Observatoire des Enjeux Politiques et Sécuritaires dans la Corne de l'Afrique

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Islam and political parties in Sudan: The National Islamic Front

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Abstract

The Islamic movement in Sudan was established in the early 1940s as a radical party with a rigid, conservative doctrine. The foundation of the Sudanese Islamic Movement was influenced by Hassan al-Banna, the initiator of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. Al-Banna's ideology was carried back to Sudan by Sudanese who had been studying in Egypt at the time and who began propagating this ideology in Sudanese universities once they returned home.
Yet, the Islamic Movement would soon open up to other influence. During its first four decades, it was heavily coined by the political work of Hassan al-Turabi, the leading ideologist in the process of renewing the movement in line with different political and social situations in Sudan. The Movement succeeded in mobilizing the Sudanese public to call for an Islamic constitution and Islamic rule, "Sharia". Gaining courage from this experience, the Sudanese Islamic Movement began working towards gaining wider social and political influence through organizational work.
The Islamic movement has had several names: the Islamic Constitution Front, the Islamic Charter Front, the National Islamic Front, the National Congress Party and its opposing Popular Congress Party after cleavage. On June 30 1989, the National Islamic Front supported the military officers under colonel Omar Hassan El-Bashir to replace the Sadig El- Mahadi government. The INF's ideology and political programme were implemented by president Bashir and his fellow officers, and Turabi and his colleagues soon became leading powers, until 1999 with the great cleavage happening. The INF divided in two, Turabi and his followers established a new party, the Popular Congress Party (PCP), whereas Bashir and his disciples remained the National Congress Party (NCP).

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to deepen our knowledge about the relation between Islam and political parties in Sudan. The study includes a short background to the roots of Islam in the Sudanese society and how Sudanese political parties, especially the Islamic National Front (INF) draw their current features from these origins.[1]

The Sudanese Islamic Movement first originated among Sudanese students in Egypt, where Hassan Al-Banna had founded the Muslim Brotherhood group. After they were introduced to the Brotherhood group and its Islamist thought in Egypt, Sudanese students returned back to their home country and spread the Brotherhood's ideology at Sudan's universities. Whereas there was no clear ideological difference between the Sudanese traditional parties, the Muslim Brotherhood Party and the SCP, they lied at the two ends of the spectrum in terms of their approaches to struggle. The British occupation of Sudan kept both parties away from political work until Sudan's independence in 1956, after which they appeared on the political arena and gained recognition. While the Brotherhood was absorbed in an ideological conflict with the SCP, the latter worked toward representing the modern and organized opposition forces in the country, coalescing with the national movement.

As to the Islamic Movement, it worked hard on the path of organizational activism to build its social and political influence. Throughout its history, the Sudanese Islamic Movement operated under different names – the Islamic Constitution Front, the Islamic Charter Front, the National Islamic Front, and finally the ruling National Congress Party (NCP), which is led by Sudan's president Omar Al Bashir and represented in the salvation government.

Two key moments of the movement occurred in 1985 when the movement organized as a political party, the National Islamic Front (NIF) and in 1989, when the NIF backed a military coup by General Omar al-Bashir. The NIF dissolved and reappeared in 1991 as the National Congress Party, later reorganized as the Popular National Congress (PNC). The mastermind behind the political, ideological, and organizational development of the movement has been Hassan al-Turabi. He has been the leading ideologist in the process of renewing the movement in line with different political and social situations in Sudan.

Source: maps Africa.com (The map of Sudan after secession of south Sudan in 2011)

The Brotherhood's transition from an ideological movement to a political party was associated with much pragmatism, which helped the Islamic Movement to become flexible enough to maintain its coherence and its position on the Sudanese political scene regardless of its political stances.

[1] The Islamic movement in Sudan has gone through a history of reform and renewal since its appearance in the early 1950s, it changed from social Islamic movement to Islamic charter front, lastly is National Congress party.

Brief history of Sudan

Sudan was a collection of small, independent kingdoms and principalities from the beginning of the Christian era until 1820-21, when Egypt conquered and unified the northern part of the country. However, apart from a few garrisons, neither the Egyptian nor the Mahdist state (1883-1898) managed to gain any effective control of the southern region. Southern Sudan remained an area of fragmented tribes.

