompter not a dictator". Faith creates a bond between God and the individual over which other men have no authority. He goes on, if the Prophet himself had a limited function with respect to his followers, the Caliph, his successor, had even more limitations. The charge that Islam mixed political and religious power in one man has no basis according to Abduh. The Caliph is primarily a political leader. He is also a symbolical religious figure, serving as a good example to his people. The Caliph has no specific religious functions, and certainly no authority, a command

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37. Mohammad Amarah, Mohammad Abduh, Complete Works, (Beirut, 1972), p.278.

of the Arabic language is what an ordinary man needs to understand it. Each Muslim, therefore, has the option of interpreting the Quran by himself.<sup>38</sup>

Abduh also realized that there would be novel situations on which the Quran has no comment. Reason, which is the means to interpret the Quran, is responsible for filling such gaps. Abduh went by grammar rules of the Arabic language to obtain the meaning of Quranic statements. Wherever the literal meaning seemed to contradict the general sense of its context or to appear unreasonable, then a reasonable interpretation was adopted. In those cases where people had to deal with situations not mentioned in the Quran, reason again was the answer.

A major political value that Abduh finds in Islamic doctrine is that of shura. The Quran has such references directed at the Prophet stipulating that he cannot dictate, but rather only advise, and that he should always consult with his people.

Hassan al-Banna has contributed to the present-day interpretation of Islam. He started by establishing the

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38. Nabil Abdo Khoury, Islam and Modernization in the Middle East: Mohamad Abduh, An Ideology of Development (New York, 1976), p.17.

Ikhwan al-Muslimin movement in Isma'ilya in 1928. He started preaching among the poor and the depressed workers stressing non-material values. He attained success in gaining supporters. It was largely the discontent of Egyptian peasants and their offspring who had been forced through economic pressures to emigrate to the urban centers before the Second World War in search of livelihood that swelled the membership of the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>39</sup>

Al-Banna offered no elaborate program beyond stressing the creed of Islam. He tried to sum up the objective of an Islamic revival in such synoptic captions as "return to Islam". "Quran is our constitution" and the like. But al-Banna, revealing gradually the broad objectives of the movement, declared that Islam had a very wide meaning, that it regulates all human affairs including modern problems and that it was not restricted to purely religious and spiritual matters. Islam, he said, regulates the affairs of this life and the hereafter. He mentioned that it was unnecessary for Muslims to borrow ideas and institutions from other societies.

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39. Warburbg and Kupfersehmd, n.1, p.5.

From Isma'ilya the headquarters were moved to Cairo. Branches were opened in the Sudan, Syria and Iraq. The Brotherhood's official organ, books and pamphlets were distributed throughout Islamic world. The Brotherhood criticized the then existing political system by saying that it was incapable of improving because it was secular in character. According to the Brotherhood men are not free to choose their political system. They would fall in error if their government were not established on religious basis.<sup>40</sup>

The central objective of the contemporary Brotherhood continues to be the establishment of an Islamic state that is governed not by human, man-made laws, but by the shari'a. Whereas the former system of legislation implies the sovereignty of man over man, this being interpreted as man's servitude to man, the latter testifies to the sovereignty of God alone. Abu Alla-al-Maududi (1903-1963) was also stressing on this notion.

The objective of applying shari'a raises the question of rule in an Islamic state. If sovereignty is the realm of God only, whose responsibility is it to govern in God's name on earth? How to choose or elect the Caliph? No answers were

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40. Khadduri, n.36, p.80.

made to these questions because the four Caliphs who succeeded the Prophet had been chosen by four different ways. Moreover, traditional Islam did not formulate general principles governing the incidence and exercise of authority. It failed to provide checks on absolute authority of rulers, many of whom violated the very spirit of Islam. How to depose a ruler who had lost popular legitimacy. There was no formula to answer such a question. It was a major political crisis when populace revolted against Osman ibn Affan, the third Caliph, demanding his resignation and he refused to do so. While the Islamists claim that they have a comprehensive perception towards modern government, they fail to find answers to these crucial issues. Omer al-Tilmisani, the General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt until his death in 1987, characterized Islam as "creed, worship, homeland, citizenship, creation, the physical, culture, law, forgiveness, and power". In his view, Islam is a complete system governing all aspects of life. Islam encompasses all things material and spiritual, societal and individual, political and personal.<sup>41</sup>

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41. Sana Abed Kotob, "The Accommodationists Speak: Goals and Strategies of Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt," International Middle East Studies, (U.K.), vol.27, 1995, p.321.

Hassan al-Hydaybi, al-Bann's successor, openly declared after the revolution of 1952 that the Brotherhood would ultimately seek to govern Egypt on the basis of Islamic system. This open declaration ultimately brought the Brotherhood into clash with the military leaders of Egypt. In the wake of the attempt on Nasser's life in October 1954 by a Muslim Brotherhood member, the government banned the Brotherhood. The principal leaders were arrested, tried and some of them were even executed. In 1966, more leaders were arrested on an alleged plot to assassinate Nasser, and four of them, including Sayyid Qutb, were executed.

## **2.5 POLITICAL ISLAM IN THE SUDAN**

The Brotherhood was introduced in the Sudan in early fifties. One of the reason for its emergence lay in the limitation of the nationalist ideology. Another reason was that it was a reaction to the beginning of Communist activities and the prominent role that Communists were playing in students organizations. The Muslim Brothers were nurtured by the Brotherhood in Egypt. It was reported that two members of the Brotherhood in Egypt went to the Sudan in

1946 and established number of branches.<sup>42</sup>

A major fanatic organization to emerge at the time in the Sudan was the Islamic Movement Liberation (IML). By 1949 IML had number of branches in secondary schools and Gordon College. By early fifties number of Sudanese students in Egypt had joined the Brotherhood there. On their return, they worked to affiliate the IML with the Egyptian Brotherhood.

By 1954 some members of the IML came to believe that some form of association with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt would be helpful. In that year a conference was held and a Muslim Brotherhood was created in the Sudan. Hassan al-Turabi, a leader of the Sudanese Brotherhood, states that in 1954 "we adopted the same name, although we had only cultural ties with the Egyptian movement". In addition, some of the IML remained independent under the leadership of the early organizers, Babiker Karar. The two groups maintained a relatively separate identity till the era of independence, with the Brotherhood group under the leadership of al-Rashid al-Tahir. Hassan al - Turabi eventually established the

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42. Warburg and Kupferschmidt, n.1, p.128.



Islamic Charter Front.<sup>43</sup> None of them became during the era of nationalism, a mass organization. They were groups whose members were drawn almost entirely from the students and modern educated elite in the Sudan. They did not become active as separate groups in the political arena, in contrast to the Egyptian Brotherhood.

Although opposed to "sectarianism" the Muslim Brotherhood tended to operate as pressure group within the Ansar. It was able to obtain serious political achievement through the existing Islamic groups, and primarily the Ansar.<sup>44</sup> The Brotherhood in the Sudan was unable to evolve as a mass organization. That was due to social as well as psychological reasons. The social reasons were that the circumstances that made the Brotherhood in Egypt gain supporters were not prevalent in the Sudan. There were no poor and depressed workers. There were no peasants who were forced through economic pressures to migrate to urban centers. There has always been an abundance of land for anyone who was willing to settle and work, even to people who migrated from the neighbouring African countries. The

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43. Ibid, p.129.

44. Ibid, p.130.

reason lie in the absence of feudal relationship of the kind that could be found in countries like Egypt, Iran and India till recently. The psychological factor was that the very complexion of the Sudanese does not tend towards fanaticism and rigid discipline. That is why the Mahdi was met by stiff resistance and hostility when he called for strict adherence in a more salafi form. In order to adapt itself with the Sudanese complexion, the Mahdiyya had to transform itself into a tariga-like organization.

The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt advocated, and continues to advocate violence. Nokrashy Pasha, the Prime Minister during the monarchy, was assassinated on 28 December 1948. There was an attempt on Nasser's life. Both were carried out by the Brotherhood in Egypt.<sup>45</sup>

These fanatic movements have been trying to move the society in the direction to restore and re-create the conditions that had existed in the days of the Prophet. This is true of Ibn Taymiyya in the medieval era, the Wahhabi in the early modern era and Mohammed Rashid Rida and the Muslim Brotherhood in the recent period.

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45. It is interesting to note that there has never been any assassination or an attempt on the life of any politician in the history of the Sudan.

The Brotherhood is different from other religious movements in the Sudan like the Khatmiyya and the Mahadiyya. While the essential interest of the latter lie in the cultivation of a spiritual relationship, the essential interest of the former is the cultivation of political influence. It is true that the Khatmiyya and the Mahadiyya acquired political influence but it came as superstructure as it were.

Both, the Khatmiyya and the Mahadiyya have been largely concerned with internal affairs in the Sudan, but the Muslim Brotherhood has been supranational. This implies that immense assistance and support should be made to similar ideological movements abroad. There is potential here for the interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and wastage of the limited resources of the country when the movement assumed power in the Sudan. Another point of difference is that there is no scope for accommodation and tolerance in the ideology of the Brotherhood. Any compromise with local customs become a form of shirk, political opponents are often described as unIslamic or murtad.

The Brotherhood in the Sudan continued to be a minor political organization till 1977. In 1965 elections it won three seats in the parliament. In 1968 elections it won five

seats. Though the main objective of the Brotherhood till 1966 was to compete with the Communists<sup>46</sup>, as mentioned by its leader, today its influence transgressed the boundaries of the country.

The tide of Islamic resurgence in the Middle East began to increase in the aftermath of the Arab defeat in 1967 war and continued throughout the seventies amid severe economic dislocations, class disparities, and authoritarian state structures. It became a formidable force after the Islamic revolution of 1979 in Iran, sweeping across the Muslim heartland from North Africa to the Arabian Gulf. This is Islam as a political force, or political Islam, challenging established regimes, shaking Arab political life to its very foundations. This revival was associated with the failure to deal with an accumulation of internal and external crises stemming from socio-political and economic decay and foreign hegemony. The failure of national ideologies in the immediate post-colonial era like Nasserism, Ba'athism, socialism, etc led to the increasing influence of this phenomenon.

However, the scenario in which the Brotherhood in the

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46. Hassan al-Turabi, al-Haraka al-Islamiya fis-Sudan, (Khartoum, 1988), p.33.

Sudan became a considerable movement was entirely different. It started with the National Reconciliation agreed upon between the Nimeiry regime and the National Front (opposition). It consisted of the Umma Party, Democratic Unionist Party and the Islamic Charter Front. According to this agreement the National Front would end its armed opposition and return to the Sudan. In return, the regime offered some concessions. As a result Nimeiry appointed al-Sadiq al-Madhi, Hassan al-Turabi and Ahmad al-Mirghani in his party; the Sudanese socialist Union (SSU) political bureau.<sup>47</sup>

While Turabi advocated ideological principles, in political life he was extremely pragmatic, and his motive in National Reconciliation was to build up his organization, even if that meant linking with the SSU. In this he was challenged by some who felt that too much compromise was involved. It led to schism in 1978 when an important faction led by Sadiq Abdallah Abdal-Majid and al-Habir Yusif formed their own organisation. However, Turabi's faction dominated the scene.

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47. Gabriel Warburg, "Islam in Sudanese Politics", The Jerusalem Quarterly, (Jerusalem), no.13, Fall 1979, p.49.

Hassan al-Turabi was able to create a huge financial institution, that is, the so-called Islamic Banks. He had always belonged to those who saw Quranic justification for commerce. He was able to develop a body of people who could feel that in new opportunities to work in the interests of Mammon, they were also serving Allah. Turabi founded the first "*Islamic*" bank with the backing of Saudi prince, Mohammad al-Faisal in 1978. It was called the Faisal Islamic Bank (FIB). It was also patronised by the government which granted it exemption from many taxes and regulation, including the control of the Central Bank. The FIB's paid-up capital had risen from 3.6 million pounds in 1979 to as much as 57.6 million pounds in 1983, while its assets, both at home and abroad, increased from 31 million to 441.3 million pounds (Sudanese).<sup>48</sup> By 1980, the FIB was outstripping all other commercial banks, both private and nationalised, in terms of both growth and profitability. The success of FIB led to the establishment of a number of similar "*Islamic*" banks like the Western Sudan Islamic Bank. These banks not only provide loans to the Muslim Brothers but also job

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48. Abbashar Jamal, "Funding Fundamentalism: Sudan", Review of African Politicsl Economy, no.52, (U.K.), November 1991, p.105.

opportunities and other facilities. Describing the reconciliation phase (1977-1984), Hassan al-Turabi said, "this phase was the phase of Islamic economic business, and became an institutional achievement to the Islamic movement in the Sudan, an achievement to the application of Islam and its strength".<sup>49</sup>

In addition to the financial sector, the Brotherhood paid special attention to expand its influence in the universities, which have played a pivotal role in Sudanese politics ever since students led the protests that forced the military regime to resign in October 1964. Beginning in 1977, an umbrella "Islamic Direction" (ID) Movement began to control the student union in each of the four northern universities. By 1980, the ID had gained control of every university students union in the Sudan (except at the Juba University).<sup>50</sup>

With the resignation of Sadiq al-Mahdi from the political bureau of the SSU in October 1978, Hassan al-Turabi emerged with a clear advantage among the ex-leaders of the National Front. He was appointed to the post of

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49. al-Turabi, n.46, p.37.

50. Scott H. Jacobs, "The Sudan's Islamization", Current History, vol.85, no.502, (USA), 1 May 1985, p.207.

Attorney General in 1978. So he, along with his colleagues, dominated the judiciary. This ultimately led to the imposition in 1983 of hudud or the infamous September Laws though the application of shari'a was not an aim of his organization when it accepted the reconciliation with Nimeiry in 1977. Turabi's aim when he agreed upon a compromise with Nimeiry was to find access to freedom to build a basis for his organization according to new strategy.<sup>51</sup>

However, the consequences of imposition of the September law had led to serious effects not only upon the southerners but also among different Islamic groups in the north. Mahmoud M. Taha, the 76 years old leader of Republican Brothers, was hanged because he criticized Nimeiry's attempt to create an Islamic state. Sadiq al-Mahdi also criticized the penal code at a sermon at Mahdi's tomb. He was arrested soon after. The event that captured the attention of the nation and the world, however, was the first public hand-severing, when two young Muslims convicted of auto theft had their right hands severed. Many Sudanese Muslims awakened to the painful reality of those Laws.

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51. a]-Turabi, n.46, pp.38-9.



Following the decree of emergency, Nimeiry set up "decisive justice", courts which began at once to adjudicate cases with a curious and often horrifying mixture of "Islamic" and emergency justice. The brutality of these courts shocked many Sudanese. At least one adulterer was hanged, his pregnant lover was given 100 lashes. Defendants were allowed neither appeal nor defence lawyers.<sup>52</sup>

The impact of Turabi's alliance with Nimeiry had a damaging effect in the South. Although conflict had broken out before the onset of the "Islamic law" in September 1983, the rebels had not yet formed coherent factions or goals "Islamic law" added to their fear. The so-called Islamic law had not been implemented in the South, and Nimeiry had stated that it would not be applied to non-Muslims. However, the fact remains that several non-Muslims have received punishments under "Islamic law". The southerners felt apprehended by the imposition of that Law not because they were anti-Islam but because it did not allow for unity in diversity. The civil war aggravated the tension and led to complete stoppage of development projects in the South. The largest and best organized rebel group the, Sudanese

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52. Jacobs, n.50, p.208.

People's Liberation Army (SPLA) led by John Garang, struck hard and fast.<sup>53</sup>

The escalation of the civil war led to the collapse of the economy of the Sudan. It is estimated that the civil war cost one million U.S. dollar per day. Along with other factors, the war led to the collapse of Nimeiry's regime in April 1985. Freedom of speech, press and restoration of democracy took place. Political parties were re-introduced. Hassan al-Turabi changed the name of his organization to Islamic National Front (INF) so as to broaden its support base, and to include the sufiyya elements. Here again Turabi offered ideological concession. The INF, after the overthrow of Nimeiry, was the strongest political party so far as the organization and finance were concerned. It was the only political organization that had benefited from the National Reconciliation, by establishing its financial institutions and operating freely which enabled it to dominate the student unions and the state structure especially the judiciary. It has been a power to reckon with from April 1985 till today. It was also able to infiltrate the army and some professional associations.

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53. Ibid, p.208.

Hassan al-Turabi has been changing the fundamental principles of his ideology. From 1964 until 1984, he was for the exclusion of non-Muslims from leadership posts in public service including the office of the Head of the State. Three years later, he let it be known that he believed in equal rights for all citizens including the right of non-Muslims to occupy any state office in the land.<sup>54</sup> Some observers see the ideological and policy shifts made by al-Turabi over the years as tactical adjustments to Zeitgeist for the sake of winning popular support than a genuine modification of beliefs and ideas. One of his followers says, "al-Turabi's genius is most apparent in his ability to hover on the border line between numerous antagonistic positions. He sits astride modernity and tradition, pragmatism and idealism, calculation and faith".<sup>55</sup>

Hassan al-Turabi is endowed with much Machiavellianism and ability to manoeuvre. During the civilian October

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54. An English version of the Sudan Charter is reproduced in: Francis Deng and Prosser (eds), The Search for Peace and Unity in the Sudan (Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, Washington D.C., 1987), pp.78-89.

55. Abdal-Wahhab al-Affendi, Turabi's Revolution Islam and Power in Sudan, (London, 1991), p.179.

Revolution of 1964, he was one of those who advocated the overthrow of the first dictatorship of Abboud and the restoration of democracy. He was of the idea that the absence of freedom was the crux of the Southern problem. During Nimaïry's dictatorship he served as Attorney General and presidential councillor from 1977 to 1985. When he was asked why he served Nimaïry though he was not a genuine Muslim, he did not hesitate to say that the prophet Joseph had served the pharaoh of Egypt though he was an infidel. During the third democratic government in 1985-1989, he not only spoke about his commitment to democracy, but took an oath on becoming a minister in May 1988 to uphold and defend the democratic order. However, a year later, his party cadres in the armed force overthrew the government based upon the constitution and democratic order and installed his military regime on 30 June 1989. He thinks that it is the right for an Islamic movement to come to power by all means possible including a military takeover. He advised the Algerian leaders of the Front Islamique due Salut (FIS) to infiltrate the army and use it to seize power.<sup>56</sup>

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56. Al-Sharq al-Ausat, 12 July 1992, London, p.1. This statement is reportedly contained in a video film shot in London, when al-Turabi was briefing NIF cadres and other close associates in April-May 1992.

