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## **THE POLITICAL ROLE OF THE SUDANESE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE NATIONAL ISLAMIC FRONT (NIF)**

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## INTRODUCTION

Sudan had been a geographical expression that describes a region extends from the Atlantic coast to Red Sea . The modern Sudan - as a political and administrative entity came into being for the first time during the turco - Egyptian rule ( 1821 - 1884 ) . Prior to that , the country was divided into local , tribal sheikdom i.e . confederation of tribes led by a sultan , the ruling class was alliance consisted of warriors , religious scholars ( ulamas ) and sufi leaders . Fung kingdom of Sennar ( 1504 - 1821 ) was a good example ; and Muhammed Ahmed al - Mahdi established the first quasi-central theocratic state ( 1884 - 1898 ) in the northern Sudan after he defeated the Turks. He was able to unify most- Muslim Arab tribes of the north under the banner of Islam and jihad . Throughout the history of the Sudan religion and politics can hardly be separated especially after the mass penetration of the Arabs into the Sudan in the fourteenth century . During the Anglo - Egyptian rule ( 1899 - 1956 ) the religious leaders played an important role in consolidating the new administration by taking part in the local power .

During the national movement and the struggle against the British , the Sudanese intelligentsia represented in the Graduates Congress in the 1940 s incorporated with the religious sects to mobilize the masses . The main parties which emerged at that period and existed till now are : Umma Party led by Abdel Rahman Al - Mahdi , the son of the famous national and religious leader . The Ashiqa and later the Nationalist Unionist Party ( NUP ) represented Ali Al - Mirghani and the

Khatmiya sect , but many non - sectarian middle class factions joined the party . At that time a great part of the Sudanese elite looked for an affiliation to non - traditional political groups . Some of the students in Egypt and Sudan formed in 1946 the Sudanese Movement for National Liberation ( SMNL ) which in 1950's took the name of the Communist Party . The other part of the Sudanese elite was religiously oriented but they wanted to express themselves in a more modern way which would be independent from the sectarian parties and anti- communist . This group formed the Islamic Liberation Movement which was heterogenous , till they took the Egyptian name of the Muslim Brothers in a conference held in 1954 .

The history of the Sudanese Islamic Movement as was written by its members , is different - to some extent -in phasing and describing the periods of development. Makki , the historian of the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood , divides its history as follows :- firstly , the stage of establishing ( 1944 - 1954 ) , secondly the development of the Muslim Brother Movement during two phases : ( 1956 - 58 ) and ( 1958 - 69 ) , thirdly the Islamic Movement ( 1969 - 85 ) which implies organizationally a form of a wide front . (1)

Turabi prefers another classification which is based on the movement's activity and impact in the society , it developed from the stage of formation ( 1949-1955 ) then early emergence(1956 - 58 ) first 'dormant ' period as a result of the Abboud's military coup ( 1958 - 1964 ) period of public activity ( 1964 - 69 ) a stage of struggle and growth after Numairy's coup ( 1969 - 77 ) , then the stage of reconciliation with the regime and ascendancy of the Islamic Movement ( 1977 - 84 ). (2)

A recent study about the movement gives the following classification : -

the stage of genesis and formation ( 1946 - 1957 ) stage of spread and development ( 1958 - 1969 ), the last stage of participation in power and penetration in civil society that ended with its seizure of power in June 1989 .

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE SUDANESE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT**

### **Islam and Islamist in Contemporary Sudan**

Islam in the Sudan is a synthesis of local cultures and islamic teachings and beliefs ; and all the religious cultural components showed a high tendency to assimilation . Islam was introduced into the Sudan by merchants , tribes men and fugitives ; and not by ulama i . e . learned scholars , who might have learned the populaces in a proper way the fundamentals of the new religion . As a result the Sudanese conceived the religion as a continuum not rupture , regarding the development of the a cultural and social life because there was no real basic changes . The lay man's Islam remains nominal , and individuals in most villages have their religious world view which is rested on saint - worship and sufi orders . Sufism spread in the Sudan during its low ebb in the Islamic world ; therefore it took a very primitive form (1) . We find in Sudan popular Islam which is syncretist and not in conformity with orthodox Islam . The Sudanese Islamic movement coexisted with popular Islam and sufism , and the National Islamic Front ( NIF ) constituted some sufi sects whose members have different islamic practices and teachings that are inconsistent with fundamentalist Islam . At the same time , the NIF combats what they call " sectarian " parties i.e. Umma and Democratic

Unionist Party , and criticizes their sufi tendendies . This paradox resulted from the contradiction between the religious religion and the political religion .

Political Islam or the implementation of sharia laws has been a common election programme for all the three main sudanese political parties . But the NIF considers itself as the the one and only islamic realities . The NIF members discern themselves from the other muslims and other parties by asserting that the former group believes in what they call the totality and universality of Islam . The NIF has an ambivalent relation with the other traditional parties as , it manipulated their members to support shari'a laws and it ruled in coalition with them in 1988 .

The Islamic movement in the Sudan is a direct reaction to the leftist and communist activities that emerged vigorously by the beginning of the fifties . The first organized Islamic movement attempted to match the slogans and the programs of the communists ; and it assumed a progressive name such as Islamic Liberation Movement . It called for land reform and equal distribution of wealth , and confirmed that : "we are a liberation movement align ourselves with the cause of the workers , students and farmers " . (2)

The Islamic movement's programme at that time reflected the impact of the historical process and the priorities ; and even the language was different . Turabi describes the Islamic movement as follows : " The inception of the movement was a predestination for the renewal of religion , it was a phenomenon provoked by incursive ideologies and it was a response to that challenge ( ... ) although the movement is an expression of the eternal facts of the religion , it bears the characteristics of Sudan's realities . The movement development has

paralleled the phases of the Sudanese political , social and cultural history since the mid of this century . " (3)

The Sudanese Islamic movement is actually successful and more powerful than all the other Arab Islamic movements . This is due to its " Sudanism " , and not for being more revivalist or renewalist in Islamic thought . The Sudanese Islamic movement's intellectual contribution contrasts with its political prevalence ; as its publications are negligible with the exception of Turabi's writings . I mean by its 'Sudanism ' that the movement has developed in propitious socioeconomic environment which is relatively tolerant and liberal in accepting different ideas . The absence of a centralization state throughout the history of the Sudan , and the diversity of tribes , clans , languages and cultures ( ethnic groups ) ; all this created a citizen who has a high sense of freedom . For this reason , democracy and pluralism are the only political system compatible with the local conditions . The Islamic movement made use of the Sudanese setting and it was the least movement in the Arab world that has been subject to oppression and persecution