The Mahadia revolution heritage of the Islamic state

A religious leader named Mohammad ibn Abdalla from the north of Sudan (Dongola town) proclaimed himself the Mahdi, or the "expected one," and began a religious crusade to unify the tribes in western and central Sudan. His followers took on the name "Ansars" (the followers). The Mahadia state system, which lasted from 1881-98, was based on the heritage of an Islamic state, the Funj Sultante in Sinnar. Between the fifteenth and eighteen centuries, Funj Sultante was governed by "holy families", who settled among the tribes, established their own Quran schools and gained both influence and wealth. The Sultante played an active role in the islamization of Sudan, the graduates of their schools became teachers in various parts of the country and tought people about Islam and the Suna. When the Imam (leader) Mohamed Ahmed Al Mahadi conquered Khartoum he divided the country into various states as it had been commonly done in countries that were governed by Islamic Sharia. Mahadism was modeled, to a large extent, on the historical heritage of the prophet and the four just caliphs (alkhulafa al- rashidieen), based on Quran and the Suna.[2] He also adopted Islamic Sharia values in framing legislation and holding consultation for resolving problems as well as relying on the general principles and regulations of Islamic rule. *(This part shall be elaborated in more detail in the next section on the history of modern Sudan.)* Taking advantage of the dissatisfaction resulting from Ottoman-Egyptian exploitation and maladministration, the Mahdi led a nationalist revolt culminating in the fall of Khartoum in 1885. The Mahdi died shortly thereafter, but his state survived until it was overwhelmed by an invading Anglo-Egyptian force under Lord Kitchener in 1898. While nominally administered jointly by Egypt and Britain, Britain exercised control, formulated policies, and supplied most of the top administrators.

Sudan Gains Independence

In February 1953, the United Kingdom and Egypt concluded an agreement providing for Sudanese self-government and self-determination. They established a small Legislative Assembly, which acted like a parliament for the country as first step towards independence. The transitional period towards independence began with the inauguration of the first parliament in 1954. With the consent of the British and Egyptian Governments, Sudan achieved independence on January 1, 1956, under a provisional constitution. The new constitution was silent on two crucial issues for southern leaders - the secular or Islamic character of the state and its federal or unitary structure. However, the Arab-led Khartoum government reneged on promises to southerners to create a federal system, which led to a mutiny by southern army officers, launching 17 years of civil war (1955-72).[3] From the historic background we can see how the modern Sudan was essentially shaped by the Mahadia, which itself derived from the Islamic funj Sultanate.

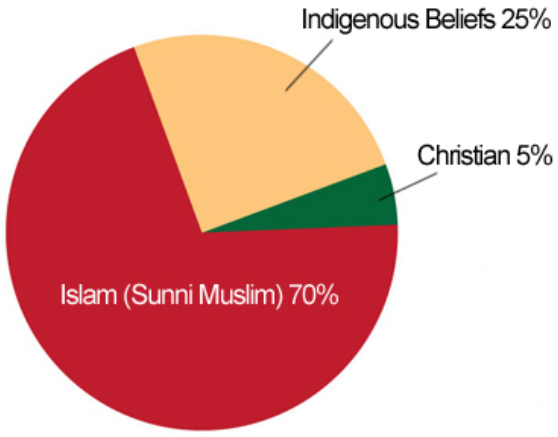
Islam in Sudan

The faith of Islam and its influence in the world in general and in Sudan in particular has often been complex and not easy to understand for any person outside the Sudanese context. Sudanese Muslims typically are "Sunni," the branch of Muslims whose ancestors believed that leadership following the death of Muhammad should be elected from those capable of filling the role. The word Sunni in Arabic means "one who follows the traditions of the Prophet." A unique characteristic of Sudan's Sunni Muslims is their formation, by the 16th century, one of the most important developments

[2] African history, A brief history of Sudan part1, US department of State.

[3] R. S. O'Fahey, Islam and Ethnicity in the Sudan, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 26, Fasc. 3 (Aug., 1996), pp. 258-267.

in Islam that gave form to the religious practices among Sudanese Muslims is the prevalence of Sufism. As practiced by the Sudanese, some of the salient aspects of Sufism were the emphasis on ecstatic and place-oriented rituals, which resonated with earlier traditional practices, and the transmission of religion from a master to his students, which is consistent with the traditional passing of authority and oral transmission of knowledge. The contrast that sometimes is made between Sufi and orthodox Sunni Islam, which prevails throughout most areas of the Muslim world, does not apply in the case of Sudan. The Sudanese Sufis, and especially the leading families among them which came to dominate the political scene, saw no contradiction between their Sufi practices and their adherence to Sunni Islam. That is to say, they were able to make a peaceful merger between "traditional" and "orthodox" practices.[4]



Source: www.sharia-in- Africa.net\pages\project\Sudan.php, religious, pluralistic society in Sudan

