Chapter Five

Conclusion
Islam has been playing an important role in the polities of Muslim societies in different degrees. In recent times we find that the efficacy of Islam in the socio-political arena, of the contemporary Muslim societies has increased.

In the Sudan, however, Islam's significance in the socio-political structure made it a unique case in comparison with other countries in the region. It is due to the fact that secular impact, which has its roots in the colonial era, produced a thin layer of secular oriented elite, whose effort to imbue the polity by their perceptions was largely frustrated by the strength of the traditional Islam, even before the emergence of the Muslim Brothers Organization in the mid forties of this century.

This fact leads us to postulate that secularism in the Sudan, unlike most of the neighbouring countries, failed to thrive on its own. That was exhibited from the early days of the Graduate General Congress, when the secularists began to merge with the religious sectarian parties. However, their merger with the two sectarian parties did not prevent the latter from being bedfellows throughout the span of the three democratic governments. The sectarianists-secularists cooperation was the only panacea to curtail the secularists' ability to bring any substantial change in the
country's polity. Anyhow, it was strongly disapproved by the secularists, as eloquently stated by Mohamed Ahmed Mahgoub, that the cooperation of Khatmiyya and Ansar to abort the endeavours of the non-sectarian elite, had a catastrophic effect on the country's political future.

The result of that merger severely obscured the concepts and perceptions of the sectarian parties, which almost failed to theorize or implement any form of Islamization. Nor it could be completely polarized by the secularists to adopt their paradigm.

The salient features of the erstwhile multiparty democratic regimes were, therefore, characterized by several anomalies, which were reflected from their performance in all the spheres of governance, during the three epochs in which they ruled the country. It was these anomalies that were shown in all the spheres of the polity, specifically in economic and security arenas.

Both of the two arenas had witnessed drastic debilitation, especially during the last democratic government. As democratic governments are generally expected to respond to the growing expressions of peoples' discontent, with several promises of socio-economic and socio-political reforms, however, the Sudanese democratic governments were not an exception in this respect. But
their response to the peoples' demand for economic reforms proved to be inadequate.

Contrary to that, economic development during the military reigns, in comparison with all the democratic governments, ironically, however, seemed to be better in tackling the country's complicated economic problems with more skill; as a matter of fact, most of the infrastructural and major developmental projects, in the Sudan, were implemented during the reign of the first two military regimes, and not a single major project built during any of the three democratic governments.

However, the last democratic rule, which came after 16 years of military rule by Nimieri's regime, was expected by most of the Sudanese to bring tangible socio-political reforms, but as discussed earlier, the internal structure of the sectarian parties, to a large extent, lacked the prerequisites for democratic setup: as absolute power in the two sectarian parties was concentrated in the hands of the two patrons of the Ansar and Khatmiyya sects, and not in any organizational body of the two. This, was in addition to the absence of any system of accountability, and also absence of any clear order through which the members of the two parties could ascend in the organizations. The process of ascendancy in
them, was mostly based on the choice of the patrons rather than any organizational decision.

The role of the two patrons in their political parties, is largely similar to that of the Sufi Sheikhs in their 

Turuq. Traditional loyalty, generally governed the attitude of the disciples. Thus, the inherited Sufi background in the two sects: Ansar and Khatmiyya, is reflected by the fact that the two sects’ patrons represented the highest authority for their disciples.

For Hassan al-Turabi (the Islamist leader in the Sudan) the democratic experiment in the West is based on a deeply rooted experience and conventions, and it is illustrated and governed by political ethics, rather than legal and constitutional stipulations; while in the Sudan and many other developing countries, plural democracy is based on tribal and partisanship, hence, leaders are sacred and above accountability. Thus, mixing primordial culture with the European-originated paradigm of secular model of democracy, as shown in the bedfellow of the secular elite with the two religious sectarian parties, made an impact due to the secularist-sectarianist relations, which largely shackled the evolution of democratic process, and increasingly weakened the structure of these parties. Moreover, it besides arresting their
capabilities by the substantial gulf which existed between the secular elite on its leadership and the religious masses on the ground level.

The difference between the two conflicting lines of thoughts, within and outside the sectarian parties, took a sharp turn in the third multiparty democracy. The question of Shari’a implementation, as propagated by the Islamists, or its abrogation, as pronounced by the secular and leftists, had represented the problematic core issue during the last democratic government.

The implications of instability in the political, economic and security arenas, primarily occurred due to the failure of the government to properly address the major issues in these fields. Furthermore, these issues were capped by the critical question of whether to enhance or abolish Shari’a, which largely crippled the socio-economic development of the country.