Turabi is also responsible for much of what goes on outside the Sudan by virtue of his pan-Islamic stature. He was elected in April 1990 to the position of the Secretary General of the Arab and Islamic Peoples Congress, an organization of fanatic movements and regimes, created as parallel to the Organization of Islamic Conference. For al-Turbai, that position made him the spokesman of Islamic internationalism or Islam as pan-national movement as he prefers to call it. This movement sees the present nation-state system s an obstacle which must be removed. Hence, a Sudanese diplomatic passport was given by the Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Rashid Gannouchi, the leader of the Tunisian fundamentalist movement (al-Nahda) because a "Muslim is a citizen of every Muslim country". Tunisia protested and withdrew its ambassador from Khartoum.<sup>57</sup> A dangerous and alarming consequence of the existing INF regime in the Sudan is that violence might dominant Sudanese politics in the future. The attack on Hassan al-Turabi by Hashim Badr al-Din, the Sudanese exile in Ottawa airport, was, by the attacker's own account, out of the conviction that al-Turabi was responsible for the pain and suffering in

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57. Al Sharq al-Ausat, 18 February 1992, p.1.

the Sudan.<sup>58</sup> One apprehends that the long history of tolerance and the tradition of accommodation that characterized the Sudanese might vanish due to the fanatic attitudes of the INF and its design to impose its ideology by coercion.

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58. al-Hyat, 29 May 1992, London. p.6, An Interview with Hashim Badr al-Din.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE CIVILIAN GOVERNMENTS

#### 3.1 THE FIRST PARLIAMENTARY PERIOD 1953-1958

The first elections were held in the Sudan in December 1953, for the two Houses of Parliament; the House of Representatives, with ninety-seven members, and the Senate, having fifty members. The National Unionist Party (NUP) established a long lead and a parliamentary majority by obtaining more than double the number of seats gained by the Umma Party (UP). The final result was fifty-one seats out of ninety-seven for the NUP, twenty-three for the UP, besides eleven Independent, the Southern Party nine, Socialist Republicans three and the Front Against Imperialism one seat.<sup>1</sup>

The result caused much surprise in Britain, chiefly owing to belief that the majority of the Sudanese people did not wish for union with Egypt in any form. There were several reasons behind the complete victory of the Unionists. Amongst them was that the Unionist's electioneering

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1. L.A. Fabunmi, The Sudan in Anglo-Egyptian Relations, (London, 1960), p. 341.

campaigns concentrated on a feeling of anti-imperialism. The NUP appeared as the chief champion of the Sudanese against the British rule. On the other hand the UP identified itself with the British administration. Another reason was that though the Mahdi was not responsible for the later horrors of his followers, the Sudanese were anxious that history should not repeat itself. They, therefore, did not vote for the party championed by the Mahdi's son. They thought that he might bring back the Mahdiyya.<sup>2</sup> Beside the charisma of Azhari and the organizational skills shown by his associates were also important factors.

The Sudanese Parliament held its first meeting on the New Year's Day of 1954. On 6 January, Azhari was elected Prime Minister. He selected his colleagues, as was his right, entirely from the members of his NUP. A Sudanization Committee was established. Its duty was primarily to complete the Sudanization of the administration, the police and the Sudan Defence Force.<sup>3</sup> In April 1955 its work was completed. By December Parliament resolved unanimously for Independence.

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2. Ibid, p. 342.

3. P.M. Holt, A Modern History of the Sudan, From the Funj Sultanate to the Present Day, (London, 1961), p. 164.



At the time of Independence in 1956, the Sudan was equipped with a professional and, apparently, apolitical army, as well as developed civil service having a high reputation for efficiency and incorruptibility and a parliamentary system which enjoyed the confidence of the people and their leaders. The then popular notion that the Sudanese were a 'naturally democratic' people and that the Westminster model perfectly suited their genius was formally confirmed by the recommendations of the National Constitution committee that the existing parliamentary system should, with a few modifications, be maintained.<sup>4</sup>

A brief background about the relations between the secular nationalists and the sectarian leaders seems to necessary to understand not only the post-independence politics in the Sudan but also the political scenario till the present day. The Graduates' Congress, established in 1930's, was a creation of younger generation of graduates mainly those who had been active in al-Fijr and Abu Ruf groups. These young graduates were intent on establishing an organization which, while starting as a vehicle for the

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4. Muddathir Abdal-Rahim, "Changing Patterns of Civilian-Military Relations in the Sudan" Research Report, Uppsala offset Centre, no. 46, 1978, p.16.

expression of graduate interests, would in due course develop as a national movement with wide popular support. The new organization in due course of time would lead the Sudanese towards self-determination. The religious leaders would be given respect, but they would remain on the sidelines while the educated Sudanese wrested increasing power from the British.<sup>5</sup>

Ahmad Khair, one of the founding fathers of the Graduates' Congress, Wad Medani branch, warned that 'enlightened opinion would become independent of disgraceful traditions; it should free itself from personal cults. The Indian Congress, Ahmad Khair contended, would constitute the model which the Sudanese graduates should seek to copy.'<sup>6</sup>

By this the idea behind the Graduates' Congress was to establish a united nationalist movement like the Indian National Congress. But what actually happened was quite different. The emergence of conflicting tendencies within the Graduates' Congress induced groups of graduates to seek outside support. Such support was sought, at least in the first instance, not from the population directly but from

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5. Tim Niblock, Class and Power in Sudan, (London, 1987), p.186.

6. Ibid, p.189.

elements within the Sudanese establishment. The two most prominent turuq leaders, and the circles of establishment figures who surrounded them, constituted the primary source from which immediate practical support could be, and was, forthcoming. Ultimately the Congress divided itself into political parties in 1940's. Although the political parties which emerged from the congress developed strong political followings, these followings were mediated through the involvement of senior establishment figures. It was the religious leaders who, making use of their substantial influence, brought in their followers to join the parties, rather than the parties which succeeded in mobilizing the people on the basis of new forms of allegiance.

Turning for support to Sayyid Abdal-Rahman and Sayyid Ali was in many ways an easy option for the graduates' leaders of the new political parties. The influence which the two Sayyids had established among senior graduates through their coteries, the economic resources which they had at their disposal, and the respect which they commanded at the popular level all combined to make them desirable allies. The search for 'easy support' also led the new political parties to align themselves, whether openly and directly or covertly and indirectly, with one or other of the two co-

domini. The justification for such alignment was that the Condominium in question could hasten the achievement of Sudanese self-determination.<sup>7</sup>

The perspectives and objectives of the political parties which emerged from the Graduates' Congress were inevitably influenced by the sources from which they drew support, both internal and external. The divisions among graduates, the strength and vitality of the Sudanese establishment, and the particular dynamics which followed from the role of the two co-domini, therefore, shaped the post-1938 Sudanese nationalist movement into a very different form from that which the founding fathers of the Graduates' Congress had envisaged.

On the eve of Sudan's independence, in the years 1953-1956, it became clear that despite the emergence of an educated elite with political aspirations, the real masters of Sudanese politics were Sayyid Abal-Rahman al-Mahdi and Sayyid Ali al-Mirghani. The Ashiqqa as the Unionists were called in 1940, maintained a firmly anti-sectarian line. The initiative which led to Ashiqqa-Mirghaniyya alliance came from Sayyid Ali himself. Worried by Sayyid Abdal-Rahman's

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7. Ibid, p. 187.

expanding influence and ambitions, and by the Condominium government's (mainly the British) apparent support for these ambitions, Sayyid Ali was determined to weaken his rival's standing among educated Sudanese.<sup>8</sup>

However, the rivalries and power games rendered the future political situation one of chronic instability. Parliamentary life from 1954 to 1958 was characterized by factionalism rather than party politics. In December 1954, Azhari dismissed Mirghani Hamza (who had been Minister of Education, Agriculture and Irrigation), together with two other ministers from his cabinet. The three men straightaway formed the Republican Independent Party. It is unlikely that there was at this time any serious ideological difference between Mirghani Hamza and Ismail al-Azhari. The events should be seen rather as a conflict of personalities. In June 1955 another leading minister, Mohammad Nur al-Din (Minister of Public Works), was dismissed. Shortly afterwards Azhari also dismissed Mohammad Nur al-Din from the vice-Presidency of the NUP. Mohammad Nur al-Din and his associates promptly retorted by expelling Azhari himself.<sup>9</sup>

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8. Ibid, p.194.

9. Holt, n.3, p.173.

Those who were expelled by Azhari were the closest associates of Syyyid Ali. By now the Prime Minister appeared to have a strong basis on which to pursue his own policies irrespective of the NUP's religious patron.

From early October 1955 Sayyid Ali began to move towards seeking Azhari's downfall. One final incident strengthened Sayyid Ali in his resolve. In August - September 1955 Sayyid Ali thought to persuade al-Azhari's government to allow the issue of the Sudan's future status (independence or Union with Egypt) to be determined by popular plebiscite.<sup>10</sup> Al-Azhari insisted that the decision should rest with the Parliament alone. Al-Azhari, to ensure that he retained the Parliamentary support necessary to counter the proposal for a plebiscite, began to open contacts with associates of Sayyid Abdal-Rahman Al-Mahdi. Meanwhile the Umma was pressing for a coalition Government, so that they could be associated with the achievement of independence.<sup>11</sup> Significant to the growing concentration of force against Azhari was an unprecedented meeting of Ali Al-Mirghani and Abdal-Rahman al-Mahdi, the first meeting

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10. Niblock, n.5, p.208.

11. Holt, n.3, p.173.

between the two arch-rivals for twenty years. The understanding reached by the two sectarian leaders on 10 October 1955, made possible a joint effort to displace al-Azhari.

On 10 November 1955, some of Sayyid Ali's ex-NUP followers in Parliament sided with the UP MPs in voting against al-Azhari's government on the budget issue. The expectation was that Mirghani Hamza would become prime minister, heading an Umma-Khatmiyya coalition government. The two sectarian leaders, however, misjudged the popular mood. Violent street demonstrations broke out in support of Azhari. When the House of Representatives re-assembled on 15 November 1955, Azhari had regained majority approval. Sayyid Ali adopted a new strategy. He called for the establishment of a 'national government' so as to reduce Azhari's freedom of action. At the end of January 1956 Azhari could no longer resist the demand for a coalition government. The new government, sworn in on 2 February, included Mirghani Hamza and Mohammad Nur al-Din, and two leading members of the UP, Abdallah Khalil and Abraham Ahmad. The divorce between Azhari and the Khatmiyya took place in June 1956, when with the support of Sayyid Ali, a new political party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), was formed, the new party

drew together the three groups of ex-NUP Khatmiyya MPs who had opposed Azhari : Mirghani Hamza's Independent Republicans, Mohammad Nur al-Din's Unionists, and the grouping of Shaikh Ali Abdal-Rahman.<sup>12</sup>

At the end of June 1956 the PDP and the UP succeeded in forcing Azhari's resignation. On 5 July an UP-PDP coalition government was formed, headed by Abdallah Khalil.

Over the remaining two years of the first parliamentary period, the NUP was excluded from power. It is significant indeed that many prominent tribal leaders rallied to Azhari's support instead of supporting Sayyid Ali. They included Mohammd Ahamad Abu Sin nazir of the Shukriyya, Ibrahim Farah nazir of Ja'aliyyn and Mohammad Siddiq Talha nazir of Batahin. Similar support was forthcoming from the leaders of many of the smaller sufiyya turug, and even some of the local Khatmiyya khulafa. One of the nephews of Sayyid Ali, Hassan al-Mirghani, also disassociated himself from his uncle.<sup>13</sup>

The coalition of the UP and the PDP was artificial and opportunistic in character. The Khatmiyya and Ansar, who

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12. Ibid, p.174.

13. Niblock, n.5,p. 216.



have been at loggerheads for three quarters of a century were brought together by nothing more than their hostility to Azhari and the NUP. Having been forced into opposition, the NUP developed a more radical posture. The emphasis was now placed on the party's secular nationalism, and one of the main slogans used by the party was 'La-qadasah fis-siyasah' (no holiness in politics). Stronger links were forged with trade unions, professional associations and radical nationalist groups which were confronting the UP-PDP government. In October 1958 a national front was formed comprising of the Sudanese Communist Party, the Sudan Workers Trade Union Federation, tenants and farmers' union, students unions, the (Southern) Federal Party and the NUP. The charter of the front called for the abolition of laws restricting basic freedoms, cancellation of the aid agreement with the United States, assertion of positive neutrality (non-alignment) in Sudan's foreign policy and the adoption of national democratic constitution.

The cracks in the structure of the government became evident in June, when the American Aid agreement was ready for ratification. By this time the southerners had withdrawn from the constitutional discussions when their proposals about a regional government were turned down. The UP was

still in a position to push through a constitution providing for the election of a non-executive President by parliament. The Ansar felt that it would be a pleasant gesture to crown Sayyid Abdal-Rahman by bestowing the Presidency on him. Members of the Parliament of the PDP began to absent themselves from the meetings of the constitutional body. There were numerous of secret negotiation between Nasser of Egypt and PDP. Then it was learned that Ali Abdal-Rahman, a PDP minister had taken off for Cairo and Baghdad without notifying the Prime Minister.<sup>14</sup>

However, during the first parliamentary government there were some achievements. The University College of Khartoum was raised to full university status; railway extensions south of Sennar in the Blue Nile and Darfur were completed, and the first part of the Managil extension of the Gezira scheme began operating in July 1958.

But the shortcomings were many. Traditional differences regarding relations with Egypt were always there. During the Suez crisis the PDP felt that Egypt should have been given greater support than the Prime Minister was willing to give while some UP spokesmen accused the PDP of softness towards,

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14. K.D.D. Henderson, Sudan Republic (London, 1965), p. 110.

if not actual complicity, with Egypt when the border dispute arose between the two countries in February 1958. The Khatmiyya could not agree to a presidential form of government with Sayyid Abdal-Rahaman al-Mahdi as the first president. Another difficulty arose from the deteriorating financial and economic situation which, having initially resulted from failure to dispose of the cotton crop of 1957, was further compounded by exceptionally poor crops in 1958.<sup>15</sup>

The South was the main failure of the first parliamentary regime. The South had suffered severe underdevelopment apart from experiencing political isolation and lack of coherent political organizations. To many southerners the representation of the South in the work of the Sudanization Committee which had been appointed on 20 February 1954 was unjust. Its task was to consider which posts in the civil service would be given to Sudanese. Only four posts were to the southerners while the rest of the 796 posts were allocated to northerners.<sup>16</sup> In August 1955, the Equatorial Corps of the Sudan Defence Force mutinied. Some

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15. Abdal-Rahim, n.4, p.17.

16. Peter K. Bechtold, Politics in the Sudan, Parliamentary and Military Rule in an Emerging African Nation, (New York, 1976), p.185.

261 northern Sudanese and 75 southerners were killed in the disturbances which followed. The southern political elite, sought the adoption of a constitutional framework in the form of federal arrangement. The support of the southern MPs for the declaration of Sudanese independence was given only after the House of Representatives had resolved on 19 December 1955 to give full consideration to the claims of the southerners for a federal government. However, in due course the assembly's constitutional committee rejected a federal form of government.<sup>17</sup>

The UP-PDP coalition was strictly a marriage of convenience of two partners with opposite foreign and domestic political approaches save one common programme; to exclude the NUP from office. In this goal they succeeded, and even managed to perpetuate themselves at least temporarily by extending the life of the Constituent Assembly until summer 1957, when a new Parliamentary Election Act was adopted. This act called for general election by early 1958, thus providing Sudanese voters with the first real opportunity of a clear choice among rivaling factions and policies. New measures were introduced. The five graduates' constituencies

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17. Niblock, n.5, p.217.

which had existed during the 1953 elections were abolished. Four of them had been won by NUP, and one by Anti-Imperialist Front in 1953 election. Of even greater significance was the re-ordering of territorial constituencies representation which involved increasing the number of the House of Representatives' constituencies from 92 to 173. The major increase in constituency numbers occurred in provinces where the UP and PDP held predominant influence. Greater representation was given to those parts of the population where tribal and religious allegiance remained strong. The territorial delimitation of nine constituencies was gerrymandered in order to improve the prospects for the PDP or UP. The UP or PDP candidate won in eight of the nine gerrymandered constituencies. In addition, educational requirement for electors in the senate constituencies was dropped. Education had been the sole qualification for such electors in the 1953 election. It should be noted that most of these measures were introduced to strengthen the position of the ruling parties.<sup>18</sup> It should also be noted that whereas the delimitation of nine constituencies in 1953 was determined by an international

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18. Ibid, p. 212.

commission, in 1958 the government retained control of this matter. These changes certainly constituted a significant element in the victory of the UP-PDP alliance. The UP gained sixty-three seats in the House of Representatives whereas the PDP gained twenty-six seats. The NUP got forty-four, and the Southern Liberals got forty seats.<sup>19</sup>

The already strained UP-PDP coalition was returned to power. Realising the futility of this arrangement the President of the UP, Sayyid Siddiq al-Mahdi, then sought an alliance with Azhari's NUP, but this was unacceptable to the Prime Minister and the secretary of the UP, Abdallah Khalil, who was also the Minister of Defence. He started consultation with senior army officers about the possibility of a military coup. From his point of view this seemed to be desirable because it would, at one stroke, solve his intra-party problems vis-a-vis Sayyid Siddiq al-Mahdi and, at the same time, save the country from the consequences of the paralysing differences with the PDP which had arisen over questions of foreign aid and relations with U.A.R.<sup>20</sup> In the evening of 16 November 1958 an agreement was reached on the

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19. Ibid, p.215.

20. Abdal-Rahim, n.4, p.18.

formation of a UP-NUP coalition; the announcement was to be made at the re-opening of parliament the following day. The military under General Ibrahim Abboud had by then, however, assumed power.

The first statement made by the military was,

"All of you are aware of the state of deterioration, chaos and instability which prevailed throughout the country. This corruption and chaos was extended to the governmental and public institutions. All this was due to the strife among political parties, each of which sought gains for itself by various means, legal and illegal, and through the exploitation."

General Abboud announced the dissolution of all political parties; prohibition of gatherings, processions and demonstration in the country and ban on all papers. To people in general the coup d'etat came as a relief after the wrangling and differences of the parties. The military government lasted for six years, to be replaced once again by the civilian government. The Sudan since then has been oscillating between the civilian and military governments who have used ideology, foreign policy and religion to legitimize their rule, while eroding the very basis of democracy in the country.