Al-Nifaisy, a Kuwaiti prominent Islamist, compared the Sudanese Islamic movement with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and he concluded that the former is more successful, modern and popular. He stated that the Sudanese Islamic movement excelled the Egyptian Brotherhood in organizational, political and ideological aspects. He enumerated some positive characteristics, for example, the Sudanese movement has developed from a close and elitist party into open, popular and comprehensive national front which compromises many Sudanese Islamic trends and ethnic groups ; while the Egyptian remained a closed organized patterns e.g.. cells , and it is an stagnant and traditional or-

ganization .We find differences in discourses : and doctrinal prapagation by the Egyptians, while the Sudanese movement tackled new social and political issues. The Sudanese Islamic movement is exolted for its wide network and diverse relations. (4) Some Islamits especially in North African countries acknowledge the impact of the Sudanese movement on their activities and understanding of religion and politics ; and on the organizing and recruiting of youth and women (5) . The second factor in its success has nothing to do with the renewal or revival of the religion . The Sudanese Islamic movement is more pragmatic than dogmatic than scripturalist ; and more activist and practical than intellectualist or theoretical . The movement benefited from the local political life mainly during the tide of the national liberation struggle.The Islamists' involvement in political sphere compelled them to be more realistic and ready for compromises. At the same time , the Islamists eschewed discussions and polemics in order to secure their organizational unity. Being more Sudanese and pragmatic, the Islamic movement survived many crisis, and eventually ruled the Sudan after it praticipated, in a way other , in all different regimes since 1977.

The Sudanese Islamic movement has attained a very distinguished position among the other Islamic movements in the Arab world . Though the Sudanese movement is relatively new compared with the Egyptian , it the is highly evaluated for its success in the arena of politics . This assessment is based on its political achievements within an optimal span of time ( less than three decades ) and with the minimum loses in lives , cadres and capabilities .

The Islamists in their strife for the accomplishment of their goal have to pass through certain stages .Turabi suggests the following typol-

ogy to trace the development of the Islamic movements :

1. Stage of dawh or propagation of the faith , in which Islam is not more than a genral current in the community.
- 2 . Tanzim or organization stage in which Islam is embodied in an organized form and people will work collectively and induce other for Islam .
- 3 . The stage in which the Jama'a or community will be evolved into an effective and active movement ( haraka ) in the society with clear - cut priorities and means to implement reformation and political change.
- 4 .The stage of sucession of God on earth (Istikhlaf) and empowerment ( tamakun ) , by which the movement realizes its objectives (6) .

Ghanoushi traces the same content of the previous classification with some modification and elaboration ; as follows :

- a ) stage of the call or nascent movement , and this is the case in most Arab countries ,
  - b) the movement as an ongoing political opposition in a preparatory period for exercising the duties of ruling in the future either in coalition with other political forces or independently ,
  - c) finally , the movement as an stage and exemplified by the Sudan (7)
- This shows how the Islamists regard the Sudan's model with great admiration as it represents the climax of the movements development .

## **Sudanese Islamist's Discourse**

The Sudanese Islamic Movement as represented by National Islamic Front , is more activist than intellectualist . Ideology is dominant in its discourse as its more concerned with the mobilization of the masses or



sometimes the mobs. The NIF is not inclined to interpret its world view and concepts in analytical or scientific way . It is common among the Islamic movement that , the Islamist writers are more effective and illuminating in understanding the " truth " which includes the individual , society and absolute . The Quran is their sole source of knowledge and contains the answers for any question or problem . In the present time the Muslims as a whole are living a crisis of accomodating their teaching with the new challenges of technological and social change . The Islamists resort to Quran to find security and meaning , but sometimes the holy text may let them down when they don't find explanation for new phenomerna . At this point the Islamist discourse constructs its analytical means on the concept of tajdid i.e . renewal of the true faith . Al - Turabi is one of the most important theoreticians of tajdid . ( 8 )

The main concept of the Islamic discourse is the idea of renewal which is used in many different terms such as : revival , awakening , renaissance resurrection etc . All these terms lead to one meaning : how to adapt what is original and historical i.e. . Quran to the modern ways of life . Turabi expresses this dilemma iu a very intelligent way : " the basic doctrine in Islam is one that unites the relativity of human existence to the absoluteness of the divine ( ... ) Islam as , a divine word is the eternal embodiment of the truth , goodness and right . But , as message , it is addressed to man in history ." (9)

Turabi , NIF leader , is an exceptional ideologist and tactician who utilized his Islamic and western cultures , and he is a revivalist or renewalist in politics rather than in religion . It is very obvious in his writings that he is more interested in political issues than in religious polemics . Turabi's differentiations in his writings is between religion ( *din* )

and religiosity ( tadayun ) , and renewal is possible in the latter because religion is eternal and viable for all times and places . Religiosity , according to his perspective , is not confined to the known religious duties or furud , or the five pillars of Islam but it includes the establishment of an Islamic state that implements shari'ia or God's law . (10)

The concept of Islamic state is not different in its essence from theocracy , though the Islamists repudiate the comparison by stating that Islam has know no clergy with a hierarchical system . This justification is tenuous , we find religious hierarchy in Islam represented by ulama , religious scholars , who are very influential and played great roles in the islamic history . The absence of a Pope or council of churches does not mean that there is no religious establishment which exercises authority and control over all the aspects of the muslims' lives , for example , fatwa ( or legal opinion ) has a powerful moral role .

The Islamists prefer generalization in their programmes and ideology and regard it more practical and useful in mobilizing and recruiting the people . The Islamist ideology is based on trial and error as a result of their persisting strive to find viable authority for explaining the new phenomena and happenings . The Islamists are trying to make their policies sound and acceptable by giving them more religious and ethical content based on Quran and at the same time to be modern .

