Preface

The aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Kuwait liberation war, has virtually proved the ineffectiveness of ideologies like Pan-Arabism, Socialism and Communism to present a viable model of government, that would provide sustainable socio-political and socio-economic development in the Muslim countries. The failure of these ideologies has projected Islam as the only acceptable alternative, and untested ideology that could bring the aspired socio-political change in the Muslim societies.

But change towards Islamization is resented by the secular inclined regimes in most of the Muslim countries. They are strongly backed by the Western countries where secularism constitutes the hub of their socio-political system.

Consequently, the emergence of Islam, as a popular choice, after the failure of other ideologies, has generated binary responses: domestically, Islamization is regarded as a direct threat for the political domination of the secular elites, who support the secular inclined regimes. For these elites, the growing tendency towards Islamization is regarded as a sign of danger to their political presence.

Externally, the triumphant West, after the end of the Cold War, aspired to globalize its concept of secular democracy, hence the burgeoning Islamization is considered as
an obstacle in the course of achieving that goal and subsequently, it was received with great perturbation.

The abrogation of the election result and the intervention by the military in Algeria, and the Western reaction against Nimieri’s Islamization in the Sudan and not to speak of Iran could be cited as vivid examples of the Western stand towards Islamization.

However, Islam’s socio-political role in the Sudan is largely attributed to the first Islamic reign during the Mahdiyya state (1885-1898); and not so much to the contemporary Islamic resurgence that is spreading in most of the Islamic countries.

In the aftermath of the defeat of the Mahdist state in 1899, Sudan was ruled by both Britain and Egypt, in what came to be known as the condominium rule. The process of secularizing the country’s socio-political structure continued without major interruption in various manner, throughout the condominium era, till Sudan achieved independence on 1\textsuperscript{st} January 1956.

This study entitled: *Islam in Political System of the Sudan*, aims at highlighting the role of Islam, as a determinant factor in the socio-political and socio-economic structure of contemporary Sudan.
One of the prime objectives of this research, is to investigate the impact of secularization on the progress of democracy in the Sudan; and how the schism between the two secular and Islamic identities, besides other factors, had negatively contributed to the socio-political development, and how this contributed to repeated failure of multi-party democracy in the country.

The study attempts to highlight the differences between the trajectories of secular and political Islam. The latter revealed a strong tendency to change the parameters of relations with the West, specially the United States of America, as happened after the Iranian Revolution in 1979, which was accompanied by a gamut of measures that caused structural change in the pattern of relations between Iran and the USA.

In the Sudan, nevertheless, the incumbent regime is not following the Iranian paradigm, yet it has been projected by many Western countries from the same perspective, which vindicates that socio-political role of Islam is equally viewed in the West, whether in a Sunni or a Shi‘i country. Besides the introduction and conclusion, the study is divided into three major chapters.

The second chapter, titled *Secularism and Democracy*, offers a brief survey on the origin of the concept of secularism, and its reflection on the contemporary concept of democracy. It
highlights the role played by the two major religious sects, Ansar and Khatmiyya through the political parties which affiliated to them; how their relations with the secular elite was initiated; what were the implications of that relations on the implementation of Shari’a; and an assessment of that on political stability of the democratic governments.

The third chapter: *the Role and Contribution of Islamic Movements*, intends to make an epistemological study of the Sudanese Islamic movements, how it evolved from small elite pressure group in the 1940s, and developed after the national reconciliation agreement in 1977, to an influential national party (the National Islamic Front - NIF) with significant support among the elite and the educated segment in the Sudanese society, besides its strong financial backing, which strengthened its maneuverability, and expanded its popularity all over the country, making the NIF an instrumental player in the last multi-party government. It also throws light on the reasons behind the third army intervention, in June 1989, which largely boosted the efficacy of Islam in the polity, and severely debilitated the strength of secular and sectarian parties.

The fourth chapter emphasizes on the prolonged dispute in the Southern Sudan. It is titled: *South Sudan Dispute: Islamization and Peace Process*. After giving a chronological survey for the problem, it looks at the factors behind it. In addition, it would
also present an account of the major peace attempts, which were initiated —between 1985 to 1993— by previous regimes to reach a peaceful settlement of the dispute.

The concluding chapter would provide an assessment of secularization of the polity on the one hand, and the impact of Islamization on the socio-political structure on the other. In addition to the repercussions of the strife between their conflicting trajectories on the democracy it would also highlight the future prospects of the ongoing Islamization, and the challenges that may impede its course.

However, the relationship between politics and Islam in the contemporary Sudan is wide and an extremely complicated subject. This modest research, therefore, should be considered as a humble attempt to throw light on some of the complex and vexation aspects in the context of Sudan.

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