### 3.2 THE SECOND PARLIAMENTARY PERIOD 1964-1969

The opposition to Abboud's regime grew stronger with the lapse of time. The political parties formed a United Front which was highly critical of everything the Junta did. It consisted of the NUP, the UP and Communists. By the end of 1961, the regime arrested twelve leaders of political parties and exiled them to Juba . All political parties were represented in the detainee group except the PDP and Siddiq al-Mahdi. Among these leaders were Abdal-Khaliq Mahgoub and Ahmad Sulieman of the Communist party, Mohammad Ahmad Mahgoub of the U.P. and Azhari of the NUP.

Dissatisfaction was building up everywhere, among the professional classes, students and workers, among the farmers in rural areas, and among the politicians and tribal leaders of the South. In Khartoum, student unrest and dissatisfaction reached major proportions. The regime introduced a new measure, that is, abrogation of the Khartoum University Act. It curtailed the University independence and put it under the authority of the Minister of Education, a general of the Junta.<sup>21</sup> Both students, and

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21. Mohammad Ahmad Mahgoub, Democracy on Trial, Reflection on Arab and African Politics, (London, 1974), p.188.



lecturers objected strongly. In protest against the curtailment of the university, the students ignored the ban and distributed invitations to general public to attend debate on 21 October 1964. The debate was held in public and the police arrived, opened fire. One student was shot dead and a number of others, included policemen, were seriously injured. Now the revolution spread in the University of Khartoum and developed into a nationwide political strike. The following day a meeting of the Bar Association was held to discuss the next step. Demonstrations were resumed and running battles between crowds and police raged all day long. On Saturday, lawyers, doctors, teachers and members of other professional classes gathered and marched to the Presidential Palace to register their protest. The High Court judges closed the courts and withheld magisterial authority for anti-riot action by the police. The police thoroughly demoralised, stood helplessly. On Sunday railway, airport and radio staff stopped work. Taxi-drivers blocked the roads to prevent armored vehicles from penetrating to the centre of the city.<sup>22</sup> The entire machinery of the state collapsed.

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22. Henderson, n.15, p.205.

President Abboud opened negotiations with a Committee for Public Safety. It was destined to provide the de facto government. It consisted of resistance leaders. A National Front of Political Organizations was formed. It consisted of leaders of trade unions, doctors, lawyers and other civil servants who participated in the Revolution. Political parties were also represented in this Front.

Abboud was forced to agree to the dissolution of both his executive councils and to the formation of a transitional government in which all parties, including, for the first time, the CP and the Muslim Brotherhood, were represented. The Prime Minister was Sir al-Khatim al-Khalifa. It was the first non-sectarian government in the history of independent Sudan. The cabinet was dominated by Communists because they were included as ministers representing the communist-dominated Worker's and Tenants' Trades Unions and certain front organizations.

In October 1964 Revolution both Communists and Muslim Brotherhood, under the name of Islamic Charter, played a leading role in the Professional Front which heralded the downfall of Abboud's regime.<sup>23</sup> This revolution has assumed

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23. Gabriel Warburg, "Islam and State in Numayri's Sudan" Africa, vol. 55, no.1, 1985, p. 402.

considerable significance in the modern political history of the Sudan and is still revered as the "October Revolution".

The rebellion in the South was one of the major causes of the Revolution. The military dictators thought that it was a military problem, not a political one. The provisional government declared a general amnesty in the South and appealed to the southern leaders inside and outside the country to help solve the problem by peaceful means. On 16 March 1965 a Round Table Conference in which northern and southern parties participated was opened in Khartoum. The Conference agreed on a constructive programme of immediate action which included the repatriation of refugees and the restoration of order, freedom of religion and unrestricted missionary activities and the training of southerners for army, police and civil service. The southern parties which attended the Conference were divided. Some wanted federalism, others a separate state, while the unionists favoured the status-quo. There was no agreement and the constitutional future of the country was referred to a Twelve - Member Committee, in which all parties were represented. The result of the consultation which followed in this and, subsequently, in the Political Parties Conference, was the proposal, finally embodied in the Draft

Constitution, which was submitted to the Constituent Assembly in 1968. It recommended that the country be divided into nine regions each of which was to have its own parliament and executive within the framework of a united Sudan.<sup>24</sup>

After a transitional period of six months, general elections were held in areas unaffected by the civil war in the South, and parliamentary rule returned in May 1965. The result was that the UP won the largest number of seats, that is, seventy-six, followed by the NUP which won fifty-four. Neither party was however in a position to form a government on its own. The Communists won eight out of the fifteen seats in the graduates' constituency. The Islamic Charter Front (ICF) won five seats. Other seats were won by the Beja Congress which got ten seats, and the Nuba Mountains Federation which got nine seats, and the PDP only three seats.<sup>25</sup>

The 1965 elections differed from the two preceding ones in several aspects. The Sudanese voted for only unicameral legislature, with the Senate no longer in existence. Also

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24. Ab al-Rahim, n.4, p.21.

25. Henderson, n.15, p.225.

the franchise had been enlarged to include younger age group (the minimum age being eighteen rather than twenty-one years). Women voted for the first time ever. Moreover, for the first time Sudanese voters were not choosing between essentially the respective organizations of three dominant personalities - a secular and two sectarian leaders with rather similiar party platforms, but between traditional and radical movements that offered opposing approaches to national problems. Regionalist parties in the second parliamentary period had become active in the North. The strongest of these was the Beja Congress. In western Sudan also regionalism was becoming stronger. The Nuba Mountains Federation won nine seats. The growing number of votes attracted by independents and by a multiplicity of small organizations, moreover, showed that the hold of the old political parties was beginning to weaken.

A coalition government was formed by the UP and the NUP with the UP's Mohammad Ahmad Mahgoub as the Prime Minister and Azhari as a permanent President of the committee of five that acted as a collective head of the state.<sup>26</sup> The

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26. They were all respected senior Sudanese. Drs. Abdal-Halim Mohammad (U.P.), Tijani al-Mahi (NUP), Mubark Sheddad and Ibrahim Yusif. A Southern member was to be added as soon as possible.

transitional constitution of 1956 was restored with some amendments. At first this arrangement seemed to function very well. Azhari began to champion the cause of new UP president, Sadiq al-Mahdi, as the future prime minister, in exchange for being assured the office of president of the republic.

Once the smashing electoral triumph of the coalition partners had been accomplished, the plan could be implemented, albeit with two minor modifications. One was the temporary postponement of Sadiq's accession to power until after he had completed his thirtieth year of age, and the second was a concession to retain the supreme council as a five-member body. Towards that end, council chairman pro tem Ibrahim Yusif was prevailed upon to resign his seat on 31 May 1965, and Ismail al-Azhari was subsequently sworn in, not merely as his replacement in that body but as the permanent Chairman of the council. In effect, Azhari became head of state for the next four years. Azhari soon indicated his dissatisfaction with a purely ceremonial role and moved to enhance the political scope of his office. This led to a series of conflicts, and was illustrated in a somewhat amusing dispute between the president and the prime minister M.A. Mahgoub, on 20 October 1965 over the right to represent

the Sudan at an African summit conference in Accra. After the prime minister asserted himself in his most forceful decision while in office, first three and then all six NUP cabinet ministers submitted their resignation. This incident was symbolic of the personal jealousies and party rivalries even among coalition partners.<sup>27</sup>

A distortion of the political system took place. The counterweight to presidential influence was located in the prime minister's position and in the Cabinet. A strong Prime Minister with effective control over his own cabinet not only could have warded off interference from the Supreme Council but also could have implemented constructive programs for economic, social and political progress, thereby further enhancing his own political support base. M.A. Mahgoub was a man of considerable skill in foreign diplomacy but was greatly lacking in personal leadership and decisiveness. Mahgoub was widely known as a vain person who thrived on flattery and seemed unable to accept criticism. He took great pride in his own intellectual prowess, and described himself publicly as his country's foremost poet.<sup>28</sup>

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27. Bechtold, n.16, p.242.

28. Ibid, p.243.

He soon moved to combat any strategies aimed at his removal. There was popular misgivings about his government's frequently ill-conceived and mostly indecisive policies in the political and economic realms and regarding continued unrest in the South. During 1965 government revenue and foreign exchange reserves declined rapidly while unemployment in the urban areas rose sharply.

The major new factor which was to influence the composition of the government, however, was the split in the UP between Sadiq's wing and that of al-Hadi's, his uncle. This provided a framework within which a series of governments succeeded each other over the 1965-1969 period. Between May 1965 and June 1966 M.A. Muhgoub headed an UP-NUP coalition; from June 1966 to May 1967 Sadiq al-Mahdi headed a coalition between his wing and the UNP; from May 1967 through to May 1969 Mahgoub returned at the head of a coalition between the Imam al-Hadi wing of UP and NUP.

A major setback to democracy in the second parliamentary period was the enactment of a law on 9 December 1965 banning the Communist Party of the Sudan (CPS), confiscating its property, and ousting its eleven representatives from the Constituent Assembly. The CPS



leader, Abdal-Khliq Mahgoub, subsequently challenged this law as unconstitutional in the Sudanese courts, which after lengthy delays, overruled the parliament in a decision on 22 December 1966. Yet the State, under Azhari's guidance and with the concurrence of the UP leadership reaffirmed the ban on the party on 16 April 1967.

A serious dispute arose in the draft constitution regarding two proposals. The one was that the country should have a presidential and not a parliamentary executive and other was that the permanent constitution be based on the principles of Islam. Article 3 of the draft constitution stated that Islam was the religion of the state and Arabic its official language, without making provisions for the southerners, most of whom were not Muslims and hardly spoke Arabic.<sup>29</sup> Articles 113-115 stated that Islam was the main source of legislation and that all existing laws which contradicted the shari'a would be revised. This draft was hammered out by a committee representing all political parties. It is noteworthy that in the committee there was close collaboration between Sadiq al-Mahdi's wing of the UP

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29. Warburg, n.23, p.404.

and the ICF led by Hassan al-Turabi.<sup>30</sup> The ICF was represented by three members in the committee. It was endorsed by PDP and NUP who paved the way for this Islamic constitution and the establishment of a presidential republic under al-Hadi al-Mahdi. This was inevitably resisted and regarded with suspicion not only by the Communists and radical northern opinion in general but also, and more importantly, by the southern Sudanese parties. This group opposed the system in question and continued to fight a rear guard battle. Thus, the Constituent Assembly was unable to fulfil its chief function, namely the adoption of a permanent constitution for the country even after its duration was twice extended beyond the originally agreed date.<sup>31</sup>

Two constitutional crises brought the regime to the verge of final collapse. The first was the banning of the CPS which resulted in a crisis in which the judiciary and the Assembly confronted one another. The second happened in January 1968. During the preceding weeks the government then

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30. Ibid, p.404.

31. Abdal-Rahim, n.4, p.22.

in office<sup>32</sup> had been defeated on several occasions by the opposition. The government dissolved the Assembly on 7 January 1968. The opposition contested the constitutionality of this act in the courts but, following their experience over the banning of the Communist Party, the courts, were in no mood to rush with a judgment. To keep the government under pressure, the leader of the opposition, Sadiq al-Mahdi, then dispatched a memorandum to the administrative heads of ministries and government departments including the armed forces, informing them of the views of the opposition regarding the unconstitutionality of the existing administration and calling upon them to abide by the ruling of the courts once their judgment in the constitutional case before them had been pronounced.<sup>33</sup> Before any judgment was pronounced however new elections were held in April 1968 and a new Assembly was brought to office.

Fearful that the UP might again obtain a relative majority of assembly seats, Azhari managed to forge a merger of his NUP with the PDP so as to form the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) on 12 December 1967. Many NUPs were

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32. This was Mahgoub's second government. The opposition was then led by Sadiq al-Mahdi and his faction of UP, William Deng and his wing of SANU and al-Turabi's ICF.

33. Abdal-Rahim, n.4, p.23.

openly embarrassed by their leader's opportunistic manipulation; others resented the rapprochement with the PDP and privately pledged their support to Sadiq al-Mahdi.

By election time in mid-April it seemed that there was a state of political turmoil in the country. Every active politician was angry at somebody or the other. The electorate was thoroughly bewildered by the ongoing intrigues. There was a disastrous effects of Umma factionalism. The party unnecessarily lost many seats to its DUP rival-ten in the two western provinces alone. The ex-premier Sadiq al-Mahdi lost his parliamentary seat. Hassan al-Turabi and Ahmad al-Mahdi, similarly lost their seats. The ICF on the right and CPS on the left could manage good showings only in the capital province. The Beja Congress declined in importance. It won only three seats. The Nuba Mountains Federation also declined, winning only two seats.<sup>34</sup>

When the Constituent Assembly held its first meeting on 27 May 1968, a new coalition government has been forged by the DUP and the Imam wing of the Umma Party. Its first deed was to re-elect Azhari as a president of the Supreme Council

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34. Bechtold, n.16, p.246.

along with one other DUP, Khidir Hamad, and two from the Imam wing. They were Daud al-Khalifa and Fadl al-Bushra, and Jervis Yek, from the South. The DUP merger moved the Khatmiyya closer to Azhari, a position formerly held by the traditional wing of the UP. This development caused Imam al-Hadi to re-consider the merits of intra versus interparty feuding, with the result that he and Sadiq eventually agreed to reconcile their differences and to re-unify their respective factions. It was completed on 11 April 1969. On 24 April 1969 the prime minister submitted his resignation to the cabinet. On 7 May, the UP and DUP issued a communique announcing their agreement on principle policies.

The most disastrous aspect of this party infighting was the virtually total neglect of major national problems such as dwindling foreign exchange reserves, rising unemployment, shortage of certain essential consumer goods, and the continuing rebellion in the South.<sup>35</sup> In the circumstance few people were surprised when, on 25 May 1969, Col, Ja'afar Nimairy, assumed control of the country and none rose to defend the fallen regime.

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35. Ibid, n.16, p.256,

### 3.3 THE THIRD PARLIAMENTARY PERIOD 1985-1989

The second military rule that was led by Nimaury, which lasted for sixteen years, came to an end by the civilian intifada in April 1985. Nimaury was overthrown by the very same technique that had been used in 1964 to overthrow the first military rule. Dissatisfaction was building up everywhere, among the professional classes, students, and workers, among the farmers in rural areas, teachers, lawyers, etc. The introduction of the so-called Islamic Shari'a in September 1983 with the assistance of Hassan al-Turabi's group was a crucial factor that brought the military regime to an end. The most controversial aspect of the laws was the mandatory amputations of hands and feet as punishment for certain crimes. The imposition of the Shari'a law was seen by suspicion by non-Muslims. It was also opposed by enlightened northerners among them. M.M. Taha was hanged. The country had sunk into the morass of stagnating economy, staggering external debt, civil war and a state of horror.

Like the earlier October Revolution, the same forces of students unions, professional associations and trade unions were the actual creators of the intifada. A transitional

government was formed of these forces for one year after which elections were to be held and an elected government was to take power. Unlike the transitional government that followed the October Revolution of 1964, it was constituted of two councils, a civilian and a military one. The civilian one consisted of the forces that had led to the overthrow of Nimeiry, and formed the Council of Ministers headed by Jazuli Dafa'allah as Prime Minister; and Transitional Military Council was headed by Siwar al-Dhahab who acted as the head of the state. While the former had been the leader of the Medical Association and had been imprisoned by Nimeiry, the latter was the army's Commander. The civilian members were essentially people of professional rather than political reputation, and most were largely unknown outside their own circles.

The transitional government was a product of detailed negotiations between the army and the National Alliance. The National Alliance comprised of political parties and professional unions. The Alliance represented in essence the same spirit of secular nationalism amongst intelligentsia who had a long and honourable history in Sudanese politics, but they had always been at least partially overtaken by

bigger battalions from the parties or the army.<sup>36</sup>

While the military, the Alliance, and the parties were all seeking to contribute directly to the development in Khartoum, the fourth vital element, the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), a southern rebellion movement, was also behaving differently from its forebears in the southern resistance of 1960's. The SPLA was from the outset suspicious. Though like the Anya Nya in 1960's, they had contributed to the conditions under which the military rule had been brought down, they were more circumspect regarding the events taking place in the capital. Despite many well-meaning overtures to SPLA's leader, John Garang, made by the transitional prime minister, Jazuli Dafa'allh and the offer to meet at any available conference site, and negotiate any issue, Garang refused to accept such promises as genuine. In broadcast after broadcast, the SPLA labeled the Transitional Military Council (TMC) as an extension of Nimeiry's military dictatorship but without Nimeiry.<sup>37</sup> Garang was insisting that the TMC must lift the 'September Laws' as a good-faith

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36. Peter Woodward, Sudan 1898-1989. The Unstable State (London, 1990), pp.201-2.

37. Peter K. Bechtold, "More Turbulence in Sudan: A New Politics this Time?" The Middle East Journal, vol.44, Autumn 1990, p.585.



gesture. The TMC felt that this was the province of a constituent assembly. Thus, the SPLA preferred to keep its distance while being actively courted by all groups and parties, especially the Alliance, which maintained a steady flow of communication between Khartoum and Addis Ababa.

There was, however, consensus on this crucial problem, that of trying to work for some agreement with the SPLA, in spite of the latter's continual suspicion of the TMC. As a result of the prolonged efforts discussions were maintained and eventually led, in March 1986, to the production of the Koka Dam Declaration, subtitled. "A proposed Programme for National Action". At the heart of the eight-point declaration was a call for a new Sudan that would be free from racism, tribalism, sectarianism and all causes of discrimination and disparity". It was followed by a list of immediate steps, most important of which was the repeal of the "September 1983 Laws". A new constitutional conference was to be held, provisionally in Khartoum in June 1986. In addition to the SPLA and the Alliance, some other parties, both northern and southern, endorsed the Koka Dam Declaration including the Umma Party, but the Democratic Unionist Party and the Islamic National Front did not. As to the SPLA's wish that the TMC should itself be replaced by

a new interim government, even the Alliance had stopped short of agreeing to that and supported the TMC's alternative of proceeding to the elections. Meanwhile the SPLA continued fighting as a strategy to maintain pressure on Khartoum.<sup>38</sup>

The other major area in which little progress was made in the transitional period was the economy. The problem of Sudan's debt was not resolved. With a huge burden of debt on its shoulder the Sudan had first to come to terms with the IMF in order to keep some trade moving. With the Sudan already owing \$500 million to the IMF, the situation was compounded by the failure of the cabinet to agree on measures for an austerity programme that the IMF was demanding. The failure to implement a programme led to the IMF's declaration that the Sudan was no longer eligible for further loans, and this in turn held up talks with the holders of the major part of the \$10.6 billion debt, the members of the Paris Club.