Turabi affirmed this characteristic of modernity in the Islamic movements especially NIF and its members : "Most of them are modernist movements because they are led by elites , their thought is generally liberal " .(11 ) He rejects the term fundamentalism if it means to return back to the traditional but original meaning of the Islam ; when Turabi was asked about : what is fundamentalism , he answered : " Actually ,

the term has no correspondence in islamic languages , or in Arabic in particular . The term was used to describe a Christian phenomenon here after the war , a tendency of being literally attached to scripture ; in the Islamic context this movement , the closest analogy to the phenomenon that we are describing is perhaps the renaissance in Europe , a whole intellectual renewal which ultimately seeks to translate into social reform , active social reform , as opposed to the dormancy ..... so the term is rather misleading term in the sense that it describes a phenomenon which is very liberal , very progressive and forward-looking. "

This tendency is not uncommon among the islamists, because they consider fundamentalism as a whole : " is modern in that it attempts to reconstruct the fundamentals of an ideational system in modern society in accordance with political and ideological positions taken in relation to current issues and discourse " .(12) Turabi succeeded in providing his party with a very effective politico - religious device which enabled the Islamists to justify or rationalize the different critical and controversial political positions and practices . He has many writings about he called "fiqh al-darura " or jurisprudence of necessity . This new fiqh is in fact a pragmatic ijtihaad or an independent and authoritative interpretation in Islamic law and thought . It depends on a rule which gives priority to common weal or maslaha , and it adopts a motto that says : " necessity knows no law or rule " . Some critics considers that this fiqh frees the Islamists from any fixed obligations and may lead to opportunism or Machiavellianism because it very elastic and open . Turabi used also terms such as : stage's fiqh or reality or status quo fiqh , all these are manipulated to explain the changing and flexible positions of the Islamists when involved in politics . He applied this fiqh when he dissolved the Na-

tional front-which opposed Numayri and because part of the regime after 1977 . He called this step the fight of alliance " . (13) According to this interpretation he supported the execution of Mahmoud Taha , the leader of Jamhuriyn Party ; in January 1985 ; and later Turabi condemned the execution . The criterion of evaluation for the Islamists practices or understanding is what Turabi called qasb or achievement which means the advantage the movement acquires when makes a decision , and this a pragmatic position per se . It is not accurate to describe the NIF members as fundamentalists , because the true fundamentalists depart from Quran and sunna to form a world view . While the Islamic movement in the Sudan refers to the state of things as they are, and descend from the holy text to reality and not vice versa .

## The Organizational Development Of The National Islamic Front

More than four decades ago the Islamic Movement established its cells among the students in the higher schools . It gave that petty organization a patriarchial name - usra i.e. family , and the movement was confined to the educated groups only without being able to spread among the followers of the traditonal religious sects . The Islamic Movement was aware of its common religious ground with the Umma Party , Democratic Unionist party and other non- politically organizaed sects . The Islamists decided in their confernce in 1954 to work as a front calling for the implementation of the Islamic constitution or shari'a law . They consider the shari'a as a very convincing and simple issue for attracting the masses , and it is a practical approach in the northern Sudanese communities because it would gather all those of religious tendencies . The Islamists avoided taking the name of 'Muslim Brothers ' for their party and the organizational affiliation to Muslim Brothers remained undeclared . When the Islamists participated in the election after the uprise of October 1964 ,they emerged under the name of Islamic Charter Front (ICF) . It recruited its membership from a wide religious spectrum with different backgrounds : some ulama , a few Sufi figures , revivalist groups such as Wahhabi inclined Ansar al - sunna , but the activits core was mainly an the elite compromising lawyers , teachers and professionals (14) .

The Islamic movement in the Sudan adopted many techniques and methods of organization which are originally used by the communists . The Islamists justified this position by referring to the tradition that advised the Muslims to know their enemies . This is one of the reasons that

make us hesitant in calling the Islamists by the name ' fundamentalist ' . This term is not an exact descriptive category for defining the Sudanese Islamists . On the other hand , the Islamic movement has chosen the strategy of organizing itself in broad front . In all conditions and under the different names , the movement remained intact . But this unity reflects the absence of dialogue and discussion inside the organization, notwithstanding the controversial decision made during different stages , e.g. alliance with Numairy and the imposition of September 1983 laws . This strategy of acting as a front enabled the Islamists to establish a unified party that survived crisis and factioning throughout their political history . As a front, manouvering is possible , decisions are compromising and ideas are open and elastic .

The Islamists played effectively their role as a counter militant elite against the communists . To achieve this objective the Islamists concluded many alliances and agreements with the traditional sectarian parties , consequently they penetrated the main parties . They overestimated the communist danger in the Sudan to divert the political parties from more crucial issues such as : national unity , economic development ; and distribution of power and material resources . Turabi explained this tactic : " We compelled the parties to accept our agenda when we allied with them in a campaign for Islamic constitution . We don't want to threaten their existence but we encroached them in Islam and to accept its call . " (15) After Numairy's coup in May 1969 , the Islamists organized the opposition against him after they coordinated with the Umma Party when they reconciled with Numairy in 1977 , they initiated their rise to power . As the Islamist historian , Makki, states:"the Muslim Brothers made good use of the new situation , unlike al - Mahdi

who was hesitant and missed his chance by miscalculating till he left in December 1977 . The Islamists moved actively among its base especially in mobilizing the students and Turabi held an important post in the Sudan Socialist party (SSP) and many of their cadres participated in the government and the party . "(16)

This was a turning point in the long conflict within the movement between two currents . One which called for the changing of the society and the individuals first before establishing an Islamic state or implementing Shari 'a law ; and they were regarded as evolutionist or gradualist or pedagogist . The other current may be called revolutionist or coupist because its advocates prefer to start from seizing political power and then impose their doctrines to create an Islamic society and state from above. They justify this way by referring to a religious precept that says : " god spreads by power what cannot be spread by Quran " , and that means for some Islamists to consider the seizure of political power as a prerequisite for any change and they will reject or minimize the efficacy of the peaceful means . The second group is dominant in the movement during the last three decades and directed all its activities ; and the Sudanese Islamic movement is overpoliticalized as a result of the ' revolutionist ' supramacy in the internal conflict . The coupist wing prevailed in the Sudan because the Islamists - like the Communists - believed that as small parties , they could never govern through general election or what they call Westminster democracy . As elitist parties they are active among students who might join the military college believing in the ideas they acquired in the schools and institutes . Also the Islamists felt powerful during the period which they called : the transition from resistance to participation ( 1977 - 85 ) . After the establishment of Faisal Islamic Bank in 1977 , the Islamists began to compete the traditional bour-

geoisie which monopolized the agricultural and commercial sectors . The Saudi capital invested in the Sudanese economy and the Saudis showed a great interest in the internal affairs of the Sudan . Prince Mohammed al-Faisal sponsored the rapprochement between the regime and the opposing National Front . (17) The growth of the Islamist in the business strengthened the coupist wing because the new parasitic bourgeoisie needed the support of the political and administrative powers . The Islamists are now dominant in the field of banking after they controlled many so - called Islamic banks .

