Chapter One

Introduction
Sudan, is the largest among the African and the Arab countries. The emergence of modern Sudan is largely attributed to the Turko-Egyptian rule (1821-1884). During this period Sudan was subjected for the first time to a central authority, which was characterized by its heavy-handed policy. That policy, resulted in the emergence of the first Islamic movement the modern Sudan. It is known as the *Mahdiyya* Revolution because its leader Mohamed Ahmed Ibin Abdallah (1843-1885), was known as *al-Mahdi* (the righteously and divinely guided one), and who was a well known Islamic scholar, and a charismatic and gifted military leader.

Al-Mahdi established the first Islamic state in the modern Sudan, after the liberation of Khartoum in January 1885. The short-lived *Mahdiyya* government (1885-1889) gave a practical example of the state that was mostly based on Islam.

Under its canopy, cultural, ethnic and regional barriers were surpassed in order to unite the heterogeneous Sudanese social groups. Eventhough, Mahdiyya's objectives were not achieved, yet Mahdiyya proved that Islam, when it transcended the Sufi sanctuaries, could become a formidable power. That palpably

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2 Ibid., 27.
3 The Mahdist in the Sudan aspired to build a modern Islamic state. However, its engagement in several wars had greatly crippled its aspiration.
awakened the nationalist feeling, and unified most of the Sudanese against the alien Turko-Egyptian rule.

The consolidation of power in the hand of al-Mahdi, perturbed Egypt, which considered Sudan as a part of its domain, since 1821. Britain also was annoyed to see an Islamic state emerging in the region, in which it had burgeoning interests. Egypt, on the other hand, was haunted by the idea of restoration of the Sudan. Like Egypt, Britain also seemed to be also interested in eliminating the Mahdist rule, but in such a way that it would insure its superiority, and would not lead to any contentions with other colonial powers.

Therefore, it deputed one of its most renowned officer, Lord Charles Gordon, to execute its policy in the Sudan. It was the last mission for Gordon, as he was killed by the Mahdist soldiers in the Khartoum liberation war, in 1885. Gordon was known in Britain as a national figure, and he was celebrated as “the Chinese Gordon,” for his role in crushing the Taiping

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5 Al-Mahdi died shortly after the liberation of Khartoum, he was succeeded by Khalifa Abdullahi al-Ta’iishi, to Queen Victoria clearly showed that the trajectory of their relations were conflicting. For more details see: Ibid., pp. 1015-18.
7 Ibid., p. 109
8 Some garrisons in the Red Sea area were maintained.
rebellion in China in 1864.\textsuperscript{9} His killing apparently generated popular reaction in Britain, against the Mahdiyya state.

Later on, the Mahdists who consolidated their grip on power, were approached by the Abyssinian King Yohana (who defeated the Italians in 1869) to formalize an alliance with the Khalifa, the Mahdi successor.\textsuperscript{10}

Thus, the repercussions of the said alliance, and the motivation to revenge for the killing of Gordon, among with other factors induced Britain to invade Sudan.

To avoid legal complications that may arose with other colonial powers who were competing -- with Britain -- in East and Central Africa (all of them wanted to add Sudan to their domain),\textsuperscript{11} Britain, therefore, resorted to a sort of legal camouflage, when it proposed a “hybrid form of government” for the Sudan, by ratifying the condominium agreement with Egypt in January 1898;\textsuperscript{12} However, few months later Sudan was re-conquered.\textsuperscript{13} The re-conquest of the Sudan was accomplished after

\textsuperscript{11} Holt, n. 6, p. 109.
\textsuperscript{13} Sudan was governed by both Britain and Egypt. Although, Egypt was under British colonial rule, and its actual role in the governing process was negligible yet, that era is known as the Anglo-Egyptian rule. It was based on the condominium agreement, which was signed on 19 January, 1898 between Britain and Egypt.
the battle of Karary in September 1898, which declared the dawn of a new era of colonization (1898 - 1955).14

The paramount task that emerged before the colonial administration was to dilute the impact of the Mahdist conception of Islam, and replace it by a modified form of Islam, that would insure enough room for secularism to flourish.

Thus, secular education became the panacea that was used by the colonial power to dismantle the pillars of the Mahdist state, in order to establish a parallel secular model of state. Subsequently, secularization of the social order was a tool for the colonial authority to enhance its grip on the country. The accomplishment of that task, however, required the marginalization of Islam’s major role in the socio-political arena.