The holding of elections of March 1986 was a return not only to liberal democracy in principle, but also to the practices and behaviour of the 1960's, and that was to

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38. Woodward, n.36, pp.205-6.

continue once the elections were over. As at every election since 1954 the result was that no clear victor emerged. The largest single party was the Umma Party with 100 seats, the largest number it had ever won. As expected, the major support came from its old heartland of Durfur, Kordofan, and the Central regions. Second was the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) with sixty-three seats, again mainly in its hardcore areas of Western and Eastern regions, though it came down badly in urban areas, such as the capital, where it had previously done well.<sup>39</sup> The Islamic National Front (INF) gained support in urban areas and the graduates' constituencies. Being well-organised and well-funded since its collaboration with Nimairy in 1977, it took thirteen seats in the capital, more than the Umma or DUP, which had got six and nine seats respectively. The INF benefited from the uncertainty caused by the number of candidates from the DUP, leading to split voting. In the graduates' constituencies the INF was equally well organised; they even encouraged the expatriates to send in their postal votes from overseas. As a result they won twenty-three seats of the twenty-eight graduates' seats, while neither the Umma

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39. Woodward, n. 36, p. 207.

nor the DUP won even a single one. Because of the rules which permitted them to indicate whichever regional graduates' seats they wished to vote for, whether they had any connections there or not, the INF ensured that it won seats in Bahr al-Ghazal and Upper Nile in the southern region. Overall the INF won a total of fifty-one seats. Its only disappointment was the defeat of Hassan al-Turabi in south Khartoum area. The Communist Party won only two seats.

Among regional parties the southerners did the best. The People's Progressive Party won nine seats in Equatoria, the Sudan African People's Congress won eight seats, and the South Sudan Political Association won seven seats across all the three southern regions. The Sudan National Party won seven seats in the Nuba Mountains. Its leader Philip Abbas Ghaboush was elected from one of the poorer constituencies in the capital. The Beja Congress trailed badly behind the DUP in Eastern Region, winning only one seat.<sup>40</sup>

The INF, the newcomer to break into the system, showed a considerable organisational capacity, as well as having its own internal and external financial resources. It however, failed to demonstrate the capacity to mount a major

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40. Ibid, p.208.

challenge in the rural areas. The INF had shown enough strength to be considered in the negotiations to form a new coalition government. As it turned out, negotiations were protracted and, after much speculation that a national government would eventually emerge, discussions finally broke down. Shari'a, the stumbling block was a problem for the coalition government. While the Umma Party now appeared willing to repeal the "September Laws", the INF would accept only amendment. As for the DUP, its discordant voices appeared also to want the existing laws amended rather than repealed.

The new government was formed with Sadiq al-Mahdi; as the prime minister and with Zein al-Abdin al-Hindi of the DUP as the foreign minister. Minor southern parties were also represented with four seats. The Khatmiyya was placated by offering it the chairmanship of the five-member council of state which went to Ahmed al-Mirghani, the brother of the sect's leader Sayyid Mohammad Osman al-Mirghani. The first coalition government during the third parliamentary period was weak, instead of producing a cohesive coalition to collectively tackle the country's obvious problems, the cabinet soon bogged down once more in inter-and intraparty squabbles. The tension between the Umma and the Unionists

largely centered on Sadiq al-Mahdi's attempt to elevate himself as the country's ruler, at a time when the Unionists lacked a convincing leader but did not wish to see the coalition serve to elevate Sadiq al-Mahdi. The Unionists, who had been very divided during the elections, continued that way after independence, with particular rivalry between Zein al-Abdin al-Hindi and the Mirghani family.<sup>41</sup>

The coalition first collapsed only a year after it took office, but eventually following a reshuffle, it staggered back to life, only to fall again in August 1987. The incidents that brought the collapse both in May and August were relatively minor, and also somewhat bizarre in ways that showed both intrinsic instability and an element of futility. In May a central theme was the attitude of Yusif Abu Harira, the minister of commerce, who sought to clean up some of the more corrupt practice in fields such as licensing and hoarding. He was, however, endangering a number of powerful vested interest, including some in the Umma Party, and the prime minister seemed determined to oust him.<sup>42</sup> The prime minister blamed him for a number of policy

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41. Woodward, n.36, p. 200.

42. Ibid, p.211.

failures, even at the price of dissolving the government. In August the final straw came with the nomination by the Khatmiyya of Ahmad al-Sayyid Hamad to one of the party's two seats on the five-man Supreme council. He had been a close associate of Nirmairy in the latter's final years. He also had been described by Sharif Hussain al-Hindi, leader of the opposition to Nirmairy from 1969 to his death in 1982, as an agent of the Egyptian Intelligence Agency. The Umma Party protested vehemently and the coalition collapsed. The two incidents thus epitomised the worst of the old and the new, the old in what coalition politics were once more highly personalised and highly unstable, and the new in that the politics of the Nirmairy years, though Nirmairy was thrown off, were still so persistently present.

Eventually, after repeated delays, it was announced that the old coalition would continue though the INF was still not included. But the government barely survived into 1988 before Sadiq regarded it as ineffective. Eventually, in May 1988, it was possible to construct a coalition in which the INF was finally included, with Hassan al-Turabi taking for himself the post of both Attorney General and Minister of Justice. A notable feature of Sadiq al-Mahdi's government was that eighteen of the twenty-five ministers appointed

had served as national or regional ministers under Nimeiry.

The Prime Minister announced that the new government would deal with the critical economic and security problems facing the country. However, it was expected that the new administration would not be able to resolve the problem of war in the South, especially since the INF had joined the coalition on condition that a replacement Shari'a code would be introduced within sixty days of its formation. Sadiq became less outspoken about abrogation of the September Laws and called for "alternative Laws" based on "true Islamic values" to replace them.<sup>43</sup>

In an attempt to resolve the conflict in the South, the DUP leadership met with the leaders of the SPLA in Ethiopia. On 16 November 1988, the DUP, the second largest party, signed a peace initiative with the SPLA in Addis Ababa. Having affirmed the commitment to unity and territorial integrity of the Sudan, the peace plan called for a ceasefire, a freeze on implementation of Shri'a Laws, and a constitutional conference to be held on 31 December 1988. The UP did endorse the peace pact. The third party to

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43. Bechtold, n.37, p.587.



the coalition, the INF, led by Hassan al-Turabi, reacted by denouncing both the parties and describing the initiative as a virtual surrender to the South. For the INF, the pact, especially the clause about freezing the Shari'a laws, was unacceptable. Its leadership stated vehemently that the INF regarded the implementation of Shari'a in the Sudan as an essential element for its participation in the third Sadiq coalition government. Hassan al-Turabi threatened to withdraw from the government if the plan was adopted.

By a series of tactical moves, Sadiq succeeded in outmaneuvering both the DUP and the SPLA, and in demonstrating that he was central to any realistic peace plan. The INF, on the other hand, swiftly organized a demonstration against the peace pact, only to run up against a massive pro-peace demonstration. Public opinion was clearly in favour of peace with the South and it was clear that the INF had badly miscalculated public sympathy in the North. Sadiq wanted peace on his own terms. He refused to endorse the peace plan.<sup>44</sup> Instead he tabled a motion calling for a constitutional conference to discuss the

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44. Raphael Koba Badal, "Religion and Conflict in the Sudan: A Perspective", Bulletin of Peace Proposals, vol.21, no.1, (U.K.), March 1990, p.90.

future of the Sudan. The DUP peace plan was dead. On 29 December 1988, following three days of demonstrations, the DUP resigned from the government.

In February 1989, the situation was aggravated when the Defense Minister Abdal-Majid Hamid Khalil resigned. The armed forces commander in chief, General Fathi Ahmad Ali, presented Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi with a petition signed by 150 officers demanding either to adopt the DUP peace plan or to equip the army to fight more effectively. The petition also included major reforms in domestic, foreign and security policies. This de facto ultimatum brought about a number of changes, but at the expense of dropping the INF from an all party government because of the latter's refusal to agree on the suspension of the Shari'a until the convening of a constitutional conference. Turabi warned in March 1989 that his party would use extra-parliamentary power to frustrate any government policy designed to limit the scope of the Shari'a.<sup>45</sup>

During the third parliamentary regime the economy continued to deteriorate. Inflation soared to 40 per cent

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45. Samuel M. Makinda, "Iran, Sudan and Islam" The World Today, vol. 49, no.6, (UK), June 1993, p.109.

annually, remittance from workers abroad declined sharply, and exports remained low. Earning on cotton dropped due to crop damage from disease and low world prices. The country remained totally dependent on oil imports of nearly 100,000 tons a month. The fundamental budgetary situation remained untenable. With revenues only half of its expenditure, the government must either resort to inflationary borrowing from the Central Bank or rely on massive infusions of foreign aid.<sup>46</sup>

Considerable social tension had built up as a result of these economic difficulties. Food riots in the west in September 1986 were followed by violent demonstration in Khartoum in November. The Sadiq's government had difficulty in formulating a coherent economic policy. In January-February 1989 the government announced price rises of up to 500 per cent on basic, and already scarce, commodities. Demonstrations rocked provincial towns throughout the country. At least four people were shot dead. Demonstrators shouted not only against the price rises but against the government in general and the prime minister in

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46. Ann Mosely Lesch, "A View From Khartoum" Foreign Affairs, (New York), Spring 1987, pp.817-8.

particular.<sup>47</sup> And when the price hikes were duly cancelled, marchers switched slogans to a call for peace. This linkage between the country's desperate economic plight and the war is one of the most significant aspects of this phase. For the first time, the economic cost of the war had entered the public political arena.

The economic situation was a great and major challenge to the third parliamentary government. Though it is true that it was the result of an accumulated sixteen years of mismanagement and corruption of the second military government of Nimeiry, yet the instability arising from the differences of the coalition partners had also made its contribution. The foreign debt exceeds ten billion US dollars. The Sudan has no major industry or exploited natural resources to meet the servicing of these debts. Agriculture accounts for ninety per cent of exports and employs eighty per cent of the population. There was a drought in the East and Central Africa since 1982 with serious consequence in the Sudan because the country's

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47. Gill Lusk, "Sadiq Heads for Political Suicide" Middle East International, no.341, (U.K.), 6 January 1989, pp.13-14.

production depends on rain. On top of the drought and famine, the Sudan is burdened by more than a million refugees from Ethiopia, Chad and Uganda. Production of cotton, Sudan's most important export crop, has also dropped. Production was plagued by outmoded equipment, poor management, inadequate infrastructure and short-sighted pricing policies.

In a nutshell, the third parliamentary period was characterized by inter and intra-party squabbles which led to complete failure to tackle the main problems of the country; namely the South and the economy. Political parties never learned from the experiences of the past when the army intervened twice discontinuing the democratic process for a total of twenty-two years. The capriciousness of party politics was distasteful enough for the ordinary Sudanese. It was compounded by economic reversals. The atmosphere changed from distasteful to unbearable. Hence, no one rose to defend the civilian regime when middle-ranked army officers under the leadership of Omer al-Bashir overthrew the government on 30 June 1989. The new leadership announced the dissolution of all political parties; prohibition of gathering, processions and demonstrations; and a ban on all papers. Parties leaders were arrested. The

new development dealt a serious blow not only to the civilian rule but also to the democratic and secular norms of the Sudanese politics.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE MILITARY REGIMES

The Sudanese polity has alternated between civilian and military regimes. The first parliamentary period was characterised by party factionalism, an unstable economy and the lingering problem of the Southern Sudan. In the previous chapter we have already noted the curious alliance of the PDP and the UP, forged primarily to exclude Azhari and his NUP from power. Foreign exchange reserves had dwindled from sixty-two million pounds to eight million pounds and the balance of trade continued in a negative spiral with a poor cotton crop harvest. The government was unable to make any progress in controlling or extinguishing the continued rebellion in Southern Sudan. In short, the irreconcilable positions of the coalition partners became too obvious to ignore for even the proverbial man in the street of the capital.

#### 4.1 THE ABOUD REGIME 1958-1964

After five years of parliamentary democracy General Ibrahim Abboud reluctantly acquiesced to the private pleas

of his old school mate, Prime Minister Abdallah Khalil, that he should assume power. The role which Abdallah Khalil played in promoting the military action is amply documented in the evidence which General Abboud and others subsequently presented to the 1964 committee of enquiry into the events of November 1958. He stated, "Abdallah Khalil visited me and reiterated his view that the political situation in the country was deteriorating progressively. He argued that only the army could save the country from its state of anarchy and indecision. Khalil's orders were the orders of a superior to his subordinate. I accepted them on that basis and I carried them out accordingly".<sup>1</sup> The military coup was executed on 17 November 1958. Abdallah Khalil believed that the intervention of the military would enable him to remain in government. The coalition UP-PDP cabinet which he headed was disintegrating. Contacts over the formation of an alternative coalition government had begun. A meeting held in Cairo in October between Azhari and Shaikh Ali Abdal-Rahman, had suggested that an NUP-PDP alliance was envisaged. At the same time discussions between senior members of the NUP and

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1. Committee of Enquiry into the Events Leading to the 17 November 1958 Coup, (Ministry of Justice Khartoum, 1965), PP. 26-9.



the UP were preceeding. Under either of the possible coalitions Abdallah Khalil would have been forced to relinquish the premiership. Khalil was of the idea that the army generals would appoint ministers from the political parties. However, by 19 November, they had decided to involve the military more deeply in the political process. The formation of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) was announced. It was composed of thirteen senior army officers. The SCAF then proceeded to nominate the members of the new council of ministers. Seven of the senior army officers of the SCAF were given ministerial portfolios. The SCAF announced the dissolution of all political parties, prohibition of gatherings, processions and demonstration, and a ban on all papers.

During this regime which lasted for six years the country was governed by the SCAF under the Presidency of General Ibrahim Abboud. As the name implies, this Council was the official supreme authority in the country. The Abboud cabinet was characterized by stability of membership and by the prominent role of military figures as heads of key ministries. Of the sixteen total portfolios, eight remained unchanged during the entire period of the first

military regime<sup>2</sup>. This represented the highest degree of stability of all post - 1953 regimes until this day. The portfolios of Prime Minister and Defence, Local Government, Information and Labour, Commerce, Industry and Supplies, were all retained by senior army officers, who were simultaneously members of the SCAF. The only prestigious ministerial appointment left for a civilian was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which the lawyer Ahmad Khair was trying to project a non-military image.

Over the six years which followed the November 1958 coup senior army officers who now held power benefited from the active support of significant parts of the Sudanese establishment. This, indeed constituted the regime's social base. Two days after the coup, Sayyid Abdal-Rahman al-Mahdi issued a pronouncement which strongly supported to action which the army leadership had taken. The Sayyid stated:

"It grieves me greatly to say that the politicians who have led the political parties have all failed. The Sudanese people became disillusioned. This now is a day of release. The men of the Sudanese army have sprung up and taken matters in their own hands. They will not permit hesitation, anarchy or corruption to play havoc in this land. Rejoice at this blessed revolution and go to your

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2. Peter K. Bechtold, Politics in The Sudan, Parliamentary and Military Rule in and Emerging African Nation, (New York, 1976), PP. 201-2.

work calmly and contentedly, to support the men of the Sudanese revolution.'<sup>3</sup>

Sayyid Abdal-Rahman's early enthusiasm reflected the close ties which linked the new regime to the Mahdist circle. The carry-over of policy from the UP to the new regime was demonstrated most clearly when General Abboud confirmed his government's acceptance of the American agreement. The Khatmiyya establishment, meanwhile, moved from a cautious welcome of the military regime to active participation in its institutions. The Syiid's message to the Sudanese people stated.

"We have heard that the Sudanese army has taken over the reins of power in our country. We trust that the army's efforts and intentions instil assurance in people and instil security and stability in the realms of the country."<sup>4</sup>

Initially the Khatmiyya were suspicious that the new regime constituted a military extension of the UP. Two prominent members of the UP were appointed to the new council of ministers; and the new regime's initial strongman, General Ahmad Abdal-Wahab, had been known as a strong UP supporter. When he was dismissed from the SCAF in April

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3. Tim Niblock, Class and Power in Sudan , (London, 1987), p. 219.

4. Ibid, p. 220.

1959, the links between the regime and the UP were loosened. With the removal of General Abdal-Wahab, the Khatmiyya began to draw closer to the regime. Consequently the regime began to establish a close relationship with Nasser's Egypt, and to conclude the 1959 Nile water agreement. The support of the Khatmiyya became crucial to the regime's survival and claim to legitimacy. With the deterioration of the relationship between the regime and the Ansar, Siddiq al-Mahdi, who became the Imam of the Ansar following Sayyid Abdal-Rahman's death in 1959, participated in the establishment of a national front in 1960 together with some other former politicians who were committed to the restoration of civilian rule. When the national front put forward its demand in 1960 for the restoration of civilian rule, the Khatmiyya took a lead in preparing a 'Memorandum of Honourable Citizens' pledging allegiance to the regime. Among those who signed the memorandum were most of the principal PDP leaders, including Shakh Ali Abdal-Rahman and Mohammad Nur al-Din.<sup>5</sup>

The Sudanese people became increasingly dissatisfied with military regime. Initial economic success led the planners to initiate bigger and more costly projects.

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5. Ibid. p.222.

Initially, a five year and then ten year plan with an estimated outlay of 500 million pounds sterling were devised. Many mistakes were made in the process. Some were attributable to the limited experience of the planners in works of such magnitude and also to creeping corruption. The growing gap between the regime and people can be explained partially by noting how the military leaders became more and more accustomed to the prerogatives of power and less tolerant of counseling civilian influences. Also there was intra-military dissension that manifested in three attempted coups in March, May and November of 1959. The first two involved Brigadier Abdal-Rahim Shannan and Brigadier Mohieddin Abdallah, the respective commanders of the northern and eastern regions. The abortive November coups was launched at the infantry school in Omdurman. Five ring-leaders were sentenced to death and publicly hanged.<sup>6</sup> The role played by the civil servants was also very important. Many senior officials had become disenchanted with the junta's policy of placing the provincial bureaucracies under inexperienced military governors whose decisions tended to be arbitrary. Many responded by practicing increasingly

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6. Bechtold, n.2, P.204.

passive resistance to the military regime by failing to carry out executive orders or by slowing down the bureaucratic machinery. Political parties also began to oppose. There were series of private contacts and written memoranda calling on General Abboud to effect the promised return to civilian rule.