Sudan presents a religiously divided / pluralistic society. It is estimated that more than 70% of the Sudan's present population are Sunni Muslims. About 25% belong to indigenous African religions. Though each ethnic group has its own religious practices, they share some common linkages, such as the worship of a divine creator, the embodiment of the divine spirit in everyday life and surroundings, and the invisible world of ancestral spirits whose presence not only suggests the mystery and power of creation but also plays an important role in daily life. Before the secession of the South in 2011, about 19% of the Sudanese population were Christians. The Muslim population was concentrated in the north, while the majority of Christians and the practitioners of traditional indigenous religions lived in the south, in the Nuba Mountains and the Blue Nile areas in central Sudan. An exception to this spatial ordering are the long established Coptic Christians who share urban space with Muslims in the North. Growing adherence to Christianity is reported among Southerners, Nuba and other groups in Sudan. Such growth could have been at the expense of the traditional indigenous religions. Before the secession of the South at least two million southern Christians have settled in northern semi-urban areas as internally displaced people due to the civil war.[5]

The Political Scene in Modern Sudan

The Mahdist state (1881-98) can be regarded as a major factor in the decline of both Sufi and tribal leadership. However, one of the Sufi orders which emerged only in the nineteenth century but succeeded in establishing itself on a countrywide basis was the Khatmiyya (sometimes called Mirghaniyya, after the name of its founder). Since its establishment had coincided with the Sudan's first colonial period under Turko-Egyptian rule, it owed its success to a large extent to the alien rulers of Sudan with whom it collaborated in the years 1821-1885. Hence Mahdism, drawing a lot of support from its opposition to foreign rule, was anathema to Khatmi interests. The Khatmiyya leaders supported their Turkish patrons against the Mahdist revolt until the bitter end. After the Mahdist conquest of Khartoum in 1885 many of the Khatmiyya supporters, led by the Mirghani family, followed their masters into exile in Egypt. This antagonism between the supporters of Mahdism and those of the Khatmiyya, with its roots in the nineteenth century, only increased under Anglo-Egyptian rule in the years 1899-1955. The Khatmiyya returned to the Sudan as a major supporter of the new colonial regime. On the other hand, the Mahdists (or the Ansar – as the Mahdi's supporters

[4] United Methodist Women, *A sense of place*, Report about Sudan, 2014.
[5] Mohamed Omer Bashir, *Revaluation and Nationalism in the Sudan*, Rexcollings, London, 1977, p.157.

were called) were regarded by the Anglo-Egyptian rulers as a major threat to the wellbeing of Sudan and were severely prosecuted.[6] Hence, Sayyid Sir 'Ali al-Mirghani, leader of the Khatmiyya, became the first Sudanese notable to be made CMG – imperial word companion of the Most Distinguished Order at St. Michael street and George 1818 – by Queen Victoria and was regarded as trustworthy, while all other Sufi orders were regarded as superstitious and viewed with suspicion. Similarly, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi, the Mahdi's only surviving son, was kept under close surveillance by the British-headed Intelligence Department.

In the years after the outbreak of the First World War this relationship became even more complex. Turkey had joined the war as Germany's ally and had declared jihad on Great Britain and her allies. While the impact of this jihad was rather questionable, Great Britain nonetheless reacted by attempting to gain the support of as many Muslim leaders as possible. In Sudan this entailed a change of attitude towards Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi, who was allowed to tour the Sudan in order to organize the ex-Mahdists to support England. This was not difficult since the Mahdists had traditionally hated the Turks, whom they regarded as corrupting Islam. As a result of this change a new alliance of forces emerged in Sudan with Sayyid 'Ali and the Khatmiyya leaning towards Egypt, while Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahman and the Ansar regarded England as their natural ally against renewed Egyptian colonization of Sudan, under the pretext of 'the unity of the Nile valley'. The British rulers of Sudan were never really happy with this new alignment. They did not trust the Ansar, or the neo-Mahdists, since they feared their millenarianism and 'fanaticism'. Most of the British officials of Sudan never fully realized that under Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahman neo-Mahdism had gradually evolved into a non-violent modernizing force. They blamed the sayyid and the Ansar for their so-called 'sectarian' political ambitions whereby the northern Sudanese Muslims were politically split into two camps in line with their adherence to one of the two 'sects', the Khatmiyya or the Ansar. It was certainly true that the Ansar constituted a political force with a fundamentalist orientation, but it pursued its goal through non-violent measures. It is noteworthy that Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahman, striving for the recognition of neo-Mahdism as a legitimate political force, tried his utmost to abide by the rules laid down by his British overlords. He denounced the leaders of small-scale locally led revolts, who proclaimed themselves Mahdi or nabi 'Isa, as pretenders. These revolts mushroomed during the first quarter of the 20th century and were regarded by the British authorities as proof that the danger of violent fanaticism, connected with the Mahdist tradition, was far from over. The sayyid's denunciation of these revolts came to indicate his contempt for these pretenders and thus enabled him to emerge as a respectable leader. He strove to eradicate local expressions of millenarianism, since he feared they would compromise the Ansar and undermine their hold on the countryside. For it is significant to note that while the Khatmiyya's main base of support was in the towns, the Ansar enjoyed a paramount position in the countryside, and especially in the fertile Gezira and in western Sudan. Its supporters included tens of thousands of West African fulani who settled in Sudan during the years between the two world wars. The emergence of a young educated elite provided an area of keen competition between the two major Islamic movements. Both Sayyid 'Ali and Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahman realized the importance of gaining the support of the educated class. They undermined the attempts of these so-called graduates to form their own independent political organization.[7] **Thus the Graduates' Congress, founded in 1938, was soon split between pro-Mahdist and pro-Khatmi supporters and the major political parties which emerged in the 1940s were under the patronage of one or the other of the two sayyids**. Without this patronage it was impossible to gain large-scale support. The two sayyids have had great influence in the associations' internal elections through choosing to allege support to certain of the competing groups. At this time a paradigmatic shift occurred among the graduates, away from a non-political role, promoting cultural education and social activities to fiercer political activism. Through their involvement the two sayyids turned the Congress into yet another sectarian political arena, as the graduates divided into two groups: one supporting the Ansar of Umma Party and the other whom supported the Khatmiyya of the Unionist party. This association of the educated elite with the two major religious organizations brought about a unique phenomenon with a far-reaching impact on future developments. On the one hand, it created a situation where political decisions depended on the leadership of the major religious factions. On the other hand, it led those of the educated elite who were politically active but refused to join either of those two camps to form more radical groupings.