The reduction of the efficacy of Islam in the socio-political arenas, entailed a drastic change in the concept of national identity, which stemmed from the Mahdist perception of Islam. It therefore, aimed at re-basing it in another framework of primordial religious sectarianism and tribal loyalties.

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Therefore, Egypt was a legal partner with Britain in the governance of the Sudan. See: John Obert Voll, and Sarah Potts Voll, The Sudan Unity and Diversity in Multicultural State, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1985), p. 50.

14 Karary is a small hill, situated 7 Kms. north of Omdurman (the Mahdiyya capital, along with Khartoum North it comprises Khartoum, the present capital city of Sudan). In that battle several thousand Sudanese were killed.
The evacuation of the national identity from the impregnation of the Mahdist impact, created a vacuum in its concept, which provided a better chance for the secular elite to play a greater role in the society. Later its impact appeared in the national movement, which was invented and led by them. Nonetheless, they were sincerely dedicated to their cause, yet they were greatly influenced and abreast with the impact of the Western secular culture.

Hence, colonial authority through secularism consolidated and directed the path of socio-political development; and as a result of that the British model of modern secular state was presented as an example that should be emulated.\(^\text{15}\)

According to that model (which originated in Europe), religion was regarded as a prime hindrance in the course of establishing a secular modern state. However, the efforts of the colonial authority and the secular elite could not completely erase the impact of the socio-political structures.

In despite of the fact that Egypt's role in the condominium government was insignificant, in connection with the efforts exerted for secularization, which were largely made by the British

authority, yet its (Egypt) impact on the national movement was tangible. This was vindicated by the emergence of an influential line in the national movement, which propagated for complete unity with Egypt. Even though, that goal was not achieved, Egypt’s role in the Sudan’s political system could not be ignored.\footnote{A. Rahim, n.10, p. 34.}

From this brief background it is clear that the impact of the condominium rule, in which Sudan was administratively more influenced by the British authority than their partner (Egypt), culturally and politically, the Sudanese elite were largely divided between the two options: to emulate the secular paradigm of the West-minister democracy; and the unity of Sudan with Egypt (under the Khedive’s crown), which was also another secular model. However, the division between the two competing lines of thought, later transformed into two political parties; and Islam constituted the crux in them, as they were backed by the two major religious sects, Ansar and Khatmiyya.

Ansar, the followers of the early Mahdiyya, were grouped in Umma party, while the supporters of the Mahdiyya arch rival religious sect, Khatmiyya, thronged in the National Unionist Party (NUP). Most of the secular elite, who initiated the Sudanese
national movement, were polarized by the two religious sect-based parties.  

The absorption of the secular elite in the two primordial religious sects proved to be a failure for secularism to attract and mobilize peoples' support in the Sudan from an independent secular forum, and also showed its inability to realize its aspired secular paradigm. This enhanced the postulation that the secularist in the post-independence Sudan, despite their crucial role in the national liberation movement, lacked the vision of leading an independent Sudan towards stability and prosperity.

This was palpably shown in the dismal performance of all the three democratic regimes; specifically the last one (1986-1989), during which the political dichotomy between the two conflicting concepts: secularism and Islam, reached its impasse. This political disorientation engendered serious repercussion on the economic front, and on the debilitating situation on the South Sudan conflict.

Economically, all the three phases of democratic rule failed to build any successful economic project, primarily due to the lack of planning and weakness of the government apparatus.

17 For more details about Khutmiyya and Ansar, see the second chapter, under the subtitle: ANSAR-KHATMIYYA RIVALRY.
Incidentally, this strongly supports the assumption that the military led governments proved to be more skillful or adroit in their economic performance.

On the Southern question, the democratic governments, due to their structural weakness, could not come out with any viable solution for that tangle. In this connection, the only tangible achievement to settle that dispute was made in 1972, during the reign of Ja’afar Nimieri.

However, the contention between the Islamist and the secularist was not an exceptional phenomenon for the democratically elected governments. It also sharply revealed itself in the early days of Nimieri’s rule, when the regime was highly influenced by the communists; consequently, it adopted the policy of eliminating the impact of Islam from the socio-political arena, which was viewed (by the communist) as a mere reactionary force embodied by the Ansar and the Muslim Brothers.