The National Islamic front compromised a wide membership that included a substantial part of the Sudanese intelligentsia and modern social forces . The last election of 1986 showed this development , the Islamists won 28 seats in the geographical constituencies compared with two seats in 1968 election , from which 13 seats were in the capital and urban centres . The Islamists won the absolute majority of the seats allotted for the higher schools graduates - according to the election laws . (18) During the sixties the intelligentsia formed the core of the Islamic movement , but the movement widened its membership from different strata . It is inadequate to analyse the Islamic movement by applying strict class criterion and socio economic methods . The cultural factor is very important in analysing and understanding the Islamic phenomenon because it is trans - class . The Islamic parties recruit its membership from different - and sometime contradictory strata and classes , as we find capitalists and workers living below the poverty line joining the same organization or party .

The political changes have a great impact on the membership . During Numeiry's regime the student's percentage fell from 15 % of the whole



members in 1969 to only 6 % in 1977 . (19) In a traditional society like the Sudan the class differences are not clear - cut , as the division of labour is simple and limited .

## Strategy for Power

The Islamic movement adopted a very tight organization which constitutes active, dedicated and persisting elements . The rise of the NIF is not a part of the general spread of Islamic fundamentalism and does not reflect the reality of the Sudan . Some people believe that the NIF represents a small , well organized and generously funded group that is more enigmatic than it is reflective of the Sudanese Muslim community and its political aspirations . (20)

The NIF followed a strategy of broad organization and decentralization ; and its executive bureau declared the establishment of regional and central apparatus for consultation and executive functions . The NIF has specialized bureaus for occupational and professional groups . There are councils responsible for economic and financial matters ; political and foreign affairs . Some councils were formed for planning , co-ordination , training and following up . The NIF is pioneer among Islamists in organizing women and two of them were elected as parliament members in 1986 , (21) The aim of the sophisticated organization is " to stretch the membership and to make its conditions easier . " (22)

The Islamists were active in many other organizations which were apparently independent or national . The NIF infiltrated cultural associations that compromise intellectuals with different Islamic backgrounds and tendencies . A good example was the Society for Islamic

Culture and Thought that included academics who were related to that field by their teaching specialization only . Such organizations emerged all over the Sudan , e.g. in el - Fasher and Senner . (23) the NIF activities were diverse and comprehensive , "there has been concerted efforts to organize and use social and artistic groups in the areas of public services such as conducting marriage ceremonies and forming musical and theatrical bands ." (24) the NIF great success was in the field of mass - media , many party's members were trained in USA and now are controlling the Ministry of Information .in (1986-89)the NIF had five newspapers i.e. al- raya, al-wan , msaira ,al - Sudan and al - usbu; and manipulated other newspapers to support its agenda .The most great and effective infiltration of the Islamists was in the army , from the very beginning they formed their cells within the army in mid - fifties following the advice of their Egyptian colleagues i.e. Muslim Brothers. Their first general secretary , Rashid al - Tahir , was involved in coup attempt in November 1959 . (25) When Numeiri declared Islamic laws in 1983 , the Islamists inspired the idea of Islamization of the army . The officers were subject to courses in Islam as a belief and culture at the Islamic African institute in Khartoum . Most members of the present ruling Revolutionary Command Council of National Salvation ( RCC - NS ) .attended the courses .

After 1985 the NIF was openly active among the army under the pretext of supporting it in the " battle against the nation's enemies " the Islamists mean the southerners .The NIF formed an organization called : "Society for Defense of the homeland and belief , " to raise funds for the armed forces . In 1989 the NIF elements were occupying extremely important minor posts in the army and they were to have good information about the army and its policies and views , One of the NIF members was responsible for the gener-

al commander's bureau ; and he provided the NIF with information and the same time misled his commanders . The NIF made use of the coup's atmosphere that prevailed after the army's memorandum in February 1989 , to execute their plot for seizing power .

## From Slogans To Practice The Internal Policies Of The Islamic Regime

The NIF coined anew term to describe its regime in the Sudan , and to give its ideology and practices a positiv impression . The Islamists do not mention the old epithets such as Islamic state or Shari'a state or September laws . The common term used nowadays is : "Our cultural alternative " , (Khayaruna al - hadari). They explain this term by saying that the Sudan under the Islamists ' rule should have its "independent way' in economic , culture and above its own model of democracy or political philosophy . They repeatedly assert that the Sudan has gained its 'independent decision' which is not imposed from any external power or block .

The official propaganda circulates the claim that Sudan's regional and international relations are worsened , because the world's hegemony power ; especially the USA and the West, will not allow the Sudan to be independent by applying shari'a and to defy the new world system in which they have a free hand to predestinate every issue in this globe . The Islamists propagate that the word is witnessing a new crusade in different historical conditions but the objectives are the same that is to supress the

Muslims and exploit them to the Western interests .

The so-called 'our cultural alternative ' or the ' independent decision ' is a new version for the Libyan 'third international theory' or the third way ideology prevailed among some Islamists and Nationalists during the cold war era . The third ways ideology is constructed on the rejection of the principles of capitalism and Marxism or communism ; this position is now replaced by the rejection of secularization , a vague term that embraces many non- religious ideas and systems . There is no a clear - cut definition for a secular state but the concept is widely used in many respects . It seems that the only criterion is the strict implementation of Shri'a law and the official relationship with the local islamic movement if it is positive or not . In fact , the third way or the rejection of ' secularism ' is an attempt to reinforce the Islamic societies against the ongoing trends of modernization that have been taking place since the beginnings of this century . By failing to accomodate with the new , overwhelming changes ; the Muslim world experiences a serious crisis situation . The Islamic movements are logical consequences of this crisis - situation .