[6] *Op.cit*,p. 158.
[7] *Op.cit*,p. 160.

Thus during the Second World War the Communist Party of the Sudan was founded. It was an elitist movement whose support came from the urban intelligentsia in the towns of central northern Sudan. Their first political success was in 1953 when they won a hand slide victory in the elections to the Khartoum University Student Union (KUSU). In 1954 the Muslim Brotherhood came into being. Both were based on the young intelligentsia and on a complete rejection of the 'sectarian' nature of Sudanese politics. Neither of them ever achieved mass following, but both of them, with their highly educated and vocal leadership, succeeded in playing important roles on the sidelines of the Sudanese political scene and, at times, assumed a leading role as a result of their 'anti-sectarian' position. The two most notable examples of this role were provided under military rule. First, in 1964 both the Muslim Brothers and the Communists played a leading role in the Professionals' Front which heralded the downfall of Ibrahim 'Abud's military regime. The Professionals' Front embodied intelligentsia elites and educated from several backgrounds. The second example was under Numayri, when the Communists backed Numayri's 'Free Officers' in the early stages, since they also sought the destruction of the Ansar. When Ja'afar al-Numayri assumed power in May 1969 it seemed that the Sudan was heading for a secular-nationalist policy, with leftist leanings. The immediate goals of the new regime were, first, to destroy political sectarianism, and, second, to work out an acceptable solution to the southern problem which had involved the country in a civil war since 1955. The first task was tackled brutally on 27 March 1970 when Numayri ordered the bombardment of Aba Island, the Ansar stronghold in the White Nile, where thousands of Ansar were killed or wounded. Sayyid al-Hadi al-Mahdi, their spiritual leader, was killed in a later skirmish, while al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, the leader of the Ansar-dominated Umma party, was exiled to Egypt. But the following years were to prove that the destruction of the Ansar had failed completely. Between 1972 and 1976 they instigated several revolts. In late 1975, a military coup by Communist members of the armed forces, led by Brigadier Hassan Hussein, failed to remove Numayri from power. General Elbagir, Mummery's deputy, led a counter coup that brought Numayri back within few hours. Brigadier Osman was wounded and later court martialed and executed. In 1976, a force of one thousand insurgents under Sadiq al Mahdi, armed and trained by Libya, crossed the border. Numayri's change of policy happened in 1976 after this coup. He started to move away from Soviet influence and began to receive arms from the U.S.A. Already starting from the end of 1970 Numayri turned to Islam to buttress their Arab nationalism, legitimate the seizure of power, and broaden his base of support. Each reinforced his Islamic identity and image. He employed a heavy dose of Islamic rhetoric and posturing. Numayri published *Why the Islamic Way* in which he delineated his "Third Way" or Islamic alternative to Western capitalism and Soviet Marxism. Numayri introduced Islamic laws, regulations, and taxes in 1983. His interpretations of Islam domestically and internationally varied significantly, however, influenced by his distinctive personality, local experiences (domestic policies), and international ambitions. Numayri, after the fallout with Sudan's communist party, incorporated the philosophies of Hassan Turabi (leader of Sudan's Muslim Brotherhood) into his government and assumed an anticommunist, pro-Western profile. When the Communists were eased out of leading positions, they even attempted in July 1971 to overthrow Numayri and assume power.