Thus, the deteriorating economy coupled with exacerbating security problems in the South, where civil war was mushrooming at a fast pace, in addition to political turmoil in some neighbouring countries, made its trajectories on the domestic policies. All these factors together severely retarded any tangible reforms or development in the third democracy, and this resulted in
unprecedented economic and security problems incapacitating the
government’s ability to realize any of the peoples’ aspired
qualitative change in the polity and the economy.

The government (led by the two sectarian parties) on the
other hand, seemed to be less bothered about the increasingly
unruly situation. Many of the ministers indulged in rampant
corruption which affected the smooth functioning of the
government. Mounting disappointment felt by the people was due
to the aggravating situation which had reached the point of impasse.

Like the earlier two coups, the army intervention was
inevitable; the peoples’ lack of faith in the democratic government
was confirmed by their indifferent attitude towards the
abolishment of democracy by the army, which was hailed by many.

The role of the army in the Sudan, is reverse compared to
Turkey where it defends the perpetuation of secularism in the
country’s polity, or in Algeria where it intervened to prevent the
Islamists from assuming power, after their landslide victory, in
order to preserve the secular system. As the army took the
initiative to defend Shari’a against the secularists and leftist

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endeavours, when they failed to repeal it through the Parliament, they formed another coalition outside the elected Parliament, which was viewed by the Islamists as a definite breach of the democratic norms.

The Islamic movement in the Sudan has, therefore, significantly stretched its influence in the army, during a long span of time which began after the ratification of 1977 national reconciliation agreement.

The Sudanese Islamic movement’s achievement in the socio-political and socio-economic arenas has transcended all its counterparts in the Sunni Muslim countries. This is largely attributed to its methodology, which is regarded by its members as moderate, flexible and effectively functional in addressing the civil societies growing needs; while for many of its opponents, its paradigm is controversial and largely unacceptable.

However, there are several lacunae in its model, as it is yet to crystallize its vision to envisage a modern system based on Islamic perspective to properly address the needs of, not only the non-Muslim Southern Sudanese, but also the majority of Muslims in rural areas, who are highly abeast by their primordial traditional religious and tribal loyalties.
Notwithstanding, the Islamic movement's decision to participate in the Nimieri's regime it seems to have ranked it as a pioneer, in connection with the critical issue of whether Islamists should positively engage themselves in a secular regime, if they avail the chance for that?

The Sudanese Islamic movement opted for participation. Its decision, however, seemed to have brought relative success, and engendered the diminishing prospects of secularist in the country's polity, yet, the road for Islamization in the Sudan is not smooth.

The future role of Islam in the Sudan's polity depends on several factors, some of them domestically evolved, while others are externally generated: Domestic factors are binary in nature the socio-political structure (which is largely based on traditional Islam) that needs to be renovated; and the secularists, who propagated for a secular modern state to be the dominant one. The external factors clearly revealed the Western fear from the Islamic resurgence, that if it establishes itself, may leave its repercussions all over region.

From the earlier discussion, the performance of the political parties in the three erstwhile democracies constituted the prime reason behind its failure each time. Their poor performance was
mainly attributed to its structure, which was largely based on tribal and religious-sectarian loyalties, as appeared from the Sudan’s two major religious sects: Ansar and Khatmiyya; the colonial authority saved no effort to revive these primordial loyalty and helped to establish in the post-independence Ansar and Khatmiyya affiliated parties, which was binary guided by conflicting concepts - secular tenets and traditional religion.

That equation proved to be inadequate to preserve and develop a true democratic system. However, secular tenets, which were exhibited by the democratic and military regimes, were not accepted as an ideal system to enhance peoples’ participation.

Islam, on the other hand, remained only the cardinal frame in the post-independence Sudan. Even though, it was traditional and insignificantly ascribed to various needs of the modern society, yet, the two sectarian parties portrayed themselves in its frame.

The question of democracy and people’s participation constituted a hub of the challenge for all the regimes that ruled Sudan. However, democracy should not lead to political chaos, as it is devised to make available the best circumstances that enable the citizens to freely chose their representatives. But, a quick
glance at on the performance of the erstwhile multiparty
governments, showed great deal of political chaos, and lack of
consideration for the citizens’ choice.

Hence, in the light of above facts, the incumbent regime
decided to go for a new type of democracy, with no role for
primordial and traditional sectarian loyalties, or any significance
for secular and leftist elite.

By and large, primordial and traditional societies can
respond effectively to the internally originated demands for greater
institutional changes to meet the external inducted requirements.
Such externally inducted requirements may occur whenever a less
developed society receives a picture of its own future from a more
developed society.