The Sudanese Islamic experience when faced with new issues , showed how backward are the Islamists in understanding their own religion in different conditions . their response is not equivalent to the challenges and it is not suffice to say that Quran is comprehensive . The Islamists should provide a new reinterpretation ( ta' wil )and creative hermeneutic understanding for the scripture . Paradoxical situation emerges when such requirements are accomplished , because new interpretation of Quran is a modernization or secularization process which Islamists vehemently condemn . In the Sudan some new issues confronted the Islamists and expose the Islamists contractions and the dichotomy .

## a : ON DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Islamic movements , in general , have no genuine contribution in the political thought ; because they usually attempt to demonstrate themselves as a reaction to the Western civilization or vis - a - vis the other . In any discussions concerning modern idea , concepts and issues , the Islamists begin with the negation by saying that Islam is not against so, and so without stating what Islam originated or established in that respect . For they say that example , Islam is not against democracy , or Islam has preceded the Western democracy and the UN Human Rights convention . Such statements are anachronism , because the mentioned concepts and ideas are products of specific socio - economic situations during certain historical epochs . But some Islamists are more realistic when they acknowledge that these concepts are unknown in the Islamic context by their content . Consequently , they claim that the Islamic concept shura or consultation is equivalent to democracy ; or 'adala ijtima'ya or social justice means socialism .

I think that democracy is a cardinal question in the Islamic discourse and practice , as the Islamists reassert that Islam preceded all the human political systems in calling for democracy and implementing it in daily life and governing . We have to clarify two questions : Is shura as an idea and institution equivalent to democracy ? What is the position of democracy and human rights in the agenda of the contemporary Islamic movements ?

Firstly , shura means consultation and does not include participation in decision-making and executive responsibilities ; and above all it has noth-

ing to do with the succession process or the right to elect or depose rulers .

The Islamic movements and Muslim ulamas are still unable to give an authoritative religious answer to the question : is shura obligatory or not ? Those who deem shura as optional have persuasive arguments based on historical precedents . Shura is supposed to be monitored by a small group , ahl al-hall wa al-aqd , literally means those who have the right to untie and tie . Such group was chosen by certain person or clique , and acted as consultive council or qualified electors ; but the criteria of their eligibility remained debatable . Shura does not mean democracy because there is a great difficulty in reconciling between the absolute divine principle of hakimiya or God's sovereignty or God's law and the rule of the people. The concept of Islamic state is not different in its essence from theocracy , though the Islamists repudiate the comparison by stating that Islam has known no clergy with a hierarchical system . This justification is tenuous , we find religious hierarchy in Islam represented by ulama , who are very influential and played great roles in the Islamic history . The absence of a Pope or council of churches does not mean that there is no religious establishment which exercises authority and control over all the aspects of the Muslims' lives , for example , fatwa or the religious opinion has a powerful moral role .

Turabi , the NIF leader , opposes western democracy to Islamic shura , the former is practiced in most cases in irreligious context because the Westerners think that religious rule has an unopposed sanctity . Turabi according to Turabi there is no place in the Islam for a popular rule which is separate from faith or iman . He considers any diversion of democracy from its religious framework to utterly political one ' is an explicit apostasy and a kind of polytheism ( shirk ) in which the will of God is made

equal to that of man ' . He stresses on the religious aspect of any democracy in order to guarantee that the personal freedom will not transgress the religious prohibitions or any restriction of faith in thought or behaviour . Secondly , the position of democracy and human rights is second to the unity of the umma ( Islamic nation or community ) which is among the Islamist ' priorities . In Islamist ideology pluralism in ideas and political affiliations threatens the Islamic unity and divides the Muslim ' rank . Prophet Muhammed and Islamic traditions warned against disunity and discord or fitnah , and maintained that a year of injustice rule is better than an hour of discord or chaos . There is a widely known tradition that says : " My nation will divide in more than seventy faction , all will go to hell except one " . For the reason if democracy or pluralism contradicted unity , the former should be eliminated .(26)

The Sudan's experience is a practical one , when the Islamists led a military coup in June 1989 against the elected government and banned the political parties and trade unions . All this is in accordance with their ideology and their political position , they think that pluralism has turned into ' chaos and inability ' . In fact the Sudanese experience of democracy was not ideal , because the pluralism became a two parties monopoly i.e. Umma and democratic Unionist parties . It was a sectarian system divided between the two parties to serve their interests , and corruption was widespread practice , and nepotism was a common rule in government administration . Such defects didn't justify the abolition of democracy and reforma-

tion might have been effective and rational . But the Islamists played the defects and malfunction up to mobilize or neutralize many people whowere reluctant to defend that regime . The masses remained indifferent in state of ' wait and see ' .



The Islamists puport that the coup of June 1989 had saved the Sudan from falling into anarchy or ' Lebanonization ' . They gave their movement the name of ' National Salvation ' which connotes religious and political meanings . The NIF , being a small party which scored 725,584 votes in 1986 election in a country with a population of more than 25 millions ; it is not easy for it to rule alone a recalcitrant country like the Sudan . The Islamists resorted to oppression and corecion ; and violated all the basic human rights in order to intimidate the people . The NIF's regime was condemned by many regional and international organizations , as stated in reports of Amnesty interntional (1993) , Africa watch , Arab Lawyers union , Lawyers Committee for Human Rights , Article 19- The interntional Center Against Censorship ( April 1992 ) and the Sudan Human Rights Organization ( SHRO ) . The Third Committee of the UN General Assembly on Social and Humanitarian Issues approved a resolution on Sudan last December 1992 by overwhelming vote - 102 for , seven against and 27 abstentions ; expressing international concern over the Sudan human rights situation . In March 1993 , the UN Commission on Human Rights based in Geneva appointed an special rapporteur to report on human rights situation in Sudan .

The Islamists have controversial arguments and they address the question of human rights and democracy from a different standpoint . They think that economic development or national unity could be more important than democracy ; or act as alternative for them . They consider that pluralism or multi-party system does not lead to democracy ; and it is not a good means for achieving participation in the third world and

Islamic societies . The Islamists believe that the political parties are not prerequisite for democracy and that ' the people's committees ' can replace the parties and function in a more effective manner .