It was the second task, ending civil war in the south, that finally assured Numayri's survival despite all attempts on his power. A peace agreement was signed in February 1972 Addis Ababa, in which the southerners were granted regional autonomy. For nearly a decade this was regarded as Numayri's single most important achievement. Indeed, many observers argued that it was due to southern support that Numayri's regime survived throughout the 1970s.[8]

In the popular revolt of April 1985, which led to Numayri's downfall, the situation was different. The Muslim Brothers were largely crippled after years of collaboration with Numayri, followed by a very brief period of imprisonment, while the Communists never regained their pre-1971 power. However, since the 1985 popular revolt was also led by the Professionals' front, it might be assumed that the political views of some of its leaders were not dissimilar to one or the other of the above two camps.[9]

[8] Gabriel R. Warburgm, "Islam and the state in Numayri's Sudan", *Journal of the international African Institute*. Vol. 55, n° 4, 1985, p. 400-413.

[9] *Ibid*.

Islamic Movement Transformations: reconfiguration of political Islam

The Islamic movement appeared in the mid-1940s as an offshoot of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, based on the teachings of among others Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb. In a founding conference in August 1954, they established the Unified Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood Organization (MBO). Ten years later, in 1964, the movement established a political organization called the Islamic Charter Front (ICF) divided from MBO, which soon became a significant political force with proper diversified functions. The main difference from its former structure was its enhanced and improved organization and its openness towards other political groups. However, it was no mass movement, but only an organization of middle-class professionals working at universities and high schools. Thus, the ICF came to be seen as an urban-centered "modern" movement compared to the tradition-bound Sufi orders (Ansar and Khatmiyya and the Umma Party).[10] The MBO oriented itself on the style of Islamic Dawa and therefore avoided politics; ICF instead turned into a full-fledged political force, coming close to resemble a political party.

In the period between 1964 and 1969, the ICF grew like a pressure group, campaigning for an Islamic constitution for Sudan. As a result, the ICF presented a moderate draft of an Islamic constitution in 1969, and both the Ansar and the Khatmiyya sects were supportive. However, the proposed constitutional changes were preempted by the military coup of Numayri in 1969. In order to reach its goal of transforming the state into its envisaged model the Islamic Movement had to devise opportunistic strategies, allowing it to dispose of any serious opponent, such as the Communist Party of Sudan (CPS), and to create and dissolve alliances with sectarian and secular parties and military regimes until it could eventually rise to power and enforce its own authoritarian rule. Guided by its ideologue Hassan al-Turabi, the Movement realized that it had to do things in stages and to view the process of gaining power as a lengthy one in which the exploitation of the "ballot box democracy with its limited opportunities is none the less an important stage towards the final goal". Asked about the reconciliation between his party and Numayri's regime, Turabi was quoted in al-Majallah (29 June 1986) as saying, "[w]e reconciled with Numayri because he had seen our strength in the July movement. We knew what he wanted from the reconciliation and we did not expect anything from him. Our intention then was to build a wide base and an encompassing Islamic movement while avoiding any open move that may antagonize him because he wants power today and tomorrow and we want to inherit the social, political and economic future of the nation (Umma).[11] We were mobilizing the masses in rural areas and establishing banks, not for the sake of money but for the sake of applying our theories and transferring services to the South. We were doing this while others were not paying attention".[12] This was the first kind of alliance in which the Islamic movement was cooperating with the military and authoritarian regime, while it always maintained its insistence on the Islamic principles and believes deeply rooted in Sudanese society. They brandish as major threat for sectarian and secular parties, as they know, if they objected to accept Islamic principles they could lose their mass support.

A major turning point for the movement came in May 1985 when the ICF reorganized and changed its name to National Islamic Front (NIF). In fact, Turabi launched the NIF as a political party together with a number of Islamists after Numayri was deposed in April 1985, and the party emerged as the third largest block in parliament in 1986. It was a "new coalition between the Islamic movement and a number of tribal and popular figures, which undertook to protect and preserve the achievements of the movements against a campaign by secular political parties and power groups to eradicate totally the Islamic legacy of the Numayri regime."[9] According to Turabi, the NIF was "an advanced stage in the development of the Islamic movement, from a simple group to an integrated social organization and from a religious faction to a state institution".[13] And he further said that

[10] Abdel Gaffer Mohamed Ahmed, *One against All: The National Islamic Front (NIF) and Sudanese Sectarian and Secular Parties*, Ahfad University for Women, 2008, p. 2.