In order to legitimize itself, the regime formed a committee, headed by chief justice Abu Ranat, to make recommendations on the best way to make the people participate in the government, as a first step towards a final constitutional setup<sup>7</sup>. The committee in due course recommended a three-tier system. Directly-elected local councils would send delegates to sit on provincial councils, which in turn would send six delegates in the central council. The fifty-four provincial delegates in the central council would be complemented by eighteen members nominated by the president. Government ministers would also sit on the council. The central council's principal roles were to formulate legislation and to draw up a constitution. This structure, as recommended by the committee, was brought into being only in 1963, when elections for the local councils were held.

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7. Niblock, n.3, p.222.

The central council was inaugurated in November 1963. Such formalised civilian representation which was controlled and was of a contrived nature, gave the central council only limited political significance because parties were banned, and candidates could only seek election on their individual merits.

The main failure of the Abboud regime was the policy vis-a-vis the South. Unrest in the South grew in intensity ultimately leading to the outbreak of the armed insurgency in 1963. The conviction that the South's interest could only be adequately protected if the Sudan adopted a federal constitution had, by 1958, become the apex around which the southern politicians revolved. The assumption of power by the military extinguished hope for the achievement of this objective. A series of speeches by the military officers who had been appointed provincial governors in the South, ruled out political concessions. The military regime's response to the political demands of the southerners was to step up attempts to eliminate the South's particularism especially those aspects of language, culture and religion which formed the basis of southern demands for separate treatment. The violence employed by the police and armed forces in suppressing dissents caused growing numbers of southern

civilians to escape from the government control, either by fleeing into exile or by absconding into the bush. The former came to constitute the core of the exile southern political leadership forming the Sudan African National Union (SANU) in April 1963. the latter grouping formed bands of guerrilla fighters; the Ananya; a loose but a secret organization.

The military government of General Abboud brought the relation between the North and the South to a near disaster. A new southern policy was initiated. Most of the southern employees were transferred to the North.<sup>8</sup> Their stay in the North which also meant supporting families and paying rent, which was quite high, caused economic hardship. Moreover, in the offices they did practically nothing because of the lack of a working knowledge of Arabic. All these created frustration. The main concern of government policy lay in Arabisation and Islamization so as to integrate the South by force. Quranic schools were established in the South. In 1960 it was decreed that Friday would replace Sunday as the day of rest in the South. Arabic replaced English as the

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8. Dunstan Wai, The Southern Sudan The Problem of National Integration. (London, 1973), p. 20.



medium of instruction in schools. In 1962 the Ministry of Interior promulgated a Missionary Societies Act restricting the activities of Christian missions. In February 1964, 336 Christian missionaries working in southern Sudan were expelled. Many demonstrations against the government policy occurred in southern schools in 1960 and 1962, followed by tough reprisals by the army.<sup>9</sup> The political objective of the southerners was now independence for southern Sudan. By early 1964 Ananya activity developed into civil war.

The growing isolation of the military regime increased. With the passage of time the junta lost much of its broad-based image and many Sudanese felt that the country in effect, was run by four men : President Abboud, Hassan Bashir Nasr, Justice Abu Ranat and Ahmad Khair. Complicating matters further was the fact that all four were Shaigyyah by origin and belonged to the Khatmiyya sect.<sup>10</sup> This alienated the Ansar. Another challenge that emerged was the question of the resettlement of those Nubians of Wadi Half a region who had been displaced by the rising water resulting from the construction of the High Dam as a result

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9. Niblock, n.3, p.224.

10. Bechtold, n. 2, pp. 206-7.

of the 1959 Nile water agreement. The regime tackled this challenge in a heavy-handed manner that led to unexpected level of protest, and culminated in violent demonstrations and near insurrection in Wadi Halfa in 1960.

As mentioned previously, political parties and trade unions had been outlawed in November 1958, and the press was heavily censored. Therefore, one of the few remaining forums for dissent was the university campus. As soon as students and professors became vocal about government policy, the junta decreed the University of Khartoum Act in February 1961, which brought the University directly under government control. In November 1963 it was incorporated under the Ministry of Education. These acts only increased the isolation of the regime from the population and drove the opposition underground where it became more difficult to control.<sup>11</sup> Before long, the mounting conflict led to the arrest of twelve prominent leaders of political parties in July 1961. They were exiled to Juba in the South in 1961-1962.

By the autumn of 1964 the military leadership had earned the animosity of students and teachers, politicians

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11. Ibid, p. 211.

and civil servants, journalists, doctors, lawyers, trade union leaders and even junior members within the armed forces. In the end, the continued ferocity of the rebellion in the South long with other suppressive measures provided the spark that lit the fire of the October Revolution of 1964 which brought the first military regime to an end.

#### **4.2 THE NIMAIRY REGIME 1969-1985**

The origin of the Sudanese free officers' movement goes back to the early 1950's. Like all political ideologies that came from Egypt, like the Muslim Brotherhood and communism, the free officers' movement was also inspired by the July 1952 coup in Egypt. At the centre of this loose organization were two brothers, Yaqub Kibaida and Abdal-Rahman Kibaida. Both were officers in the Sudan Defence Force. It is not surprising that these early free officers espoused a unionist line. It is even possible that the idea of organising the free officers' movement in the Sudan may have been suggested to Yaqub Kibaida by the Egyptian military commander in the Sudan, with whom Kibaida enjoyed good

personal relations.<sup>12</sup> The Unionist inclination of the movement was abandoned after the independence in 1956. Believing that the post-independence parliamentary institutions had brought to power leaders who were incompetent and corrupt, they wished to provide the country with more capable leadership.

The group planned their seizure of power for 14 June 1957. Officers in the Khartoum area, led by Major Abdal Rahman Kibaida, were to mobilise their troops and take control of the government buildings. On 11 June, however, major Kibaida was arrested together with a number of fellow conspirators. Although the failure of the coup constituted a severe blow to the free officers, the movement survived. General Abboud's assumption of power in November 1958 did not deflect the free officers from their own plans. The army leadership which had taken power was regarded as being effete and corrupt. The free officers involved themselves in a coup attempt led by Colonel Ali Hamid in November 1959. When this attempt failed, General Abboud executed the five main instigators including Ali Hamid and Yaqub Kibaida. A

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12. This possibility have been widely discussed in the army circles. Information from Mamun Awad Abu Zaid, interview December 1973 by Tim Niblock.

large number of suspected officers were dismissed from the army. The free officers' movement of the 1950's was effectively destroyed.

A new free officers' movement came into being in early 1960's. Among those officers, who achieved prominence, only two had played an important role. Ja'afar Nimairy and Faruq Hamadallah. Of critical importance among the factors which gave birth to the new free officers' movement was the role of the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP). The party appears to have deliberately sought a presence within the army. There came to be a considerable number of soldiers and army officers who were associated, whether closely or loosely, with the SCP. These officers constituted the nucleus around which the free officers' movement was formed. A broader cross-section of progressively inclined officers, not always aware of their colleagues' links with the SCP, gathered around the nucleus.<sup>13</sup> The movement began publication during 1961 an underground news-sheet, printed in the underground presses of the SCP. Its name was the 'Voice of the Armed Forces'. Through this publication the free officers

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13. The account of the post-1960 free officers is based on information given to Tim Niblock by Mamun Awad Abu Zaid. Mamun had been a member of the free officers.

expressed their intention of working with the popular movement to overthrow the regime.

By 1964 the free officers played a limited role to ensure that Abboud did not obtain the support he needed to crush the civilian resistance, and were active in dissuading officers from ordering, and soldiers from carrying out, the shooting of civilian demonstrators.<sup>14</sup> The transitional government followed the October Revolution of 1964, the unstable succession of governments represented a betrayal of the hopes engendered by the Revolution among the free officers. Government was again in the hands of sectarians which saw no need to undertake structural social and economic reform. Agreement was reached among free officers that a new regime should be drawn up. Following the Egyptian experience, it was decided that sovereign authority would be vested in a Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) and civilian council of ministers was to be responsible for the day-to-day running of the government business.

The performance of the second parliamentary regime has already been discussed in the last Chapter. Most of the politicians were trying to pursue personal ambition rather

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14. Niblock, n.3, p.240.

than to respond to the aspiration and expectation of the populace. The parliament did not pay attention to the judiciary in the case of the banning SCP.

At 7.00 a.m. on 25 May 1969, Radio Omdurman broadcast recorded speeches by Ja'afar Nimairy and Babiker Awadallah that the 'reactionary regime' was overthrown and replaced by revolutionary regime. It was decided that Colonel Ja'afar Nimairy, most senior ranking member of the free officers' movement, would head the RCC. Attention was also given to draw civilian support and not to present a purely military face. The free officers approached Babiker Awadallah to head the council of ministers. He had gained national respect through the role he had played in the anti-Abboud professionals front, and whose resignation as chief justice in protest against legislation banning the SCP in 1967 had won him a particularly strong standing within the left movement. The RCC was composed of Colonel Nimairy as a the head, along with Babikar Awadallah, Major Khalid Hassan Abbas, Faruq Hamadallah, Major Abu al-Qasim Mohammad Ibrahim, Major Zain al-Abdin Abdal-Qadir, Major Momun Awad Abu Zaid, Lieutenant-Colonel Babiker al-Nur, Hashim al-Ata and Abu al-Qasim Hashim. Two members of the RCC were associated with the SCP; Babiker al-Nur and Hashim al-Ata.

Abu al-Qasim Hashim had links with the Nasserist circles. Most of the Council of Ministers were either Communists<sup>15</sup>, Arab Socialists or of Arab Nasserist groupings, or else were independent and unaffiliated radical intellectuals.

Nimairy's alliance with SCP was purely pragmatic. He needed popular support against the traditionalist forces, and believed that the SCP, with its strong following among peasants, workers, professionals and students, would be able to provide it. He also knew that the Communists had infiltrated the armed force including the free officers' movement. Nimairy required the organizational skills of the SCP at least during the first few crucial months of his regime. In order to minimize the dangers of counter coup, the RCC retired most of the senior officers. In June 1969 about 300 officers and men had been either dismissed, arrested or sent home. The new regime did what military regimes were expected to do normally like dissolving the Supreme Council, the Constituent Assembly, political parties, newspapers ... etc. Political leaders of the ex-regime like

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15. There were four Communists in the Cabinet: Faruq Abu Isa, Minister of State Premier's Office, Mahjub Osman, National Guidance, Makkawi Mustafa, Planning and Joseph Garang, Supply. There were two SCP sympathisers, Khalafallah Babiker, Local Government and Abdul-Karim Mirghani, Economy and Foreign Trade.



Ismail al-Azhari and Sadiq al-Mahdi were either imprisoned or like M.A. Mahgoub put under house arrest.

The leftist orientation of the new regime was very clear in the composition of the RCC and the Council of Ministers. It was also clear in the foreign policy as well as the domestic measures. In the foreign policy the regime recognised East Germany on 5 June 1969.<sup>16</sup> Sudanese trade and finance delegations visited most of the capitals of Eastern Europe. In the domestic measures the regime considered that the economic difficulties were due to the capitalist path of development. The new regime strengthened the state control over the economy and restricted the private sector's freedom of action. In May 1970 the government initiated measures leading to a series of confiscations and nationalizations of private trading companies and financial institutions. The assets of large landowners and most businessmen, especially those previously associated with the conservative parties, were expropriated. The radical posture of the regime gave the impression to the people that it was a hostage to the influence of the SCP. To dispel this view, President Nimeiry emphasized that his regime was not an alliance of the old

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16. Mohamad Ahmad Mahgoub, Democracy on Trial Reflections on Arab and African Politics, (London, 1974), p.227.

political parties under a different umbrella, because they had all been dissolved, and that the Communists in the Council of Ministers were selected on an individual basis according to their ability. However, the Secretary-General of the SCP, Abdal-Khaliq Mahgoub, saw the new balance of power differently. According to him:

"Ours is an alliance between progressive forces and that part of the army which supported the popular uprising of October 1964. At our fourth congress in October 1967, we declared that a Western-type of parliamentary regime no longer met the country's need; that the reformist bourgeoisie was economically and politically too weak to bring about important change based on wide national front and headed by the working class.<sup>17</sup>

The Pan-Arabists and National Socialists in the government, however, did not like any association with the SCP. Nimairy shared their distaste for the Communists and made this clear by reprimanding Babiker Awadallah publicly, following press reports that he had told Sudanese Students in East Germany that the May Revolution would not advance without the Communists. After his return home, Babiker Awadallah was immediately demoted as Deputy Prime Minister. The various ideological as well as personality conflicts within the RCC

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17. Abdal-Khaliq Mahgoub, Le Monde (Paris), 19 September 1969.

proved divisive, and made it difficult for the regime to move in a new direction. Meanwhile, the Pan-Arabists were gaining disproportionately high influence, as reflected in President Nimiry's decision in the summer of 1970 to sign the Tripoli Charter which committed the Sudan, Egypt and Libya to a political federation. The Communists and National Socialists opposed what they considered to be the regime's obsession with Pan-Arabism.<sup>18</sup> The political wrangling and ideological disagreements surfaced in November 1970, when three anti-Pan-Arabist members of the RCC were dismissed for being obstructionist. They were Lt. Colonel Babiker al-Nur, Major Faruq Hamadallah and Major Hashim al-Ata.

The Nimiry regime had to face three major challenges; political opposition from those groups whom the military had replaced, continued rebellion in the South, and a badly tottering economy with rapidly dwindling foreign exchange reserves. Regarding the political opposition, immediately after the coup the new regime arrested all political leaders of the ex-regime save those who managed to escape abroad. President Nimiry recognized that his major opposition would

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18. Dunstan Wai, *Revolution, Rhetoric and Reality in the Sudan*, The Journal of Modern African Studies, (U.K.), vol. 17, March 1979, p.83.

come from the Ansar with their paramilitary organizations in Central and Western Sudan. The feeling of animosity between Nimeiry and the Ansar was mutual. Their clash came early, and with encouragement from his two most powerful allies at the time, Babiker Awadallah and Major Khalid Hassan Abbas. Both were strongly pro-Egyptian and anti-Mahdiyya. The initial confrontation occurred during the last days of March 1970 in street clashes in Wad Nubawi on the outskirts of Omdurman. There was considerable loss of lives on both sides. Al-Hadi al-Mahdi, the Imam of the Ansar had retired to Aba Island, the traditional stronghold of the Ansar. Thousands of Ansar had gone to the island. The military junta were not happy with reports from the area and they considered al-Hadi's aloofness from Khartoum politics a threat to the regime. Mohamad Osman al-Miraghani, the leader of the Khatmiyya, had recognized the new government.<sup>19</sup> The only major opposition leader who was still free with strong followers was al-Hadi al-Mahdi on Aba Island.

Nimeiry was persuaded by junior RCC members, particularly Major Abu al-Gasim Mohamad Ibrahim, to take the fight from Wad Nubawi to Aba Island. The ensuing battle took

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19. Mahgoub, n.16, p.236.

on the proportions of a small war. On 27 March 1970, Nimeiry ordered the bombardment of Aba Island by rocket-firing MiG fighters. At that time, the Sudan had no MiGs and no pilots who could fly them. It was commonly known that bombardment was carried out by Egyptian fighters and Egyptian pilots. A communique by the Libyan Foreign Ministry some months later confirmed it.<sup>20</sup> After the bombardment had decimated a large part of the population, some four thousand troops with armour invaded the island. There was some ferocious fighting. It was a brutal massacre. The number of dead between 27 March and 31 have been estimated to be between five and twelve thousands. While the Imam al-Hadi al-Mahdi was trying to escape to Ethiopia, he was killed near the border by government troops. By then, in Nimeiry's words, the right-wing reactionaries had been defeated on Aba Island.

The next development was the tussle between Nimeiry and the Communists. In fact the dismissal of the three pro-communist officers from the RCC was a result of a controversy between Nimeiry and the SCP. In August 1970, the SCP held a special conference to discuss the RCC's demand

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20. Ibid, pp.237-8.

for the dispersal of the SCP and its merger along with other progressive forces into the government sponsored Sudanese Socialist Union (SSU). These developments were closely patterned on the Egyptian model. The SCP decided not to liquidate itself but to press instead for the formation of a national front which would include other progressive and anti-imperialist organizations. The Communists claimed that Nimeiry was aided by reactionary tendencies in the Arab world and particularly in Egypt, whose intelligence service in the Sudan was exercising its black methods in sabotaging the revolutionary movement.<sup>21</sup> On 25 May 1971, during the celebrations of the second anniversary of the Revolution, Nimeiry announced officially the setting up of the SSU as the sole political organisation in the Sudan. He also dissolved the Communist-dominated students, women's and youth organizations. Most of the ranking leaders of the SCP were imprisoned. On 29 June 1971 Abdal-Khaliq Mahgoub escaped from prison.

In the morning of 19 July 1971, Hashim al-Ata staged a communist-oriented coup. He managed to arrest Nimeiry, and to capture the presidential palace. In his first decree al-Ata

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21. Gabriel Warburg, Islam, Nationalism and Communism in a Traditional Society, (London, 1978), p.188.

announced the abrogation of the laws promulgated by Nimeiry's regime and the dissolution of the organisation it had established. The coup, was executed in a hurry. Only al-Ata was in the Sudan. His two colleagues, Babiker al-Nur and Faruq Hamadallah were at the time in London. However, the new regime did not survive for more than seventy-two hours. The other two leaders who were in London were arrested by the Libyans when the latter intercepted the BOAC aircraft which carried them back to Khartoum. While Sadat sent two representatives to negotiate with al-Ata,<sup>22</sup> he at the same time ordered the Egyptian troops at Jabal Awliya to move on to Khartoum, a distance of forty miles, and help overthrow the new regime. Instead of mobilising the army against the Egyptian threat, al-Ata was occupied with matters of government in Khartoum.<sup>23</sup> Thus on 22 July 1971 the coup came to an abrupt end, and Nimeiry was once again returned to power. In fact he gained popularity because he crushed the 'communists menace'. The SCP paid dearly for its involvement in the coup. Three of the most prominent leaders were executed: Abdal-Khaliq Mahgoub, the Secretary-General,

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22. They were Ahmad Hamrush and Ahmad Fu'ad, both known for their leftist views.

23. Warburg, n.21, p.132.

al-Shafi Ahmad al-Shaikh and Joseph Garang. The three military leaders of the coup were also executed.