The competition between the two concepts (secularism and Islam) was also exhibited in a low profile tone, in the mid seventies, when the helm of the regime was dominated by the secularist elite. But when Nimieri began to shift towards Islamization, after 1977, not only his secularist allies were
perturbed, but this also soured his relations with the U.S.\textsuperscript{18} The short visit of the American Vice President George Bush in 1985, clearly revealed how dependent Nimieri had become on the U.S. as he decided to dramatically reduce the Islamization profile, by arresting most of the Islamist leadership, and accusing them of conspiring against his rule.\textsuperscript{19}

This supported the presumption that, the implementation of Islam (Shari'a) in the Sudan, had sharpened the contention between the two concepts of secularism, as propagated by the secular elite (chiefly from the sectarian parties platform), and Islam, as conceived and demonstrated by the Sudanese Islamic movement.

Moreover, the conflictual relations between the secularist and the Islamist seemed to be reciprocal in its nature. Secularization aimed primarily at assimilating Islam in its frame, or at least to mold it in a sense that it would not hamper its progress. Thus, the magnitude of animosity between the two concepts grew proportionately along with the advancement in the Islamic programme.

\textsuperscript{18} In 1977 the National Reconciliation Agreement was ratified between Nimieri's and his opposing National Front, in which the Islamist were vocal. Thus, 1977 was a watershed for the Islamist, as the agreement availed them to work from within the regime apparatus, and therefore, managed to expand their influence.

That reciprocity negatively cast its imprint on the Sudan’s relations with some neighbours, where the ruling secular elite were confronted by the Islamists growing challenge. The same attitude was shared by the United States and some of its Western allies towards the burgeoning Islamization in the Sudan.  

Democracy is, however, expected to reflect peoples’ demands and aspirations generally, but the strange nature of the sectarian-secularist relations, showed the great ambivalence, that characterized the democratic performance in Sudan specially the indecisiveness in most of the major issues.

Sudan was ruled by three democratic reigns: 1956-1958, 1965-1969 and 1986-1989. All the three democratic phases were, almost, featured by multi-dimensional problems, but specifically in the last democratic government (since 1989), that could be shown as follows:

1. Inter-sectarian contentions between the two major religious sects (Ansar and Khadmiyya), due to its historical animosity.

2. Intra-sectarian strife, represented by the internal competition between various groups within the two

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sectarian parties, which revealed the conflicting interests between members of different regional loyalties.

3. The sharp contention between the Islamist and the secular groups, which crystallized into a schism (in the third democracy) between the supporters of Islamization and the protagonists of a secular state model.

In fact, the competition between the two arch rivals, Khatmiyya and Ansar, did not reveal any dichotomy that completely hindered the cooperation between them. Notwithstanding, their political differences, they shared a lot of commonalities, which were strong enough to allow them to forge several coalition governments, mainly to frustrate the advancement of the non-sectarian (Islamist or secularist), whom they considered a potential threat.

However, failure of democracy, thus constituted the prime reason behind the three army interventions. On the 17th November 1958, the army intervened at the behest of the Prime Minister from
the Umma party. It was removed by spontaneous people's in October 1964; and the 25th May 1969 coup, which called itself the May Revolution, was toppled in 1985, by another people's revolt. This made Sudan the only country in the region were people overthrew the army rule by a democratically elected government. Ironically, the people also supported, the military intervention on all the three occasions, due to their disappointment by the dismal performance of the democratic governments.

The failure of the secularist, in the three democratic regimes, to formulate a strong popular base to build a secular modern state in the Sudan, vindicated that the imposition of secularism on the Sudanese society, culturally and politically, affected only a thin layer in the society, which was represented by an elite class: civilian as well as in the army.

As aforementioned, the inability of democratic regimes to righteously reflect peoples' aspirations and demands precipitated the third army intervention on 30th June 1989.

All the three military reigns introduced and practiced, in some way or the other, a form of democracy in which people were

directly elected to the parliaments, which also include some nominated members.

On the other hand, the role of Islam in the Sudan’s socio-political area stretched its root to Mahdiyya state. However, the modern Islamic movement in the Sudan was influenced by the Muslim Brothers organization of Egypt. But unlike most of the contemporary Islamic movements in the region, the Sudanese Islamic movement took an independent line from its early days. This helped it to formulate its own stand in connection with many political (domestic and international) issues, which broadened its Islamic perception and boosted its popularity within the society. This reflected in the stages of its development from a small elite pressure group to a widely supported political party, as demonstrated in the 1986 election.

Its independent line also gave it an edge over several Islamic movements in the region, for its pioneering endeavours in various spheres of socio-political and socio-economic reforms.

The major breakthrough came with the ratification of the national reconciliation agreement in 1977, between the regime and the National Front, in which it played an instrumental role. The
agreement was signed after the National Front’s unsuccessful military attempt to overthrow Nimieri in July 1976.