Based on this hypothesis, when the colonial authority
inducted the concept of secularism in the Sudan, it was motivated
by the hope that secularism would reflect the socio-political
structure and help in creating a model that would not substantially
differ from the Western paradigm. But that hope was never
materialized, for Islam stood as an insurmountable hurdle in its
course.
Islam in the Sudan, although, mostly reflected by the primordial Sufi orders, yet when it was actuated by the National Islamic Front it could conspicuously influence and mobilize the society. Hence, it has been projected as a major pillar for the new democratic experiment; on its base the incumbent regime seemed to be pursuing a policy of complete eradication of secular influence from the political arena; at the same time, through the declared Islamic programme the regime aspires to absorb popular support from rural areas, which are known mostly by their traditional loyalties to the two sectarian parties.

So, the pronounced party-less democracy found no support either from the secularist (for them a seminal Islamic role in the polity, simply means eradication of secularism), nor the sectarian leadership, who saw in the advancement of the new system as an erosion of their popularity in the rural areas, which is traditionally loyal to them.

The concept of the party-less democracy is apparently based on the idea of widening the scope of participation from below. In other words, to enhance peoples’ engagement in the governance process, away from the sectarian and primordial influence. The new mechanism which was followed to achieve the
task, was based on ‘dialogue policy,’ according to which a series of ten conferences on the country’s prime issues were convened, in which major directives of the country’s policy were laid. The participants in these conferences covered almost all the social strata.

It is indeed a real challenge for the government’s aspired party-less democratic system that it must dismantle all kinds of primordial loyalties, as a prerequisite to establish a system, in which Islam’s role is seminal. This raises a new challenge, of how the non-Muslim Sudanese would be accommodated in the new system. However, it is too early to assess the performance of the party-less democracy, as it is yet to take a final shape.

The role of Islam in the party-less democracy has sharply raised the importance of modernity and Islamic renovation, and their conflicting trajectories. The impact of competition between the two concepts would significantly influence the future of the Islamic project in the Sudan, and elsewhere.

The efficacy of modernity and Islamic renovation to influence and mobilize the Sudanese society is mainly related to the position of its propagators, the secularists and the Islamists respectively, in the country’s polity.
By and large, Islam has become an influential element in the socio-political arena since 1983, when the first Islamic penal code was pronounced. But, seeing Islam thriving in the Sudan or any other country in the region, would certainly not appease the West; which aspired to perpetuate the state of cultural and economic dependency among the region's countries, mainly through the paradigm of secular democracy.

Renovation of Islamic thought and fiqh, on the other hand, would enhance the applicability of Islam in the society, which would obviously bring a substantial change in the equilibrium of relations between many countries in the region and the West.

Thus, we could postulate that the result of democracy is acceptable in the West as long as it legitimizes secularism, even if it is guided by traditional principles of religion and primordial loyalties.

Globalization of democracy is meant, in other words, as globalization of secularism through the culture of modernity. Accordingly, the process of secularization is mostly synonyms to modernization. Consequently, the concept of renovating Islam constituted not only a hurdle, but also a potential threat for the continuation of secularism through democracy, in accordance with
the Western paradigm. So, according to that perception, secular democracy largely corresponds with the connotation of modernity, and the tenets of the civil religion.

The Western reception of Islamic renovation is also based on the deeply rooted antagonism towards Islam, which according to a renowned scholar of orientalism Edward Said, stemmed from the feeling of competition that Islam has posed to Christianity. This is evidenced in the way news concerning Islamic resurgence is negatively covered by the Western print and electronic media, and even by the secular-governments’ controlled media in many Arab countries; as both of them archly oppose the advancement of Islamic thought and renovation.

In the same context, the officially adopted slogans of renovating Islam’s socio-political role in the Sudan, has been negatively portrayed by the Western media, saying it has become the ‘metaphor for the world disorder’ in which violation of human rights is routine.

So, the continuation of the ongoing Islamic programme in the Sudan depends mainly on the peoples’ support to the regime, which is based on the regime’s ability to devise a system that would induce and encourage peoples’ political participation.
Islam, for Hassan al-Turabi, remains the only national doctrine with indigenous values strong enough to establish its own system and to withstand the Western pressure. So, party-less democracy aims at dismantling the concept of secular democracy and consolidating the role of Islam in the country’s polity.

Adopting federalism as a system of governance by the incumbent regime implies greater role of peripheral population in the governing process, with less interference from the central government, in which the role of Islam is pronounced.

This raises the question of how Islam would be implemented in a way that would preserve the social harmony, and protect the basic rights of the non-Muslim minorities, mainly in the Southern region. The duality of the system has, therefore, become crucial in solving the question of accommodating non-Muslims in the Islamic-oriented national political system.