After his return to power in July 1971, Nimeiry's policy can be defined as following an independent Sudanese line. Its most outstanding achievement was the Addis Ababa agreement, signed in February 1972. It brought peace to southern Sudan after seventeen years of civil war. The South was granted its own Regional Assembly, elected by the people of the South, and a High Executive Council, chosen mainly from the Regional Assembly by the Regional President, in turn elected by the Regional Assembly and appointed by the President of the Republic. The High Executive Council was to be presided over by the Regional President, and was responsible to the Regional Assembly, and to the President of the Sudan for the administration of the region. The agreement provided for substantial autonomy for the South and amnesty for and absorption of rebel soldiers into the Sudan's armed forces. The state of emergency was lifted after more than sixteen years. With the implementation of the Addis Ababa Agreement, the demand of the South for autonomy became a reality. A sixty-member Regional Assembly was elected in November 1973 and was officially opened on 15 December 1973 by President Nimeiry in Juba, the capital of



the southern region. Abel Alier was sworn in as the official head of the southern regional government. The agreement raised Nimeiry's stature among the Sudanese especially in the South.

The conclusion of the peace agreement with the South angered the staunch Pan-Arabists in the government, as evidenced by the resignation of Vice-Presidents Babiker Awadallah and Khalid Hassan Abbas and Major Mamun Awad, Abu Zaid. All three went into self-exile in Cairo.<sup>24</sup> A gradual withdrawal from the Arab political scene manifested itself in the Sudan's refusal to join the Federation of Arab Republics.

The purging of the leftist was accompanied by a new program providing for more popular participation in government, at least on paper. Thus, a referendum for voting on the presidency was announced. It was to be held in early September. A temporary constitution was promulgated by the RCC in August calling for the creation of a People's Assembly, which was to be charged with drafting a permanent constitution. In the final result of the referendum 98 per cent of the electorate voted yes to President Nimeiry. He

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24. Wai, n.18, p.85.

was installed in his office for six years. Elections for the Constituent Assembly were scheduled to be held from 22 September to 4 October 1972.<sup>25</sup> There is every indication that the Assembly amounted to little more than a rubber stamp for policies decided higher up. Nevertheless the Sudan had a permanent constitution on 8 May 1973; nearly twenty years after the first freely elected Constituent Assembly. What made the drafting of constitution possible was the removal of the largest obstacle to this goal, namely the regional conflict between the North and the South.

The constitution of 1973 endowed the President with virtual dictatorial powers. He could make and unmake ministers. He was the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. He presided over the Secret Service. He also appointed the leaders of the SSU.

In the economic realm the radical left-oriented al-Ata's policies were revised after al-Ata's; coup. Nationalization of banks and other commercial enterprises had led to economic stagnation and dislocation because of scarcity of indigenous managerial and entrepreneurial

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25. The President appoints 25 Members in addition to 225 elected. The Assembly is elected every four years.

talent. Nimeiry reduced state control of economic activities and encouraged private businesses and Western governments to invest in Sudanese development.<sup>26</sup> The government announced an agreement for compensation of assets nationalized in 1970. Diplomatic relations were resumed with the United States in July 1972. At the same time relations with the USSR and Eastern Europe were deteriorating. These new measures opened the way for foreign investment from the USA, U.K., France and West Germany. Foreign capital continued to flow in the Sudan as loans as well as aids. Military aid and co-operation was also resumed with those countries. These countries also offered to participate in the campaign for rehabilitation and resettlement in the South. The government passed acts that facilitated and encouraged foreign investment.

Relations with Arab states no longer followed ideological predilections but were based on pragmatic assessment. There were rapproachments with the monarchical rulers of Sudia-Arabia and of the Gulf Shaikhdoms. This policy coincided with the rising oil revenues in the Gulf

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26. Bechtold, n.2, p.182.

after the hike in oil prices after the 1973 war. The investment of Arab oil revenues in Sudan's land, labour and water resources, could therefore achieve a development breakthrough. The Gulf states and Saudi-Arabia import most of their food from the Western countries. They were trying to reduce their dependency on the West.

The five-year plan for 1970-1975 provided the basic framework for the annual development program in the Sudan. The basic goals of the plan were to increase the GDP by four per cent a year over the extended plan period, to broaden the base of the economy by diversifying agricultural production, to increase the size of the industrial sector, and to expand and diversify exports and reduce imports. The first IMF stabilisation program was adopted in 1972 in return for twenty-four million (US) dollar loan. The six year plan (1977-1983) followed the pattern led down by the interim program of the IMF. Within this framework considerable development activity was engendered in the Sudan in the middle and late 1970's. Annual development expenditure rose from 278 million Sudanese pound in 1972-73 to 433 million Sudanese pound in 1973-74, and to 666 million Sudanese pound in 1974-75. In 1976-77 it exceeded 1000 million Sudanese pound. Infrastructure also attracted

significant expenditure. A tarmac road was constructed between Khartoum and port Sudan.<sup>27</sup> One other field of development activity was in the oil sector. A number of Western companies like Chevron were given concession. By 1980 it was clear that oil was present in exploitable quantities in the South.

However, the flurry of development activity in mid-and late 1970's led the Sudan into a deepening economic crisis. Few projects which were initiated were completed on time. Even after they had been completed, projects rarely fulfilled the production targets which had been set for them. The output from previously existing agricultural schemes and industries gradually declined. The GDP decreased in the years which followed 1977 - falling by 4.3 per cent in 1978/79 and one per cent in 1979/80. Having borrowed vast sums of money in the expectation that loans could be repaid out of increased production, the government found itself burdened with an immense debt and no new revenue with which to make repayment. The external debt, standing at 3 billion US dollar in 1978, had risen to 5.2 billion US dollars in

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27. Niblock, n.3, pp.279-83.

1982. By the time the Nimeiry regime had fallen it was 9 billion US dollars.<sup>28</sup>

There were several causes for the failure of the development projects. Projects were often adopted simply because the necessary financing for them could be arranged; not because any of the plan documents had scheduled them for implementation. Secondly, the cost and benefit of each project seemed to have been assessed individually, with little attention given to the impact which all projects together would have on the economy. Some ministries took the initiative of starting projects, financed by external loans which they negotiated themselves, without obtaining prior approval of the central planning agency. Thirdly, the consequences of rising oil prices led to substantially increase in Sudan's fuel bill. Finally, corruption played a major role. The motivations for many projects could be found more in the financial gain which would accrue to individual ministers than an impartial assessment of their real value to the economy.

In the political sphere, leaders of the traditional parties, that is the DUP, the UP and the Muslim Brotherhood,

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28. Ibid, p.285.

organized themselves into a National Front by early 1970's. The National Front operated as an opposition movement with its headquarters in Libya. It was led by Sadiq al-Mahdi, Sharif Hussain al-Hindi and Hassan al-Turabi. The National Front staged a coup of July 1976. The coup was executed by well-trained and equipped Ansar. Seven hundred lives had been lost and more than hundred were executed. The coup's failure convinced the leaders of the National Front that Nimeiry was too strong to be easily toppled. It also convinced Nimeiry that the Front was too strong to be ignored. Hence he sought national reconciliation.<sup>29</sup>

On 8 July 1977, Sadiq al-Mahdi was invited to Port Sudan to discuss the details of reconciliation with Nimeiry. The eight-point agreement reached between the two led to the reconciliation. Important among these points were the following: the National Front would end its armed opposition, dismantled its training camps and return to the Sudan. In return, Nimeiry had to free political detainees belonging to the National Front. Sadiq and Turabi returned while al-Hindi refused to return and continued his

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29. Gabriel Warburg, "Islam in Sudanese Politics", The Jerusalem Quarterly, (Jerusalem), no.13, Fall 1979, pp.52-4.

opposition. The election for People's Assembly were held in February 1978. Candidates of Ansar and the DUP won thirty seats each, while the Muslim Brothers won twenty seats. On 21 March 1978 Nimairy appointed al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, Ahmad al-Mirghani and Hassan al-Turabi to the SSU political bureau. Of great impact was the rift within the National Front between Sadiq and his erstwhile ally, al-Hindi. The first indication of this rift was al-Hindi's condemnation of Sadat's peace initiative and of Nimairy's declaration of support made in the wake of Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in November 1977. On 10 February 1979 Sadiq had a meeting with al-Hindi in Tripoli. Sadiq was quoted as saying that Nimairy's support for Sadat's Camp David 'treason' had brought reconciliation to an end, and Nimairy had not abided by many of the terms of the agreement.<sup>30</sup>

Far graver, and of greater significance to the future of the Sudan, was Nimairy's decision to appoint Turbai as the head of a commission to determine whether Sudanese laws should be revised and brought into line with Shari'a. This created suspicion among the southerners. It led to resignation of Bona Malwal, a southerner and the Minister of

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30. Ibid., p.59.



Information, in December 1978. Turabi was appointed to the post of Attorney General in 1978. For Turabi and his colleagues there was no difficulty in disbanding their party as required by the regime, provided they could operate through the SSU, the National Assembly, the student unions etc. The Muslim Brothers were thus fatally integrated within the governing bodies. In an interview with Sudan Now in March 1982, Turabi declared that as far as the Brothers were concerned, reconciliation had been achieved. It was clear that Turabi emerged with a clear advantage from the reconciliation compared to other leaders.

By early 1980; the economic hardship had aggravated. The immense foreign debt and severe imbalances in the economy left the government with little room for maneuver. There was high inflation and shortage of essential products. This was reinforced by external pressure. The IMF insisted that government expenditure be cut back sharply. The economic problems had the greatest political significance in the South. The Sudan was hit by severe drought that further damaged the economy in early 1980's. Nimeiry faced most serious threat in January 1982 as riots erupted in response to the IMF inspired increase in the price of bread, sugar and oil. He also provoked southerners by cancelling the

region's special status in June 1983.<sup>31</sup> The civil war re-emerged in southern Sudan. In February 1983 battalion 105 of the Sudanese army, constituted mainly from among the southerners, mutinied. Some one thousand soldiers and officers fled to the bush with their weapons. The formation of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) gave the resistance movement in the South a formal structure. In February 1984 an attack by the SPLA on oil workers employed by Chevron brought oil exploration to a stop.

In these circumstances the regime was about to collapse. Dissatisfaction spread among the Sudanese with their different ideologies. Hassan al-Turabi and his organization supported the shaky regime by introducing the hudud in September 1983. Nimeiry's alliance with Turabi was an alliance of convenience, which each side sought to exploit for its own gain. Nimeiry used the shari'a as the last resort in his final power play, and its implementation really had little to do with religion: Nimeiry had made enemies of all political parties, whom he had banned, and his ruling SSU had lost all claims to being a representative body. For Turabi, the alliance served two purposes: it was a

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31. Niblock, n.3, pp.286-9.

way of promoting the main goal of 'Islamisation', and it provided opportunities to infiltrate their supporters into key positions "preparatory to take-over of full political power". Nimaury also tried to use it as a means of muzzling dissents.<sup>32</sup>

The immediate trigger for the break with the Brothers came after a showdown with its leader Hassan al-Turabi. During his visit to UAE Turubi adopted two different positions. In a public lecture at the local university he praised Nimaury's Shari'a Laws; but in private groups he spoke critically of them and expressed the view that Nimaury had outlived his usefulness".<sup>33</sup> It was the final straw in their relationship. In March 1984 Nimaury arrested Turabi and all senior leaders of his organisation.

In an apparent move at economic belt-tightening with a view to obtaining international credit and aid, President Nimaury cut subsidies on essential food items leading to 33 per cent increase in the price of bread and increase in the prices of gasoline and sugar, a move which set off riots. It

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32. The brutality of these hudud could be imagined from the fact that there had been 350 amputation for crimes. Many were hanged, among them was Mahmud M. Taha, a political opponent of Nimaury.

33. H.M.L. Beri, "The Coup in Khartoum", Strategic Analysis, (New Delhi), May-June 1984, p.180.

led secondary school students in Khartoum to demonstrate in January 1985, leading to closure of schools for a month. The University of Khartoum was preparing to confront the government but the government closed it. By 26 March 1985 people went in demonstration to protest against the increase in prices of food and scarcity of essential goods. By 29 March demonstration grew larger. Security force, killed many people but the revolution continued. Doctors' association went on political strike, followed by the Bar Association, then judges, engineers, teachers, etc. The state machinery came to a halt. By that time Nimeiry was on his way from USA to Cairo. The army leaders sided with the populace and refused to use force against civilians. On 6 April 1985 a new regime was installed ending the military regime that had lasted for sixteen years. The second military regime's policies destroyed the liberal, democratic and secular forces and thus was indirectly responsible for the type of the new regime that was to rule over the Sudan subsequently.

#### **4.3 THE BASHIR REGIME 1989-1996**

Mention has already been made of the instability of the third parliamentary period in Chapter 3. The debate about the shari'a and civil war was going on throughout more than

three years without any fruitful and concrete result. The populace went on demonstration protesting against the 500 per cent price rises on basic commodities. On 22 March 1989 a new government was formed by the UP, the DUP, the SCP, the Sudan National Party and the 'Modern Forces' as the professionals who led the intifada against Nimeiry were often known. The biggest change was the absence of the INF after less than one year in government. Once it became clear that the new government would have to sign the November 1988 peace initiative agreed by the DUP and the SPLA, the INF refused to participate. On 26 March, the cabinet approved the peace initiative.<sup>34</sup> In mid-June 1989, the Sadiq government announced that a cabinet meeting would formally repeal the September Laws on 1 July and, a government delegation and the SPLA were to meet to propose a permanent solution to the civil war. However, twenty-four hours before the proposed 1 July meeting, a group of mid-ranking officers took over the Republican Palace, the parliament and the national broadcasting station. They rounded up top party and union leaders throughout the capital, and announced the

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34. Gill Lusk, "Back on Course for Peace", Middle East International, (U.K), no. 347, 31 March 1989, p. 13.

take-over by the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) under the leadership of Lt. General Omar al-Bashir.

The RCC used the same tone used by the leaders of the two previous coups, that is, the RCC had intervened to save the country from anarchy, corruption, civil war and deteriorating economic situation. People by and large welcomed the coup during the few first days. However when it appeared that the INF had masterminded the coup, they started opposing it. The INF had been marginalized by widespread popular support for a swift resolution to the country's economic problems by way of ending the civil war. The INF's two-fold aim was to pre-empt any peace agreement and reverse the ascendance of the largely secular forces that were newly incorporated into the new government. The INF junta targeted these forces for repression, and imprisoned leaders of professional unions and associations. They forcibly retired over 300 senior officers in the army and replaced hundreds of civil servants with INF members and sympathizers.<sup>35</sup> Soon it became evident that Bashir was just

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35. Abbashar Jamal, "Funding Fundamentalism: Sudan", Review of African Political Economy, no. 52, (U.K), November 1991, p.104.

a convenient figure head, while the de facto leader of the government was Hassan al-Turabi.

In June 1989, Bashir announced that the implementation of shari'a would be submitted to a national referendum. However, even after seven years in power no referendum was held. Since the shari'a is interrelated with the civil war in the South, the war continued because the Bashir regime had introduced the shari'a laws. More of Islamization implies stiff stand from the SPLA and continuation of the war. The continuation of the war and the sacking of hundreds of highly qualified senior officers led to resentment among the rank and file in the army. As a result there was an attempted coup in April 1990. After a summary trial of one day and after having undergone severe torture, the leaders of the coup, numbering twenty-eight, were executed.<sup>36</sup> Some of them had sustained broken limbs before their execution. They were buried in a mass graveyard without the knowledge of their families. It led to distaste among the Sudanese civilians as well as in the army who were not accustomed to such harsh methods.

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36. Charles A. Otunga, "Writing on the Wall for Sudan Ruler", Link, no. 29, (New Delhi), vol.33, 19 August 1990, p.29.

The political parties, trade unions, professional bodies, the ex-army officers who were sacked, and independent intellectuals organized themselves in the National Alliance. It undertakes the responsibility of leading the struggle against the Bashir regime. The SPLA also had joined the Alliance. Bulk of the leaders of the Alliance have been running the opposition from outside the country. The rest who have been within the country work underground though they frequently undergo interrogation, house arrest, imprisonment and prohibition of travel within the country.

The junta had claimed that they had assumed power so as to tackle the problems arising due to the southern conflict and the deteriorating economy. The junta held innumerable negotiations with the SPLA. In August 1990 there were negotiations in Ethiopia in which the SPLA demanded the removal of shari'a. Negotiations immediately collapsed because the Khartoum regime refused. Further peace negotiations, mediated by the former US President, Jimmy Carter, began in Kenya at the beginning of December 1989, but quickly collapsed. In March 1990 President Mobuto of Zaire held talks, separately, with both Garang, the leader of the SPLA, and Lt. General Bashir. They agreed on a cease-



fire for one month and the continuation of the negotiations. But by the end of the month heavy fighting was reported. International efforts to achieve a settlement gained renewed momentum in mid-1991. In June the government announced that it would consider proposals made by the US government which provided for partial withdrawal of government forces from Southern Sudan and the withdrawal of the SPLA forces from occupied areas. Fighting erupted again. The Nigerian President, Ibrahim Babangida, also acted as a mediator and subsequently a series of negotiations were held but no agreement was agreed on. Apart from shari'a, lack of confidence in the government had been due to the fact that the media kept on playing upon the drums of jihad against the 'infidels'. This tone has been damaging to the societal fabric of the Sudan for the army comprises of personnel from the South and from Nuba who are not Muslims. In November 1989 the government passed the Popular Defence Forces Act<sup>37</sup> (PDFA) which legalizes the use of militias in the war against the SPLA. The militias have been blamed for the massacres of women and children which took place in the Nuba Mountains in southern Kordofan. These tribal militias, as

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37. *ibid*, p.19.

organisation encouraged and organised by the state, have done more harm to peace and security. These militias were encouraged to fight the SPLA. The tribal militias comprises of members of the tribes bordering the south like Rizygat and Missrya. There are also some tribes in the South who have been armed by the government like Mandari, Bari and Didinga. Instead of protecting innocent people these militias resort to raids and animal theft thereby devastating southern villages and animal camps. This has created 300,000 refugees who are living on the borders with Ethiopia. About 250,000 have estimated to have lost their lives.<sup>38</sup>

The Southern Sudan question could not be solved in a theocratic environment. This axiom had been proved because in many trials to find peace during the third parliamentary period, only the DUP peace plan was about to bring peace because it called for the removal of the shari'a. By now more of Islamisation, as well as insistence on shari'a and call for the jihad had led the SPLA to call for self-determination for the South meaning thereby that the SPLA no more advocated the unionist approach to solve the problem.

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38. M.A. Mohamad Salih, "New Wine in Old Bottles: Tribal Militias and the Sudanese State", Review of African Political Economy, no.45/46, (U.K), 1989, p.169.