The chairman of RCC , General al-Bashir , reacted to the international protest against human rights violations in the Sudan , by saying that Sudan would turn a deaf ear to any condemnations adopted by any forum . He asserted that Sudan and the Arab and Islamic world's enemies would not be pleased with the victories of the Sudanese people and therefore they have begun to unleash baseless rumours based on unfounded facts . (27) The regime organized a conference on human rights in Islam in Khartoum , during January 1993 ; in which the participants rejected the condemnations and described that as a ' conspiracy against the Islamic orientation of the Sudan , what the enemies condemn was not the violations of human rights but the implementation of shari'a in the Sudan ' . (28) Turabi accused Amnesty International as a " biased organization not neutral , a western institution that sides the western conception of laws and punishments , and does not believe in Islamic laws and reject them categorically (29) . During the international conference on human rights held in Vienna in mid June 1993 ; the Sudanese delegation expressed its reservation in the discussion demanding that the particularity and specificity of different cultures should be considered .

The Islamists failed till now to reach a compromise between pluralism and the absolute belief which leads unconditionally to intolerance . Relativity is unknown in the religious thought , as a result it is not probable to be a fundamentalist and democratic or tolerant at the same time . The NIF regime rules as one party religious populism establishing a totalitarian state based on total Islamization by force . The Islamist's call for the delegation of the state's functions to the society , sounds very demo-

cratic at its face value . It seems as if it means more participation in the political and administrative processes . In fact this is an strategy for the monopoly of power by the Islamic elements as it was practiced by the Communist party members in the Eastern block before its fall . In the Sudan there is duality and discrepancy between the governmental and popular institutions and organizations . We have good examples in the army and the popular defence forces or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the International Popular Friendship Council . I think this division of labour is intentionally created to obscure the responsibility and consequence of any decision .

#### **b : ON ECONOMY :**

The Islamists claimed that they are going to introduce a new economic system that can avoid the pitfalls of both the capitalist and socialist systems . The Islamic economic system is supposed to achieve this goal by referring to the fundamentals of Islam as revealed in the Quran and mentioned or practiced by the Prophet . The Islamic economic system has main features by which we differentiate it from the other systems , such as " that individuals are guided in their economic decisions by a set of behavior norms , ostensibly derived from the Quran and the Suna ' , and to impose zakat or religious taxes , and the prohibition of interest . (30)

The Islamists give new interpretations for Quranic verses so as to justify their quasi-capitalist policies or the free market economy . Values of individualism , competition and achievement have a close connection with Quranic concept of khilafa i.e. that the individuals manage the property and wealth as God's trustees . (31) What the Islamists call Islamic economy is a primitive version of capitalism in which they are " ... holding the Quran in one hand and the economic theories of Milton Friedman in the other trying to wed unbridled capitalism to militant Islam . " (32) They advocate free market or open door economic policy , but at the same time they rejected any liberalization in politics or in culture or social life . Such position is acceptable among the Islamists as they normally separate what is material from the spiritual .

In a totalitarian regime the free market economy is a means by which the interests of a certain group are officially protected and sustained . The present privatization process imposed by the NIF regime enabled the Islamist businessmen to monopolize the Sudanese market . When the government initiated the sale of the state enterprises , the NIF supporters were the most privileged . It is clear that the privatization is not aiming at achieving economic reform but to give the NIF absolute control over the economic and political spheres in the Sudan . As there is no economic feasibility in selling most of the enterprises especially those which were making profits e . g . Sudan Telecommunications Public Corporation or Duty Free Shops Corporation . Also the selling prices were extremely low , for example , the Blue Nile Tannery was sold to a NIF leader for S L 20 million . This price included buildings and machinery ; and the company had S L 17 million worth of stock . (33) The regional and international allies of the NIF have also benefited from privatization , e . g . The Baraka Group has been directly or indirectly involved in the purchase of some enterprises in textile and transportation industries ; and the NIF members acted as brokers . (34)

The Islamists ' penetration of the banking sector can be dated with the establishment of Faisal Islamic Bank in 1978 through special decree by president Numayri immediately after the National Reconciliation agreement by which the Muslim Brothers took part in the government . During the last years the Islamists realized that the economics has the decisive role in their struggle for political power . They succeeded in strengthening their economic and financial bases ; and by seizing power in June 1989 they benefited greatly from the banking facilities so as to monopolize the economy and to disqualify non-NIF businessmen from economic competition.. Also the access to trade licenses from ministry of commerce is a sole right for NIF cadres .

The economic programme declared by the Sudanese ruling Islamists claimed that they will present an Islamic model which should be followed by other nations . The Islamists outside the Sudan adopted this claim and they are defending that economic policy which will be a substantial example of Islamic economy . (35) The economic programme of NIF regime is considered as an important aspect of the Islamic solution , and for this reason it should achieve independence , integrity and the specificity of Islam . The main pillar of the Islamic economic programme is self-sufficiency in food supply and industries . The regime raised the slogan of : " We eat from what we grow and we dress from what we manufacture . " The other objective of the programme is to disassociate the Sudanese economy from the western economic hegemony exercised by international institutions such as : the world Bank and IMF . The NIF regime is facing the challenge of proving the validity of the so-called Islamic economy in the modern times . On the local level the Islamists should achieve development in accordance with Islamic teachings and slogans , that means to descend from ideals and ideologies to practice and reality . The Sudanese experience has many dimensions and consequences on different levels .

Most of the Sudanese economists think that the present NIF economic salvation programme is a typical application for the structural adjustment programme ( SAP ) which is prescribed by IMF . It is not easy for the Islamists to condemn the western institutions while they are executing all the western plans and following foreign mechanisms . The NIF justified June ' 89 coup when they promised to reform the economy by reducing the huge deficit , controlling the inflation and increasing the government revenues ; above all to attain a balanced development and achieve a high growth rate .

The outcome of the ' Islamization ' of the Sudanese economy is a real disaster , and it gives a catastrophic model for development . For example , the devaluation of the national currency reached unpredictable level ; when the NIF came to power the Sudanese pound rate was : \$ 1 = LS 12 , now it is : \$ 1 = LS 300 through legal channels , and LS 370 in illegal transactions . At the same time the value of exports declined from \$ 527 m . in 1978 / 79 to \$ 343 in 1990 / 91 . The value of imports has increased from \$ 1,137.9 m . to 1535.0 during the same period ; and the deficit has increased from \$ 610.9 m to \$ 1,192 m . in 190 / 91 .