This encompasses the probability of establishing a sub-system for that region, in order to provide the Southerners with a proper political forum to enhance their participation in administering their own affairs, besides freely expressing their cultural diversity, without undesirable imposition from the Muslim-majority North. Thus, duality is meant to exempt the non-
Muslim Southerners from implementation of certain Islamic laws which contradicts with their belief.

Duality of the political system, therefore, appears as a real need for the country's stability and progress. Moreover, the government's adherence to federalism, would pave the way for the duality of the system, between the North and South. The success of this system largely depends on reaching a lasting and acceptable settlement for the prolonged South Sudan dispute.

The durability of popular support to the regime depends on its credibility to enhance the role of Islam in the Sudanese society. However, the economic factor is crucial in helping the regime to implement and sustain its Islamic programme. Thus, peoples' support to the government is crucial, in addition to the ideological motivations, based on economic determination.

Therefore, in the absence of tangible economic reforms in the economically-backward Sudan, the viability of Islamization would be questionable. Thus, if economic improvement which has, so far, been achieved by the incumbent government, is graded as less than most of the people's expectations, this would largely erode their support to the regime. Economic conditions, if not
improved would, therefore, open a Pandora's box, that would certainly lead to the regime's instability.

Sudan has huge untapped economic potentials. Thus, attracting foreign investment and encouraging domestic businesses to take part in the economic reforms programme, composes paramount challenge for the regime, for which the accomplishment of economic reforms, besides internal mobilization of resources, requires huge finance, technical assistance and know-how. To obtain these prerequisites foreign help is indispensable for any major economic breakthrough.

Sudan's economy was featured by structural and infrastructural problems, since independence. The reflections of these problems has significantly weakened the country's economy, and largely resulted in its susceptibility to foreign pressure, as external aid used to constitute more than sixty per cent of the country's budget.

Economic pressure and sanctions, have been used as an effective method to enhance foreign policy objectives for centuries. They are implemented by economically stronger country, as a panacea to force the weak nations to fall in line with its policy, or not to exceed certain limits, which are regarded as
undesirable by the stronger economic power. The end of the Cold War has increased the use of economic sanctions as an important tool for national and multinational diplomacy.

Sudan has experienced economic pressure, and even a sort of undeclared economic sanction after its pronounced adherence to the Islamic programme in 1983. Although, mounting political and economic pressure on Nimieri's regime was expected to be lifted after the collapse of his rule, but it was not eased during the third multiparty democratic government. In view of this, the Islamist cause appears to have advanced, at the cost of secularism. This made an impact in the West as Islam was thought to prevail through the democratic game; and accordingly Sudan was regarded as a hotbed for potential Islamic resurgence, which would lead to undesirable repercussions for the Western interests.

This explains continued Western economic pressure on Sudan which was exhibited when Holland decided to sever its economic aid during the time of the multiparty government, as Sudan failed to reach a peaceful settlement with the rebels in the South, despite government's effort to reach an amicable settlement for the dispute. In fact the Southern issue has been used as cover to justify the economic pressure, which got intensified since the
incumbent regime came to power, especially, after the Kuwait liberation war. Its repercussions strengthened the regime’s self-reliance policy.

Agriculture constitutes the backbone of Sudan’s economy in addition to livestock and minerals. But the country’s economic future will mainly depend on agricultural sector, as the country is endowed with huge cultivable land, with plenty of water resources. Thus, Sudan has enough potential to be one of the world’s largest food producing country.

The importance of the mining sector, in view of promising reserves of chrome, gypsum and gold has led to considerable increase in the export in this sector. This, in addition to the fast growing oil industry (which started in 1975) has accelerated the economic development. However, the oil reserves are estimated to be 3.5 billion barrels only, located in South-Western Sudan and part of the Southern regions. Although, oil exploration requires huge funding, but Sudan is likely to attain sufficiency and may export small quantity of oil by 1999. The economic breakthrough is thus, primarily dependent on the advancement in the field of oil sector.
The external economic pressures seems to be the only major tool in the hand of the regime’s opponent to destabilize incumbent government especially after the failure of all military endeavours to defeat the regime in the Southern front.

However, the external pressure might increase against the present government in the diplomatic, economic and militarily areas in two ways, first: to frustrate the ongoing efforts peace, by escalating the present war in the South, where military and logistic support provided through the border to the rebels, and secondly: to launch a direct attack across the border.

In the final analysis all this is due to the concept of Islamization, as propagated by the regime which contradicts with basic tenets of Western democracy.