In the economic field, it is needless to repeat that the continuation of war means continuation of economic hardships. The country's economic problems increased following the decision by Netherlands to withhold a grant of 2.5 million US dollars in aid to the government for failing to stop the war. Furthermore, the US suspended 200 million dollars in direct economic aid in protest against the 1989 June military coup. The IMF had already declared the country ineligible for any loans. It owes the IMF one billion dollars in arrears. In a bid to raise the standard of living of the Sudanese people, the new government decided to take austerity measure which had disastrous repercussions. It raised wages, a step which pushed the government borrowing from the banking system to some 2.5 million dollars per annum.<sup>39</sup> The result was rising inflation estimated at more than 80 per cent, which in turn increased the cost of living. The country also lost huge source of foreign exchange of the Sudanese repatriations working in oil-rich Arab countries due to uncertainty in economic and financial policies of the Bashir regime. The country used to receive 600 million dollars per year in repatriated fund.

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39. Otunga, n.35, p.32.

According to a Sudanese economist, the introduction of 'Islamic' banking laws has done more damage than good. It has led to endemic corruption, blackmarketing, investment geared to quick profits and business and financial practices alien to the vast majority of Sudan's trading partners.

The Bashir regime committed a fatal mistake by supporting the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. The country had to suffer a lot because it lost huge amount of financial resources, both aids as well as loans and investments, from Kuwait and other Gulf shaikhdoms. In late seventies the Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Economic Development had provided fifty million dollars in the Rahad Scheme which brought over half a million acres under cultivation. The Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development contributed nine million dollars to the same scheme. The Kuwaiti Foreign Trading Contracting and Investing Company contributed 23 per cent to the Kenana Scheme, the world's largest sugar scheme. Kuwait also contributed to the financing of West Sennar Project for cultivation and manufacturing of sugar as well as cement industries at Dirbab. At the end of March 1975, the total loans granted to the Sudan by Arab countries was 116 million dollar of which Kuwait's share was 55.8

million.<sup>40</sup> Kuwait and other Arab oil producing countries contributed to many project like road constructions, oil pipeline etc. There was a long term-plan to invest six billion dollars by these countries in the Sudan for ten years beginning in 1985. The extent of damage to the economy of the country and its national interests by supporting Saddam Hussain could be imagined from the above summary. At the same time the USA and Western Europe also ceased offering economic, financial and technical facilities to the Sudan for both the regime's stand in the Iraqi aggression of Kuwait and its record in human rights.

In order to face the deteriorating economic situation the regime adopted several measures which further alienated the Sudanese. The government withdrew the subsidies to essential goods and commodities thereby leading to a sharp increase in their prices. It also sold public sector institutions and enterprises to private capital which resulted in mass unemployment. Most of the duties of the state were abandoned by the Bashir regime, like education, health, law and order and peace (by establishing militias).

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40. Jack G.Kaikati, "The Economy of the Sudan: A Potential Breadbasket of the Arab World?", International Journal of Middle East Studies, vol.11, (U.K), 1980, pp.106 - 9.

At the same time the regime imposed extremely high taxes. The regime resorted to devaluation many times without corresponding increase and diversification of exports.<sup>41</sup> Nor did it pursue a policy of curtailment of imports which ultimately led to hyperinflation.<sup>42</sup> The above-mentioned formula which is IMF-led, devastated economic situation and ultimately led to tragic social consequences. For the first time in the history of the Sudan, we witness the emergence of two classes with glaring gap. The upper class which consists of the elements of the INF, its sympathisers and opportunists who account for 20 per cent of the the population. It enjoys enormous facilities in the form of license to capital from the ' Islamic' banks, licence of import-export business etc. The lower class consists of the rest of population. This class has to suffer due to a limited income and hyperinflation<sup>43</sup> with a very low purchasing power of the currency. Many millions fled the

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41. The dwindling value of the Sudanese pound is obvious from the fact that before Bashir regime came in 1989 \$1 = 25 pounds, in 1996 \$1 =1,500 S. pounds.

42. John Predergast, "Blood Money for Sudan: World Bank and IMF to the Rescue", Africa Today, vol.36, no.1, (USA), 3rd and 4th Quarters, 1989, pp.44-8.

43. Annual inflation estimated to be 80 per cent in 1990, cited by Otunga, n.35, p.30.

country and settled abroad, particularly in Egypt. It adversely affected the demographic composition of the population in the Sudan. Some Sudanese abroad resorted to menial jobs while the rich invested overseas.

Like Abboud's Central Council and Nimeiry's SSU, the Bashir regime created a superstructure body called the National Parliament in trying to legitimize itself. The government held elections in 1995. The electoral process was made suspect because of the speed with which the electoral register was compiled - in a matter of few weeks. The traditional system of electors going to register was replaced by a team of officials going door-to-door to register voters. Registration was carried out by security men, who screened not only the candidates but also the voters. The polls were carried out with different areas voting at different times so as to minimize and contain potential protests. People by and large boycotted elections due to their belief that their results were already known, that is, victory of the elements of INF and the opportunists.

The regime's performance in foreign relations has been worst. Foreign relations were determined by the whims of the rulers rather than by national interests. This is clear when the regime rendered support to Saddam Hussein in his

adventure in Kuwait. Earlier, the Egyptian government had waited barely twenty-four hours to recognise the Bashir regime. On 4 July 1989 Hosni Mubarak received three delegations of the new regime. On 12 July 1989 Bashir visited Egypt. Relations with Egypt had been good for more than one year.<sup>44</sup> However, they began deteriorating after that. Egypt accused the Sudan of supporting the militant Islamic movements in Egypt. Both governments asked for reduction of each other's diplomatic missions. On 26 June 1995, Sudan's relations with Egypt suffered a further setback after the unsuccessful assassination attempt on Hosni Mubarak. Mubarak immediately accused the Sudanese regime of complicity in the attack on him. In early 1995 there was a rift with Kenya because the latter accused the Sudanese government of supporting the Islamic Party of Kenya, an unregistered political party which was engaging in subversive activities against the Kenyan government from a base in the Sudan. On 5 December 1994 Eritrea severed diplomatic relations with the Sudan, largely because of the Sudan's support to the Eritrean Islamic Jihad, a radical Islamic group. With Uganda, relations deteriorated after the

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44. Max Rodenbeck, "Undisguised Glee", Middle East International, no.354, (U.K), 7 July 1989, p.4.



Sudanese army attacked targets of the SPLA in northern Uganda in April 1995. Uganda severed diplomatic relations in protest. Immediately after the assassination attempt on Hosni Mubarak Ethiopia severed diplomatic relations with the Sudan.

The Bashir regime however, maintained good relations with Iraq, Iran, Libya and France. With the latter there was a deal in 1994 when the Sudanese authorities handed over Carlos to France in return of military assistance and to supply the Sudanese regime with satellite photographs identifying the positions of the SPLA.<sup>45</sup> The regime's most strategic ally has been Iran. Iranian leaders have been looking to North Africa, the region included in the second circle of Islamic influence in Khomeini's grand design. Sudan was chosen as the gateway to the region. They found it as a hospitable base for the region. Thousands of Iranian Revolutionary Guards were reported to have reached the Sudan by January 1992 so as to train members of radical movements from different countries.<sup>46</sup> Many training camps were

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45. Abdul-Salam Sidahmad, "Sudan, France and the Carlos Affair", Middle East International, no.484, (UK), 23 September 1994, p.19.

46. The Sunday Telegraph, 5 June 1992, p.9.

established in the Sudan for training these members. Iranians also helped in establishing ubiquitous security apparatus in the Sudan, made up of the Popular Defence Force, the security police and the clandestine security of the Front. During Rafsanjani's visit to the Sudan in December 1991, he was greeted as "the anti-imperialist strong man".<sup>47</sup> There were economic, military, <sup>and</sup> financial agreements signed by leaders of the two countries during that visit. The US Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Herman Cohen, alleged in March 1993 that Khartoum harbored known terrorists and terrorist groups including Hezbollah, Hamas and the Palestine Islamic Jihad.<sup>48</sup> The regime's close ties with similiar regimes like Iraq, Libya and Iran increased its international isolation.

The sadest aspect of the Bashir regime has been its record on human rights; the worst as compared to the two military regimes of 1958 and 1969. The torture and execution of twenty-eight officer implicated in an attempted coup in April 1990 had given rise to increasing resentment among the Sudanese. They were executed during Ramadan, a holy month

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47. Khalid Medani, "Sudan's Human and Political Crisis", Current History, (USA), no.574, vol.92. May 1993. p.206.

48. Times of India, 28 March 1993. p.6.

for the Muslims, during which no killing or fighting should take place according to Muslims' belief. The regime staged a crackdown on black market currency traders and executed at least two of them. New militias which are encouraged by the government, have carried out offensives against people in Darfur and the Nuba Mountains which resulted to killing, raping and kidnaping. Amnesty International has termed it as an "ethnic cleansing" since it involved widespread killings and the forced relocation of hundreds of thousands of people from their fertile ancestral lands. There were series of street demonstrations in Khartoum on 9 September 1995. Khartoum University students organized demonstrations in protest of the detention of three fellow students and nine other people. The government's response was brutal: indiscriminate shooting and a tactic new to riot control in the Sudan - the deliberate breaking of arms and legs. At least nine were killed. This tactic, used for the first time in the Sudan, was probably introduced from Iran. The INF militias were dispatched to smash the marchers. Dozens of detainees remained in 'ghost houses', that is, a common name for detention in houses where torture takes place. There have been several cases of disappearance. A shameful type of torture happened to Brigadier Mohammad Ahmad al-Rayah, who

had taken the step of suing the regime, alleging torture and rape.<sup>49</sup> This act is unprecedented in the history of the Sudan. The widespread assumption in the Sudan is that the tradition of political tolerance has been broken by the INF. Ironically, defending his government in its human rights record, Bashir in an interview replied, "while we have only three hundred political detainees in the Sudan, this number could be found in one village in some other countries".<sup>50</sup>

The situation of human rights and the international isolation of the regime could be clearly grasped from the fact that in December 1992 and January 1994, the UN General Assembly condemned the human rights record of the Sudanese government. After expressing its concern over persistent and serious human rights violations, the 47th session of the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on the human rights situation in the Sudan. Among other things, it called upon the government of the Sudan to comply with applicable international human rights instruments, in particular the international conventions on human rights and

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49. Rachel Wildavstky, "These Heroes Wait For Freedom", Reader's Digest, vol.145, no.872, (New Delhi), December, 1994.

50. Oadhaya Dowaliyah, Political Weekly Report, no.187, 2 August 1993, p.40, Islamabad, Pakistan.

the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, to which the Sudan is a party. The resolution further called upon the Sudan "to respect Article 3 of the Geneva Convention of 1949, and the additional protocol thereto, to halt the use of weapons against civilians and protect civilians from violations, including arbitrary arrest and detentions, ill-treatment, torture, and summary execution". A resolution adopted by the UN Commission on Human Rights in January 1994, fully backed its special rapporteur, Gaspar Biro, and confirmed his mission to the Sudan to monitor the human rights situation. The backing was made by thirty-five votes to nine with nine abstentions. "We have oriented ourselves to God and we would not risk His anger even if that displeased the whole world", declared President Bashir. The Government-controlled press and other media organs described the stand of the UN as "groundless allegations". They campaigned that the Sudan was signaled out because of its, "Islamic choice", The regime initiated the formation of human rights bodies to counter the campaigning of the London-based human rights organisations like Amnesty International and Africa Watch.<sup>51</sup> To sum up,

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51. Sidahmad, n.45, p.18.

the existing regime of the INF has destroyed the economy, social harmony, the polity and most of the peculiar traditions of tolerance that characterized the Sudan. This burden may takes generation to get rid of. The partition of the country is not a remote probability. Unlike the two previous military regimes, the removal of the existing regime seems to involve blood-shedding.

## Chapter 5

### CONCLUSION

The political history of the Sudan in the modern period is full of sudden and dramatic changes. The Sudan has, over these years, witnessed the rise of democracy and civilian supremacy. It was often challenged and replaced by the army coup d'etat and military dominance. Religion, an important aspect of Sudanese life had always played a significant role but, over years, it began to dominate Sudanese politics and today it has emerged as the dominant force in the politics of the Sudan. All the three things; democratic-civilian rule, army rule and what can be termed as Islamic fundamentalism have left their imprint upon Sudanese politics.

The instability of the first parliamentary period was due to the fact that factionalism had consumed a lot of time and efforts of the politicians and sectarian leaders. As we mentioned earlier the idea behind the Graduates' Congress in 1930s, was to establish a nationalist movement like the Indian National Congress. The differences among the Graduates and the subsequent search for support of the sectarian leaders had led to the split in the Congress as well as in the nationalist movement. Achieving a national

consensus in the context of sectarianists continues to be a challenge to the political scenario in the Sudan till today. In most countries under colonialism, nationalists had a common enemy and could agree on the goal of independence. In the Sudan, however, nationalism emerged in two not merely competitive but rather antagonistic forms. One sect advocated unity with Egypt, the other called for a separate state. Independent Sudan came into existence in 1956 as a result of agreement between the two groups.

However, trouble continued after independence. It stemmed from one basic cause: having either worked for or opposed independence, the parties found themselves without any particular aim once it was achieved. Much was expected from the parties but they fell short of expectations. They had no detailed and defined programmes to deal with economic and social issues. The masses were swayed in elections by broad general issues such as union with Egypt or independence, or voted to assert their adherence to personalities rather than programmes.

The main difference between the two sects since 1898 had been the attitude towards one or other of the two co-dominions; Britain and Egypt. This question vanished after



independence. Yet rivalries between them continued. But these sects were ready to forget their difference when the matter came to be the ouster of Azhari's government in June 1956.

Political history of the post-independence era was dominated by one central characteristic; political influence of social groupings which had benefited from the condominium. Therefore those who framed government policy were not inclined to undertake a radical reformation of the country's socio-economic structure. Political parties maintained their power by their alliance with those figures whose social status did not favour social and economic transformations.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the two kinds of imbalance or inequality differentiating both regions of the country and social groupings within it continued and became more marked. As a result political movements based on those who were regionally or socially disadvantaged grew in strength, posing a threat to stability. Radical political parties, free officers groups in the army, trade unions and occupational organizations, regional parties, secessionist

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1. Tim Niblock, Class and Power in Sudan, (London, 1987), p.226.

guerrilla all formed part of this response to a system which perpetuated social and regional imbalances.

In terms of political culture, the Sudanese have been marked as the most democratic in the Arab World and Africa. They have a strong sense of egalitarianism and tradition of electing tribal leaders and local notables coupled with an easily observable insistence on verbal give-and-take regardless of the rank or position of authority. It is equally observable that politically conscious Sudanese disdain authority and autocracy and particularly loathe military rule.<sup>2</sup> Multiparty elections, according to the international committee which observed the first election in 1953, were open, fair and peaceful. They continued to be so in other democratic elections. The instability of the civilian government has been due to the incompetent leaders and the measure of democratic institutions by the sectarian leaders. Perhaps here we witness a phenomenon that exists nowhere else, that is, 'democratic people' and a leadership that did not care for democratic norms and principles. The monopoly of political power by few houses changed politics

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2. Peter Bechtold, "More Turbulence in Sudan: A New Politics this time?", The Middle East Journal, (USA), vol.44, no.4, Autumn 1990, p.576.

in the Sudan to be a private game for them rather than a civic education for the people.

It seems that politico-sectarians in the Sudan thought of independence as an end in itself, and government as their legitimate right. In the aftermath of independence there was no comprehensive planing like the way Nehru had done in India for instance. There were only limited economic achievements in the first parliamentary period which we have mentioned in Chapter 3. No exact plans were made on scientific basis. In a vast country like the Sudan transportation is the most important factor both as an aspect of economic infrastructure and a unifying factor socially in such a multiethnic country. In a country having a long rainy season no tarmac road to connect any two cities was constructed during the period of the first civilian rule. No economic development had taken place in the South. Here was the crux of the problem of the South, that is, under-development which continued to form glaring regional imbalance. The colonial regime started a few development schemes in the North but neglected the South. The post-independence governments expanded these schemes in the North and neglected the South, the Nuba Mountains and other

backwarded areas. They are to constitute a source of instability and perhaps secessionism in today's Sudan.

When Azhari was forced to resign in June 1956, after the Khatmiyya-Mahdiyya alliance, he realised the opportunist attitude of these sects. Azhari developed a radical posture of the NUP and emphasised on secular nationalism. He advocated the famous slogan la-qadasah fis-siyasah denouncing sectarianists. Stronger links were established with progressive parties and movements. However, on 16 November 1958 an agreement was reached on the formation of NUP-UP coalition. In 1968, he went further by merging his party, NUP, with the PDP to constitute the DUP. The PDP was a Khatmiyya party that strived much so as to oust Azhari.

At the time of independence in 1956, the Sudan was equipped with a professional and apolitical army. It continued to be so after independence. The Sudanese army by and large showed an indepth awareness that the running of the state was not the business of the armed forces. It is interesting that the first military coup of November 1958 was a brainchild of the then prime minister, Abdallah Khlil, a civilian and not an army officer. His selfish and shallow motive was to frustrate a potential coalition which would remove him from the premiership. He was of the idea that the

Junta would appoint him in their cabinet. However, there has always been foreign hands behind the three military coups in the Sudan.<sup>3</sup> The existence of a democratic regime with multi-party system was a cause of irritation to some authoritarian regimes in neighboring countries. The Abboud regime was different from both the Nimeiry's and the Bashir's in the sense that it was carried out by senior army officers, meaning thereby it did not resort to expulsion of senior army officers and kept the army intact. Moreover, it was not based on imported dogma. Both the Nimeiry regime and the Bashir regime were brought about by middle and low rank officers and were based on foreign ideologies. This led to expulsion of hundreds of senior officers who were highly qualified but had no dogma.

The political history of the country has witnessed the evolution of a very important force, also peculiar to the Sudan, that is, the 'Modern Forces'. They are pressure groups consisting of professional associations, trade unions, and students unions. Their history goes back to pre-independence era. They have been very crucial in the struggle against all forms of hegemony whether colonialism

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3. al-Sharif Zain Al-Aabdin, ex-Foreign Minister, Interview in Addiplomasy, no.8 (Cairo), February 1994.

or military regimes or even the 'civilian dictatorship'. They have been working for the national causes. It is a truism that these forces were the real creators of both the October Revolution and the April intifada that brought down the Abboud regime and the Nimairy regime. Some of the leaders of these forces might have some sectarian, regional, tribal or political affiliations yet they operate as national patriots.