The NIF economic policies have many negative effects on the Sudanese economy such as : cuts in government expenditure , high taxation , removal of subsidies , ' liberalization ' of prices and foreign trade , increase of government credit from central bank and failure to control money supply . The rate of inflation increased to 2660 % in 1991 if we consider 1981 / 82 as equal to 100 ; and the IMF expert expect that the inflation would be running at an annual rate of 55 - 60 % . (36) The standard of living in the Sudan has seriously deteriorated since 1989 . The employees and workers are suffering from low wages and high prices . The following table shows some indices : (37) ( in pounds )

Commodity	Unit	Price 1989	Price July 1992	Price October 1993
Bread	1	.15 Piasters	L 6 Piasters	-
Sugar	Pound	L 1.25	L 60	-
Meat	Kilo	L 1.20	L 300	L 650
Charcoal	Sack	L 25	L 1200	L 2000
Petrol	Gallon	L 10	L 110	L 400
Gazoline	Gallon	3.75	110	300

The trade unions which were nominated by the regime in 1989 protested against the inflation the scarcity of good , and the high cost of living . The regime acknowledged for the first time that ' there were some difficulties and the poor classes are suffering from the negtive effects of the economic reform programme ' . (38 ) For the first time there are discussions and call for revising or amending the economic programme among different groups - extending from workers and farmers unions to businessmen syndicate . The criticism became intensive and open . The masses demonstrated during last October e . g . Omdurman Medani , Obeid and Gedarif ; but they were harshly suppressed . Though the NIF regime went much farther than IMF prescription , the later decided to suspend Sudan membership as it failed to meet the payment of the due debits of about 1,5 billion dollars . ( 39)

The Islamic slogans in economy are short - lived , because after the verbalism and the Islamists are now faced with a hungry and suffering people . The Islamists are divided between ideology and reality . For example , Hamdy , Finance Minister , asserted that the Sudan would try to develop its relations with the World Bank by following liberalization policies . ( 40 ) At the same time al - Turabi gave different explanation by assuring that : " Sudan with its Islamic power was able to liberalize its economy from every thing by having free market , " and added : " Sudan exports to the world not only its food surplus but it exports also cultural and civilization food ( gidha hadari ) ! " (41 )

#### c : NATIONAL UNITY :

The Sudanese experience is faced by the question of the status of non-Muslims in an Islamic state . As a sycretistic ideology , fundamentalism in the modern time is manuevering to address the new question in an acceptable way for many parties and different groups . Sometime , the Islamists have deliberately or not - a double - standard position when they try to compromise . The Islamists in the Sudan claim that the non- Muslim Sudanese have equal rights as citizen in their homeland . But the Islamists ' practices in the civil war and the racial cleansing in the Nubia Mountains refute their claims .

The Islamists - according to resent reports concentrated thier Islami- zation policy in Nubia Mountains region which is regarded as an obstacle for the Islamic design in the northern Sund . The region is subject to special treatment which has included : " the confiscation of land , the ev- iction of whole communities the destruction of entire villages , the en-

slavement of children and the torture and murder of Nuba people regardless of age or sex . ( <sup>42</sup> ) This campaign is led by Arab tribes ' militia or popular Defence Forces in south Kordofan . The NIF regime declared a holy war or jihad on January 7 , 1992 in the Nuba Mountains . The Sudan Human Rights Organization ( SHRO ) was able to gather film evidence of the regime ' s atrocities . The film was premiered at the British Houses of Parliament on 18 May 1992 . ( <sup>43</sup> ) The British House of Lords debated on 8 December 1992 , the situation in the Sudan and roundly condemned the Khartoum regime ' s politics of ethnic cleansing in Southern Sudan , the Nuba Mountain and Darfur . ( <sup>44</sup> )

The membership and belongingness in the Islamic state are based on religious belief and not on the right of citizenship or nationality . The non-Muslims are called dhimmis, and they have to pay a poll tax known as jizyah .

This is applicable for Christians and Jews only , and that means the majority of the Sudaneses in southern and western parts of the country has no clear status in the Islamic state . This is a real predicament for the Islamists .

## FOREIGN POLICY AND EXTERNAL ROLE

Islamists believe that Islam is a universal call and every true Muslim is supposed to work assiduously to realize the establishment of the ' God ' s Sovereignty ' Islam , for them , is message sent from god through the prophet to proselytize and guid all humanity without exception . Consequently , Islam dose not recognize any political , geographical or racial boundaries . At this point the Islamists face the dilemma of being



citizen in a ' modern ' nation-state , and at the same time they belong to Islamic polity or community on the world level ( Ummah ) . Such situation is theoretically not contradictory , but when it comes to practice , many troubles and liabilities follow . In the present Sudan where the Islamists are now power , they have to encounter two main difficulties : firstly how to implement Islamic means i.e. institutions ? Secondly , how to accomodate the Islamic ideals with the international and regional realities ?

In the Sudan , the Islamists declare their solidarity with any Islamic movement in the Arab world or outside it .

as a result they indulged in troubles with other Arab countries and their relations worsened as they interfered in the internal affairs of the neighbouring states . But Halayib dispute , a location on Red Sea lies in the eastern frontiers between Egypt and the Sudan , gives a good example of the contradiction between practices and slogans . The Sudanese government and General Bashier attempt to be international Islamist and sincere nationalist at the same time . Sometimes they declare that in Islam there is no political frontiers between different Muslim groups or countries ; and for that reason the Sudan will avoid any conflict with Egypt concerning Halayib . At the same time the Sudanese Islamists emphasize on their national dignity and declare that they are ready to die as martyrs in defending their homeland against ' alien aggression . '

The Sudanese Islamists believe that their country has a great role which extends beyond ' the artificial boundaries set up by colonialism ' . giving the following analysis :

" Sudan , with its Arab north and black African south , is the right springboard (....) Sudan is seeking peace and opening its frontiers with

Libya , with Ethiopia , with chad and now it wants to do with Uganda " <sup>45</sup>  
 ( ). The NIF regime in Kartoum is very active in the Horn of Africa especially in Somalal , Kenya and East Africa . In Somal ' Land , the Islamic Relief Agencies are sometimes camouflage for political activities , and not only a humanitarian work . The Nif made use of such agencies the eighties in the Sudan during the drought and famine period , and what is called igatha or relief and aid , was a main factor in its advance in 1986 election . The new Islamic parties in the region are established under the auspices of the NIF's members woh are present as relief employees , and as preachers and teachers in the Islamic centres and schools . There are new parties such as : al-Itiha al-Islami ( Islamic Unity ) in Somalia and ogaden , Eritrea jihad organization and the Kenyan Islamic Party . This constitutes a foundation for the NIF's strategy in the region of forming what is called ' African Islamic Belt ' .