[11] Hamdi, Mohamed Elhachmi, *The Making of an Islamic Political Leader: Conversations with Hassan al-Turabi*, English Translation by Ashur A. Shamis. Colorado and Oxford: West view Press, 1998, p. 6.

[12] Abdel Gaffer *op. cit*., p. 7-8.

[13] *Ibid*, p. 60.

the NIF was "the beginning of the latest stage in the growth of the Sudanese Islamic movement so far. Unlike the 1964 Islamic Charter Front, which was no more than a political front reflecting the decisions taken, in most cases, by other sections of the movement, the National Islamic Front has inherited all the functions of the movement. The movement expanded its social program, which soon became the NIF's real foundation.[14]

The Islamic Movement has continued to change its strategies, just as it has changed its name for pragmatic reasons to attract the largest possible number of members and sympathizers. It has relied on the adherence of the general public in Northern and Central Sudan to *Sufi* Islam whereby no individual, civil society organization or political party can be vocal in their opposition to *Shari'a* laws. The strategies used by the Islamic Movement throughout the various stages of its development, as well as its relationship with the other national parties, may be summed up under five main categories include: I) intimidation; ii) control of key institutions in society; iii) alliances; iv) deceptive moves; and v) delaying tactics.[15]

The relation between Turabi and Bashir (INF to NCP): 1988-1996

The relationship between Bashir and Turabi was seemingly a good one from the beginning. In 1994, Turabi affirmed in an interview that "Omar represents an important period not only in the history of the Sudan, but also in the history of the whole Arab Muslim World".[16] He also said that the "Sudanese people have now come back to Islam. Omar is a symbol and a good example of this phenomenon." However, there had been tensions between them since the coup, especially concerning the need for the RCC-NS.[17] While Turabi wanted a democratic National Assembly, Bashir wanted to maintain the Revolutionary Command Council. In 1989 ten of the Islamic leaders wrote a memorandum explaining how Turabi put pressure on the institutions and treated others in exculpated ways, they asked Bashir to limit Turabi's powers. Bashir resolved the council and appointed Altahir as chairman to replace Turabi.

Nonetheless, even though Turabi had no governmental position, and all formal power was in the hands of Bashir, it seems as if Turabi won the first "struggle" when a transitional National Assembly was created in February 1992, and the RCC-NS dissolved eight months later.[18] Even though Bashir appointed all the members of the assembly, it is retrospectively clear that Turabi "emerged as the regime's supreme ideologue and Sudan's de facto ruler." This is furthermore confirmed when we observe that NIF members and sympathizers filled important positions in the government at home and at key embassies overseas.

The political program of the Bashir regime became relatively clear in the early 1990s. It appeared that there were three central elements to these policies: 1. to turn Sudan into an Islamic republic as soon as possible. 2. Use military force rather than negotiation to end the civil war in the South and Darfur. 3. Use repression against all dissents to maintain control. The first point led indirectly to hostile Western and U.S. attitudes toward the regime, including UN sanctions, which lasted until September 2001. As we have seen, the government[19] allegedly supported terrorist activities (Gaida), and the U.S. put it on the list of states that sponsor terrorism in 1993. One significant and important event in the 1990s was the legislative and presidential elections held on April 1, 1996. This was Sudan's first election since 1986 and four hundred people were elected to the National Assembly. Bashir was elected President with 75.7% of the votes, and Turabi was elected Speaker of Parliament. In retrospect this can be considered the birth of the power struggle between Turabi and Bashir, which culminated on December 12, 1999. The quest for power and struggle between Turabi and

[14] "Coup in Sudan May be Turabi's Swan Song," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, 1, n° 12, Dec. 1999, www.meib.org. 2002.

[15] Abdel Gaffer, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

[16] Robert O.Collins, *A history of modern Sudan*, Cambridge, 2008, p. 185.

[17] *Ibid*, p. 194-195.

[18] Middle East Intelligence Bulletin, *op. cit.*

[19] Mohamed Sid-Ahmed, "The Sudanese Crisis," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 461, 23- 29. Dec. 1999, http://www.ahram.org.eg/weekly/1999/461/op3, 2002.