Thus, 1977 could be regarded as the dawn of a new era, which was characterized by wide range of Islamization. Under the circumstances, the Islamists consolidated their influence on students community; and expanded the base of their support in the youth and women sectors; established a strong base for them in the economic arena, where they introduced Islamic banking, making Sudan one of the pioneering country in this respect.

Besides, the Islamic movement managed to attain a large degree of financial strength which enhanced its independent outlook. However, most importantly, the Islamic movement after the agreement arranged to establish its base in the army, which chiefly foiled the leftist and secularist attempts to resort to the army to repeal the Islamic penal code which was promulgated by Nimieri in September 1983.22

Hence, Islamization programme accelerated with the declaration of Islamic penal code in 1983, which revealed that the impact of traditional Sufism and primordial traditional Islam (which was inextricable from the socio-political structure) began

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22 These law widely known as Shari’ā (the comprehensive cannon of Islam), although, it the laws constituted a tiny part of Shari’ā.
to witness qualitative changes, as confirmed by the performance of the National Islamic Front, the Islamist’s political party. Accordingly, the efficacy of the primordial and traditional culture began to re-emerge in a more politically inclined manner.

The theoretical background of these changes was largely attributed to the leader and ideologue of the Islamic movement in the Sudan, Hassan Abdallah al-Turabi.\(^{23}\)

Al-Turabi’s Western education and Islamic knowledge, ranked his perceptive opinion on the renewal of the Islamic thought and *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) among the pioneering *Ijtihad* (work), which was appreciated by the supporters of the idea of renovating Islamic thought, so as to properly cope with various challenges confronted by the Muslim societies, and it was sharply criticized by those who believed in the essentiality of *taqleed* (literally following the predecessor *Ijtihad*).

The idea of renovating Islamic thought is largely ascribed to bringing qualitative reforms in Islam’s perception and applicability in the process of governance in general. Moreover, its role would not be separated from the state, and there should not be any distinction between the temporal power and Islam as this

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\(^{23}\) Hassan al-Turabi (b. 1932) is basically a law professor at Khartoum University. He got his initial Islamic training from his father, who was a judge and Shari’a expert.
distinction was inculcated in the mind of the elite, due to the impact of and influence of the secular Western culture, since the colonial era.

Thus, Islamic thought renovation would bring forth a conception which aimed at re-establishing the role of Islam as a determinant force in the polity, which would be regarded as an antithesis for the Western secular paradigms.

Therefore, in most of the Western countries including the United State of America, Islamic resurgence or Islamic thought renovation is read as a potential threat to its interests, which they want to preserve by the equation of secularism as its crux.

So, if Islamists appeared close to power, through the democratic means (as happened in Algeria, where democracy was obscured, by the army) the army intervention was not opposed by the West, as long as it would prevent the Islamists from gaining power. This stood as a vivid example of the Western reaction towards Islam’s aspiration to play greater political role.

In the Sudan, however, when the debate on Islamic constitution revealed a sign of advancement, foreign economic and political pressures were exerted against the democratic government. This, along with other factors, forced the Prime
Minister, Saddiq al-Mahdi, to ignore the elected Parliament by forming another coalition government, based on minority secular group. This among issues precipitated the third coup, which proved that secularism was not the preferred option for the Sudanese army.

The Western stand against democracy, (when it brings the Islamist as in Algeria or, would enhance Islamization as in the case of Sudan), strongly supports the claim that the West is propagating democracy, not for the sake of true democratization, but to preserve its vital interests, by strengthening the political status quo.

Hence, globalization of democracy, which has emerged as one of the salient features of the post-Cold War era, is mainly based on secularism, as a crux of its concept. At the same time, the re-awakening of Islam’s role in the polity, would be regarded (by the West) as a potential hurdle for its propagated democratization.

However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the defeat of Iraq (in the Kuwait liberation war), the probabilities for the communist, Ba’athist and Arab Nationalists to come to power has largely diminished. But on the other hand, the chances of Islam as an alternative have become brighter in the Arab countries.
It is true that after the Iranian revolution (in 1979), Islam emerged as a vocal determinant socio-political force in many countries of the region, especially in the majority of the Sunni populated states. However, the reflection of the ongoing Islamization in the Sudan, on the Arab societies is expected to be more tangible than that of Iran, mainly because of the language differences, and the type of relations between the two Islamic schools Shi’ism and Sunni.