The NIF leader , Turabi , ambition is so great that the SAfrican Islamic belt represents only a part from a larger design . He established in April 1991 the Popular Arab - Islamic conference in during the inauguration in April 25 th 1991 , Turabi declared that the conference is a new platform for the Islamic movement and its allies from the nationalist and progressive forces . The conference according to Turabi - is a front against imperialism and foreign intervention in the Islamic world . He strives to institute an ' Islamintern ' which will replace the present International Muslim Brotherhood organization ( al - Tanzim al - Dawli ) ; and the official organizations e.g. Islamic conference organization ( ICO ) .

Sudan is a marginal country - geographically and politically ; and one of the most underdeveloped countries in the world . In spite of this fact

the Islamists believe that the Sudan could be an ideal example of Islamic state for other countries or for humanity as a whole . They acknowledge the Sudan's abilities , but at the same time they reiterate what they call ' radiation role ' which means that the achievements of the Islamic experience will be known to the neighbouring countries and attract them . The president of the military ruling council , General al-Bahir , wishes that the Sudan will be a model for the third world as the Medina was the case during the prophet Muhammed's time . ( <sup>46</sup> )

The Islamists argue that the world is in need for an spiritual leadership , and the Islamic movement is qualified to play this role . There is a dichotomy in their ideology between the spiritual and the material or between the idela and reality . Such thinking is a compensation for backwardness and solace for failure and frustrations ; as the Quran itself says that man's qualities are inseparable and can not be divided into material and spiritual . Such unrealistic and utopian thinking resulted in miscalculations and wrong judgments in internal and foreign policies .

## Conclusion

The Sudanese experience in which the NIF ruled the country is a good example for the difference between theory and practice in the Islamic ideology . What matters is not what the Islamists declare or promise , but what they actually realize and execute . For this reason we have to differentiate between the phases of the Islamic movements discourse . A movement in power differs basically from that in opposition or outlawed . The Islamists defend human rights when they are subject to suppression , but they don't condemn the violations when directed against other groups . I think that the Islamic movement can lead effective opposition and mobilize the masses against the governments and ruling elites ; but as rulers they will practice what they rejected before . We have horrible examples from Iran and Sudan and Pakistan under Zia al - haq . The Islamists pose right questions but give wrong answers to these questions . When they fail to solve problems they resort to metaphysical interpretation . In the Sudan when the NIF government suffered from economic crisis and international isolation ; some members in the National Council in a session during December 1991 suggested that they could turn to the Muslim Jinn (or demons ) for assistance <sup>(47)</sup> ( ) ! The lack of concrete and detailed programmes , rescued the Islamic movement from internal organizational conflicts , but at the same time deprived it from being capable of solving practical problems when it seizes power .

The NIF in the Sudan succeeded in seizing power because the ex-ruling elite and parties were corrupt and incapable . The NIF success resulted from the weakness of the other alternatives and not due to its own abilities . The Sudanese people was indifferent when the Islamic coup took

place as the political parties were diverted from their agenda declared before election 1986 . But the NIF regime , on the other hand , failed to realize its agenda declared in June 30 , 1989 which justified the coup . The Revolutionary Command Council of National Salvation promised to achieve the settlement of the southern Sudan question , a new economic reform and a balanced foreign relations . The regime is a great failure in this respect but it doesn't face any effective internal opposition . The NIF , though minority in number , proved to be capable than the majority parties . Oppression is great and comprehensive , but it is not possible to control a state by using force all the time . The challenge for NIF regime is how to broaden its base ? The Islamists reject the participation of the other parties , only as individuals . The regime is isolated but does not feel threatened , and proceeds in its programme of Islamization which could make any future change difficult . It gained new supporters by time like those made advantage of the " liberalization " of economy .

The present real danger lies in the failure of the economic policies , and protest is growing but unorganized . Hunger cannot be suppressed by religious slogans or ideology . The regime is aware of this danger but it has no realistic solutions unless it revised its policies of suppression inside the country and confrontation in foreign relations . Many currents are conflicting within the regime ; the more militant second man of NIF , Osman Taha was appointed in July 1993 as a minister for " social planning " . But at the same time , the wing that calls for better relations with Egypt and the west , succeeded in sending high delegation for consultation in Cairo . The unity of NIF is faced with many challenges for the first time as the Islamists are expected to build a new state that satisfies the promises . The

Islamic movement has to be more realistic and not to read the reality by the eyes of the dead i.e. early Islamic history . Conciliation is rejected by all parts in the Sudan . The National Democratic Alliance ( NDA ) which compromises all the banned political parties , trade unions and professional syndicates , lead the opposition in more active way especially after the ex-command of the Sudanese army before June 1989 declared itself as the only legitimate command and joined the NDA. In Spite of the NIF's ' purification ' of the armed forces , it is still unable to control and master the army ; because the lists of dismissal continued till now . Military confrontation is possible , bearing in mind that the cease fire between the regime and Sudan People Liberation Army ( SPLA ) is no more valid .

The debate in the official newspapers and National Assembly , shows that the NIF's grip is weakening . The international campaigning against the NIF regime violation of human right , made difficult for the regime to practice the same oppression of the early days of 1989 . The opposition is growing because the Sudanese people's interest are largely damaged by the policies of the regime which were implented in undemocratic conditions . The Sudanese people didn't take part in the decision-making , therefore didn't defend the policies . Any real salvation would be in genuine democracy as a principle ; then the Sudanese discuss its form and means .

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