Bashir fits classical political science as the balance of power between the legislative (parliament) and the executive (presidency).[20]

In the fall of 1999, Turabi presented a draft bill to the parliament amending some provisions of the constitution. The proposed amendments would have stripped Bashir of his power to appoint provincial governors and required him to give up the post of the prime minister that he held in addition to the presidency, as well as to appoint a vice-president. Turabi further tried to push a new legislation through parliament giving the prime minister wider powers and giving parliament the right to remove the president from office with a two-third majority. Thus, in early December 1999, Bashir asked Turabi to postpone his amendments, but Turabi ignored Bashir's request. Consequently, to preempt a vote on constitutional changes that would have severely reduced his power of the presidency in favor of a parliament and a ruling party[21] dominated by Turabi, **Bashir dissolved the parliament, declared a state of emergency, suspended the constitution, and dispatched troops to take over the national assembly on December 12, 1999**. He legitimized his move by proclaiming that "Sudan must have one leadership, the president of the republic, who exercises his authorities with the assistance of the various constitutional institutions."[22]

Turabi condemned Bashir's dissolution of parliament as a "military coup" and rejected the state of emergency as unconstitutional. He said that Bashir "has destroyed the constitution and liberties and betrayed the political system. He has also deceived the forces that brought him to power and supported him".[23] He further accused Bashir of acting autocratically and said that Sudan is now being governed by "one person and by sheer force." It seemed that the polarization between the military and the Islamists finally reached Sudan as in most other Middle Eastern countries where the military rules.[24]

In 1999, Turabi dissolved the National Islamic Front (NIF) and created the National Congress Party (NCP). The NCP was the only legal party at that time, and in the beginning, none of the members of the party secretariat had governmental posts, but instead exercised unofficial influence. While Turabi was its Secretary General and the *de facto* leader from the beginning, Bashir later became its president and the chairperson of its political sector. Consequently, the conflict that took place between Turabi and Bashir was reflected in the National Congress. But as we have seen, Turabi has always had the upper hand in the party. This was confirmed both in October 1999 when a National Congress conference attended by some 10,000 delegates gave Turabi considerable political and executive power, and in the January 2000 reconciliation meeting, which brought Turabi back to power. Bashir was only granted the honorary position of conference chairman with a promise of the nomination for another presidential term. Turabi's position in the National Congress and his comeback in January must have been difficult for Bashir to accept. The latter's main obstacle was Turabi's position as the Secretary General of the party, and the only way for Bashir to regain power was to remove Turabi from his position. Thus, **on May 6, 2000, Bashir announced a series of decisions, including the suspension of Turabi from the position of party Secretary General and the removal of most of his supporters from influential posts**.[25]

After stepping down as secretary-general of the ruling National Congress, **Turabi set up his own political opposition party in August 2000, the Popular National Congress (PNC).** He and his supporters operated in opposition to Bashir's National Congress, and the PNC boycotted the Sudanese Presidential Elections on October 27, 2000.[26] Until now Bashir has dominated the National Congress Party (NCP).

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[20] Harvey Glickman, "Islamism in Sudan's Civil War", *Orbis*, vol. 44, n° 2, Spring 2000, p. 280.
[21] Mohamed Khaled, "Sudanese Power Play," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 457, 25 Nov.-1 Dec. 1999, http://www.ahram.org.eg/weekly/1999/457/re7.htm, 2002.
[22] Gabriel Warburgm, *Islam Sectarianism and politics in Sudan since the Mahiyya*, Bell & BrainLtd, 2003, p. 22.
[23] *Ibid.*. p. 27.
[24] Ahmed Al-Shahi, *Pluralism and Governance: the Necessity of convocational democracy in Sudan*, Paper for Arabs for Democracy Foundation, London, 2006.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 4.
[26] Warburgm, *Islam Sectarianism and politics in Sudan*, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

The analysis above illustrated how the internal power struggle was a major factor in determining Sudanese politics. Furthermore, the struggle for power was multifaceted, and one major component in this struggle was how to handle international issues. Communication and relations between the Islamic movement and its cleavages, beside the relations with other Sudanese parties and how they supported the coups to seize power.

The problems facing Sudan's ruling NCP has not gone away with the secession of South Sudan. Warfare in the southern, eastern, and western parts of the country, as well as international isolation, have only worsened as a result of ever intensifying domestic challenges, such as flagging economic conditions, corruption, government maladministration, a disillusioned population, an internally fragmented NCP, and a growing and more organized dissent.