Though the very complexion of these organizations is to patron their demands for better working conditions, suitable working hours, better payment etc, yet during military regimes they struggled hard to remove them. The leaders of these institutions did not pursue personal ambition in their struggle. They have been the first who went to jails during military regimes. These institutions derive their importance from the state's need for their work and service and control of production. They have played a leading role in expressing the viewpoints of the masses. They use their tools in protest against unpopular decisions of the governments like hike in prices of essential commodities or even political decisions which have a negative impact on people during civilian regimes. On the other hand they use these tools against totalitarian regimes with the declared aim of re-

moving the regime in question. The most important and effective tool has been political strike, or civil disobedience, that is, to cease working till the collapse of the regime. The simultaneous strike of all these unions and organizations was quite sufficient to bring the regime to an end. It happened twice, in 1958 and in 1985. Interestingly this technique has not been used in other countries to remove authoritarian regimes. Unfortunately these 'Modern Forces' have no access to power. They were represented in transitional governments only, both in the aftermath of the October Revolution and in the transitional government in the aftermath of the April intifada.

The role of the Sudanese army to crown the success of people's revolutions in 1964 and 1958 was highly important. Instead of siding with the military regimes of both Nimeiry and Abboud, the army aligned itself with the civilians and refused to suppress demonstrations. The army showed that adventurous officers did not represent the general attitude of the rank and file of the armed forces.<sup>4</sup> This phenomenon is also peculiar to the Sudan because generally armed forces

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4. The total number of officers, rank and file of Nimeiry's coup was 500. Some of them were trainees.

in Third World align with military rulers and are ready to shed blood so as to safeguard them. The third parliamentary regime under the leadership of Sadiq al-Mahdi realised the necessity to include the Modern Forces in the cabinet only in March 1989. But it appeared that it was too late because by June 1989 the INF overthrew the parliamentary system.

The crux of the problem of alternation between civilian and military regimes and the failure of both seems to be the unbridgeable gap between the rulers and the masses. Perhaps we witness a curious problem that exists nowhere else, that is, the governed outstrip the governors. The successive regimes since independence lacked political effectiveness, efficiency and broad - minded understanding. Political effectiveness is closely related to both legitimacy and stability of the regime in question; without legitimacy there can be no stability, and without stability no regime can effect any program. We may limit the concept of legitimacy to two aspects; the legality of a government and the extent of popular acceptance, something of relatively greater significance as times goes on. The parliamentary governments of 1953, 1965 and 1986 were completely legitimate, unlike the military regimes of 1958, 1969 and 1989. With the passage of time the initial legitimacy of the three



parliamentary regimes was eroded by their woeful performances. The support for military juntas of 1958 and 1969 increased whenever their record in office so warranted.<sup>5</sup> The existing regime lacked popularity since its inception. The support for the junta decreased as time went by. The political effectiveness depends on many factors. Some of them are substantive programs, decision-making style, cabinet stability, availability of channels of political communication and domestic tranquility. It seems that all governments had no political effectiveness. Apart from a very short period in the wake of independence, the Sudan lacked wise, decisive and effective leadership. It appeared that decisive leaders either lacked political base or experienced politicians lacked decisiveness or wisdom.

While studying the political history of the Sudan and the oscillation between military and democratic governments, what is more significant is the content of democracy rather than its form. The academic definition and political institutions are meaningless without concrete actions that could meet the aspirations of the masses. By raising some

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5. Peter Bechtold, Politics in Sudan Parliamentary and Military Rule in an Emerging African Nation (New York, 1976), p.223.

questions perhaps we could be able to find a workable conceptualization of a given democratic setup. Does the leadership of the system in question think in harmony with populace's thinking? Is the real intention of the leadership to pursue personal ambition or to pursue the interests of the masses? What is the degree of people's acceptance of the common attitude of the government? There would be differentiation between formal superficial level of liberal democracy and the viability of its alternative—a more substantive and deep participating democracy. In the conventional minimalist definition the criteria of democratisation are regular electoral competitions, usually in a multiparty system, and thus governmental succession by constitutional, electoral procedures, guaranteeing the rule of law. On the other hand those who are dissatisfied with minimalist usually include criteria such as redistributive socio-economic reforms, broader popular participation, social justice and human rights. The minimalist definition seems unable to sustain unless it is legitmised by the achievement of basic human needs.<sup>6</sup> We may term the former as 'democracy' and the

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6. Shahid Qadir, "Sustainable Democracy: Formalism vs Substance", Third World Quarterly, vol.14, (UK), no.3, 1993.

latter as 'democratisation'. However, democracy leads to democratisation if the impetus for change escapes from sectarian domination to encompass broader social forces. Democratisation is indeed a process rather than an end. 'Democracy' is indeed a fragile flower but the argument that it is too frail for parts of the Third World can be used as a disguise for dictators.

In the Sudan had there been no military intervention 'democracy' would have not been able to survive the pressures that 'democratisation' would place on it. Both 'democracy' and 'democratisation' have the first evident requirement, that is, a broad popular consensus over how politics should be conducted. Political power should be exercised with the consent and on behalf of the people. It is a call for the accountability of rulers to the governed. However, we claim that there is an 'unwritten law' that governs the responsible exercise of politics in a democratic setup, that is, a 'moral obligation' of those who exercise power in the name of the people. The masses in the Sudan are well aware and very sensitive about this 'moral obligation'. It was evident in November 1955 when the two sectarian leaders collaborated to remove Azhari by voting against his government on the budget issue. In pursuing their vested

interests they succeeded in removing him. Though it had been done in accordance with the constitution and 'democracy' yet the populace forced the sectarian leaders to abide by the 'moral obligation'. Violent street demonstrations broke out in support of Azhari. After five days he was reinstated as a Prime Minister. The victory of the 'unwritten law' over the written law in democracy reflects that the masses were very conscious that political power should be exercised with the consent and on behalf of the people. Politicians had failed to grasp the emergence of new political force in the country that represented the aspirations of a substantial proportion of the younger generation. This generation could not be dismissed by mere appeals to traditional symbols of loyalty. In 1965 elections traditional parties obtained 98 per cent of the seats of the territorial constituencies. The failure of these parties to address the younger generation is clear from the fact that they won only two seats out of fifteen of the graduates' constituencies. This curious result becomes even more intriguing when we realise that the two victorious NUP candidates belonged to the extreme radical wing of the NUP. One of them Saleh Mahmoud Ismail used to criticise Azhari publicly. The Communists got eight seats and the Islamic Charter Front got two seats. In 1985 elections the

traditional parties got nothing in graduates' constituencies. The dissatisfaction of the young generation of the traditional parties is also reflected in the Khartoum University students body election during the second parliamentary period where the left group obtained 45 per cent and the Muslim Brothers got 40 per cent of the votes as compared 15 percent for supporters of the traditional parties.<sup>7</sup> Traditional parties failed to address the new generation. Even during the last parliamentary period the DUP used mottoes such as 'we achieved independence' as if it had managed to launch a rocket to the moon.

Organizationally, on paper both those parties had Executive Councils consisting of 12 to 15 members and committees at the grassroots level. But in actuality power was concentrated in the hands of a few figures, generally the sectarian leaders. Before his death in the aftermath of the Nimeiry regime, Azhari was more influential than the sectarian leaders. But during the last parliamentary period Mohammad Osman al-Mirghani became very influential. While secular leaders in the DUP were struggling to convene the General Conference to decide issues such as the party

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7. Bechtold, n.2, p.78.

president, nominees of candidates, the domestic and foreign policies, the political office etc, al-Mirghani succeeded in frustrating it. He filled the political office solely with his family members. He assumed the role of the president of the party. The result was a split in the party. While it got 1,540,000 votes with only 63 MPs, the Umma Party got 1,350,000 votes with 101 MPs. The INF got only 465,000 votes but won 54 seats.<sup>8</sup> In some constituencies the DUP had three candidates at a time. The result was scattering of votes and consequently the loss of a large number of constituencies; two were won by the Communists and the others by the INF.

Another reason that contributed to instability of civilian governments was the nature of coalition governments. Apart from the first government of the NUP when it had won majority, all successive civilian governments were coalitions. With the exception of the first elections in 1953, the best performance by any party gained it 42 per cent of the total vote. Every coalition government, by definition, has a senior and junior partner, with portfolios allocated accordingly. Often within months of assuming governing responsibility, the junior partner is approached

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8. Sellam Abbas, "Mashahid ala al-Masrah as-Syasi al-Sudani", al-Khartoum, (Cairo), 17.7.1993.

by the opposition with proposals for a better portfolio arrangement. Sooner or later, the offer becomes too tempting, a vote of confidence is called, and the government falls. The new coalition experiences a certain "honeymoon" period until the former senior partner, now in opposition, begins its own flirtation with one or another grouping to undermine the new partnership. The end effect is twofold: coalition politics deteriorates into a game of musical chairs and, indeed, during the first six years of democratic rule every possible combination of centrist parties has been in power and each single party has been in opposition. The game of musical chairs continued with faster rhythm during the last parliamentary period. During the last parliamentary regime, April 1986-May 1989, the Prime Minister led a series of six successive coalition governments. There was a period of many months when there was no government in the last parliamentary period and the administration was run by the Council of the State and the undersecretaries at ministries because no agreement was reached on coalition. It led to discontent among the people.

The crux of political instability, and the problem of the South which were interrelated, is the absence of a permanent constitution. On the initiation of the self-

government process in 1953-55, culminating in independence on 1 January 1956, the Sudan had a Westminster model constitution, and an English common law oriented legal system with customary and some Islamic law components. Political development prior to independence had led the various nationalist parties and groups to convert the Self Government Statute of 1953 into a Westminster model "Transitional Constitution", on the understanding that once full independence was achieved, the Sudanese could then turn to the deliberate process of indigenous constitution-making at their own pace. Thus, the first constitutional commission was set up to draft the Sudan constitution, but before their draft was formally enacted the first coup d'etat took place and the whole exercise was postponed indefinitely. On restoration of democratic rule in 1964, the Independence Transitional Constitution of 1956 was reintroduced after some amendments, again in the hope that the "Permanent Constitution" would soon be promulgated. The second coup d'etat that took place, aborted the second draft constitution. Nimeiry adopted the Sudan Permanent Constitution of 1973. Notwithstanding criticisms that may be raised against the one-party state established by this document, it appears to have achieved a degree of stability and unity in the country throughout the



1970's. Addis Ababa agreement which brought peace in the South was incorporated and entrenched in the 1973 Constitution.<sup>9</sup>

The nature and content of the prospective permanent constitution was the hottest and the most fundamental political and social question facing the country since independence. The major northern political parties were committed to what they called Islamic constitution, while the southern parties, Republican Brothers and some secular groups in the North were opposed to it. However, the two main centrist parties seem to have been carried away by the Muslim Brothers in support of Islamic constitution so as not to lose the electorate, majority of whom were Muslims. Given the religious legitimation of the major political groups the smaller group of the Brothers retained influence disproportionate to its size in 1965. This was because of their capacity to put pressure on the leaders of the sectarian parties through their constituencies by demanding reforms in the name of Islam which it was impossible for them to reject. This was evident in the aftermath of independence. When the Constitu-

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9. Abdallahi An-Na'im, "The Elusive Islamic Constitution: Sudanese Experience", Orient, (Hamburg), March 1985, p.329.

tional Commission rejected the idea of the Islamic state in 1957, the Brothers led a campaign which forced the religious patrons of the two sects to issue a communique supporting the Islamic constitution.<sup>10</sup> Similarly the campaign of the Brothers to expel the Communist MPs was also supported by the two centrist parties.

During the efforts to draw a constitution the southern parties were more interested in regional autonomy and only supported the speeding up of the promulgation of the constitution with this end in mind. As the constitution came for its second reading in the Parliament, tension amounted and forty MPs from the South boycotted the second reading of the constitution in parliament in January 1968 in protest at its dominant Islamic spirit. In spite of this, the constitution was passed in its second reading by 168 votes. After the elections in April 1968 a new constitutional committee was formed. Both centrist parties favoured Islamic constitution. In the final agreement reached between them shortly before the Nimairy coup, the Islamic constitution was firmly supported.

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10. Abdal-Wahab al-Affendi, "Discovering the South: Sudanese Dilemma for Islam in Africa", African Affairs, vol.89, (U.K), no.354, January, 1990, p.375.

The controversy about the constitution and the role of religion in the state and its implication was settled by the 1973 constitution. However, after the National Reconciliation in 1977, the Muslim Brothers were trying to convince Nimeiry about Islamic laws. In early 1983 Nimeiry decided to re-divide the South into three regions and assumed rigid fundamentalist tendency by imposing Shari'a laws. Both issues, that is, re-division of the South and imposition of these laws were violation of the Addis Ababa agreement which had been included in the 1973 constitution. Civil war broke again to continue till the present day. During the last parliamentary period, 1985-1989, Sudanese politicians were very busy in their business of alignments, coalition and distribution of portfolios etc. They could not find time to draft a secular constitution, call for separation of the state from the church, settle the controversy of the South, and subsequently achieve societal harmony and economic development.

Another major issue that adversely affected the political stability and nation-building process was the refusal of the northern political parties to adopt a federal setup. The speciality, cultural, religious and ethnic of the South, led the southerners to demand regional autonomy. It is a histor-

ical fact that the Sudan had never been ruled by a strong centre. The vastness of the size of the country, its diverse religious, ethnic and cultural group, in addition to inadequate communications and transport system did not allow a strong central government to emerge. The Funj Sultanate in early sixteenth century, was in effect a confederation of smaller sultanates or tribal chieftains, each ruled by a "mek" or prince who owed allegiance to the Sultan at Sennar. The authority of the Sultan was recognized throughout the former lands of the Cush and Nubia including the Gezira and Fazagli in the South. By that time both Kordofan and Darfur helped to define special regional identities. During the Mahdiyya, some tribes joined it because they were unhappy with measures of centralized control brought by the Egyptians. When Khalifa Abdullahi began to establish a centralized state, those tribes who had joined the Mahdiyya in opposition to centralized rule of the Egyptians began to withdraw. One example was the revolt of Abu Jummyzah in 1888. The Condominium rule was aware of this fact so it introduced the system of Native Administration that delegated considerable powers to shaiks and nazirs to run the local affairs.

The demand of regional autonomy by the southerners was a reasonable and effective measure to settle the issue. It seems to be a legal claim also because they had agreed to vote for the Independence Resolution in the parliament after they were given assurance that their demand would be met subsequently. However, they were denied the right to regional autonomy by the northern parties on the grounds that it might lead to breakup of the new state and that the proposed regional government needed a huge fund and there were no sufficient resources in the South to finance it. But the civil war consumed and continues to consume tens of millions of dollars per annum milking the bulk of the resources of the country.

The democratic form of government is best suited for such a diverse country. It also suits the very complexion of the Sudanese people. In the words of a scholar who had visited the Sudan several times, "tradition of decision making in public matter by some form of popular consent is deep-rooted in the Sudan. Whether the issue is relevant to the fortune of clan or tribe, the individual always had-and still has-access to the actual decision-making body or person. It is true that the elders make the final decision regarding family affairs, the shaikh for the village, the

nazir for the tribe and, on the surface, this process has all the trimmings of authoritarian, will-nilly behavior. However, if one disregards the structure of this process in favor of the actual functioning, an important point emerges: access is available at virtually all levels. If any individual desires to state his point of view on an issue, he will always have a chance to be heard. In their social intercourse, the Sudanese have naturally assimilated some values of Arab, African or colonial vintage".<sup>11</sup>

The authoritarian and military regimes had committed, and continue to commit, historical mistake that would have never taken place during civilian regimes where there was freedom of expression, opposition and free media. Abboud had sold Halfa to Nasser for fifteen million pounds by signing the Nile water agreement as a compensation for the damage caused by the inundation of the area south of the High Dam. As a result of the construction of the Dam, vast area including Nubia and Wadi Halfa was flooded, thus subjecting antiquities dating to thousands of years, and reflecting very glorious history, to devastation. Seventy thousand

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11. Peter Bechtold is chairman for Near East and North African Studies at the Foreign Service Institute USA.

Nubians were displaced by force. Nimeiry had agreed with the CIA to allow Ethiopian Jews to be lifted to Israel via the Sudan. He also allowed military facilities to the USA in the Red Sea. The existing regime has made the Sudan a hospitable haven to terrorists from the Middle Eastern countries. The South may secede and the society was inflicted by degeneration as a result of the economic hardships.

Apart from the deep-rooted democratic values among the Sudanese, democracy is almost universally triumphant in the Post-Cold War world. The solution to the chronic problems of the Sudan seems to lie in a secular, democratic, federal constitution. Modern Forces are to be given share in power. The adoption of the process of 'democratisation' after regain 'democracy'. The new generation is to be given a proper scope in the political parties, especially the centrists. Political parties have to practice democratisation within their institutions. Women should be given representation in the parliament, cabinet and in the institutions of the centrist parties that used to neglect their role. Foreign relations are to be formed according to the country's national interests instead of emotional sentiments.

If the nationalists who had fought for independence were to resurrect, they would be stunned to know that the national tasks of post-independence that they had left forty years ago are still there; namely the regional rebellion, economic planning and nation-building process, in addition to societal decay, thirteen billion US dollars foreign debt and more than one million refugees abroad.

To sum up, the gradual downward slide in the Sudanese polity had started immediately after independence. The politicians paid no attention to basic problems; namely the problem of the South, economic planning and enactment of a constitution appropriate to the Sudanese environment. They resorted to temporary solutions that were not enough to eradicate these maladies. Long and precious time was wasted in mutual rivalries and power struggle. Political parties sometimes were a mere temporary alliance that evolved around personalities. During the second parliamentary period, the Muslim Brotherhood emerged stronger after the October Revolution and began to pressurize for an *Islamic* constitution. The centrist parties, swayed by this pressure, also claimed that they too were in favour of '*Islamic*' constitution. This led to mistrust on the part of the southern parties as well as other secular forces. It



ultimately led to the Nimeiry coup; one of its aims being to avoid the creation of a theocratic state. Again after the removal of Nimeiry's regime pressure was mounted on the INF in favour of Islamization of the state. The issue of Islamization became too serious to be ignored. It assumed the role of political, economic and social programme and an alternative to the centrist parties. The existing regime continues in the same tone.

The gradual alternation in the polity in the Sudan was from civilian to military rule and finally to religious ideology. With the option of armed struggle raised by the opposition movement, the new change might be different. In the light of Sudan's short history since its independence, and the rapid transition from one system to another, one should not be surprised by new revolutionary developments. However, what type of revolutionary system might emerge in the Sudan in future is too early to say.

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