The coming Election 2015

The National Islamic Front (NIF), which came to power in 1989 as a revolutionary Islamist party al-Ingaz (the Salvation Party), has adapted itself to different phases in the country's history. For twenty-five years, it has managed to retain power under the command of its one and only president Omar al-Bashir. In 1999, al-Ingaz transformed itself into the NCP after a famous feud between its founder and leader Hassan al-Turabi and disciples under the command of president al-Bashir. The power struggle led to the ouster of al-Turabi.
After the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), which ended 22 years of war in South Sudan, the NCP earned international legitimacy, which it leveraged to lead the country through two transitional periods, from 2005 to 2010 and again after 2010. Having failed to avert the secession of the country's southern part, the government then subjected the remaining parts of the country to harsh economic conditions. Despite these setbacks, however, the biggest threat to the regime came last year when unrest broke out in September. Protests came in response to the government's decision to cancel fuel subsidies, which led to a doubling of prices. The protests developed in the Sudanese capital and other large cities under the slogan of "freedom, peace, and justice". **The September 2013 uprising proved that the NCP could no longer rely on short-term resilience**. This reality, which poses a serious threat to the regime, has also caused significant internal fragmentation. On September 28, 2013 amid the unrest, 31 NCP cadres publicly criticized their own party and challenged its legitimacy after the violent reaction of the security forces against the protesters. Had the popular unrest continued any longer, other members of the NCP might have abandoned the regime. Other evidence also suggests that the regime's flexibility and adaptability is reaching its limits. The legitimacy of the al-Bashir regime has been shaken, forcing it to undergo a dramatic shift to remain in power. Politicians, civil society organizations, as well as ordinary citizens, have also come to believe that change is inevitable, as the government appears less and less capable of resolving the country's economic problems. Adding to the government's challenges, as of December 15, 2014, conflict has once again broken out in South Sudan, this time between factions of the SPLM. With the outbreak of war in South Sudan and the associated threat this poses to the north, Khartoum is encountering a real revenue dilemma, as its main source of income is the oil transit and refining fees. The NCP regime cannot afford the continued loss of these oil-related fees. Three crucial elements underline the rationale for inevitable dramatic change within the Sudanese regime: the 2015 general elections, pending criminal cases against al-Bashir and other government officials at the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the United States' new approach to Sudan. It is because of these factors that the al-Bashir regime is pushing for dialogue with its traditional foes.[27]
The 2015 elections, by contrast, will be much more challenging not only for the NCP but for all its political rivals. The country's old, crippled political parties have repeatedly criticized the outcome of the 2010 contest and expressed their reluctance to participate in a new round of elections that would be subject to the NCP's political repression and reinforce the party's dominance. If the opposition decides to boycott the elections, they will lose their credibility. Even if old, crippled, and inactive, the participation of these parties will give the election much-needed legitimacy.[28]

[27] *Getting the normal with the two Sudan's*, www.cgdev.org.
[28] International Crisis Group, *Sudan: Major Reform or More War?*, Africa Report 194, 29 November 2012,

Conclusion

The paper started out by investigating and analyzing various aspects of Islam and political Islam in the context of Sudan, focusing on Islam and its roots in Sudanese society. Besides, the relation between Islam and other religions in Sudan was illustrated, describing the majority of Sudanese as Sunni. The paper also illustrated the history of the current political situation and the relations between the political parties. Finally the paper pointed out the transformations of the Islamic movement, up to the clash between the Islamist leaders Turabi and Bashir, when the Islamic national front divided to the National Congress lead by Bashir and Popular Congress led by Turabi.

The policies which NCP implemented in Sudan reflected the real purposes of their plan: to control the country and exclude anyone who is not "Islamist". The " Islamic civilization project" which they had announced to implement as an Islamic model project turned out to be simply a project to empower their own followers. After the separation of Turabi and Bashir it became obvious that the Islamists are severely divided in their struggle for gaining or maintaining power. The clash between Bashir and Turabi reflected the struggle inside the Islamic movement, between the executive power held by Bashir and the ideological and religious power in the hands of Turabi. In the end Bashir's executive powers turned out to be more appealing to most of the Turabi's students and followers, promising access to political positions and leading finally to a victory for Bashir.

Regime types in Sudan (1956 to date) and the role of the Islamic Movement

Type of Regime	**Parliamentary**	**Military**	**Parliamentary**	**Military**	**Parliamentary**	**Military/ Islamist**
Period	1956-1958	1958-1964	1964-1969	1969-1985	1985-1989	1989-
Party/ person in power	Coalition: The Umma Party and the Democratic Unionist Party	Abboud Military and technocratic support	Coalition: The Umma Party and the Democratic Unionist Party	Numayri Socialists first, Liberals and Sufis	Coalition: The Umma Party and the Democratic Unionist Party	Bashir NIF and its militias
Leading Islamic Movement	The Muslim Brotherhood	The Muslim Brotherhood	The Islamic Charter Front	The Muslim Brotherhood	The National Islamic Front	The National Congress Party (1991-) the Popular National Congress (2000-)
Islamic Movement in the political system	Minor pressure group in opposition	Minor pressure group in opposition	Political organization in opposition	Political organization in opposition (1969 – 77) and in power (1977 – 85)	Political party in opposition (1986 – 88) and in power (1988 – 89)	Political party in position (1991 – 99) and in opposition (2000 -). National Congress in power and popular congress in opposition.

Source: Adapted with slight modification from Tonnessen (2005)

http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/africa/horn-of-africa/sudan/194-sudan-major-reform-or-more-war.pdf