Chapter Two

Secularism and Democracy
This chapter does not intend to study the concept of secularism and democracy and how they evolved through the ages. However, an attempt has been made to give a panoramic review of these concepts, which is essential to understand their links to relevant issues, such as modernism, and Islam, as a prelude to study their implications on Sudan.

Secularism

The West is the cradle of secularism, since it was innovated and developed there; and the emergence of that concept was attributed to the bigotry of the Catholic Church in the medieval Europe. The church's despotic attitude made it inflexible towards the knowledge, and its reflections on socio-political change in Europe. Accordingly, the process of social development was largely frustrated by the church's despotic attitude. This enhanced a wide movement to liberate knowledge from the firm grip of the church; according to which socio-political change, since then, became largely indifferent to religion. The widening rift between the church and socio-political change necessitated the separation

---

between the two, which broadly, came to be known as secularism.\textsuperscript{3}

On its base, the church's socio-political influence was apprehended in Europe, since the seventeenth century, as a prime hinder in the course of socio-political change or modernization.\textsuperscript{4}

With the scientific advancement that accompanied the industrial revolution, the abolishment of the church's massive supremacy in the European societies, became a prerequisite for the predomination of secularism and its values, which emerged as an ideology and culture of its own, and established itself as an alternative for the church authority.\textsuperscript{5}

Henceforth, the subsequent development in the European society, further minimized the socio-political role of the church, to the extent that concentration of powers in its hands was regarded as something sinful that required, not only, an explanation but also an apology.\textsuperscript{6} Thus religion was regarded as the prime source behind the malfunctioning of the medieval European societies.\textsuperscript{7}

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., p. 26.
\textsuperscript{5} Though secularism emerged as rational reaction against the hegemonic role of the Church in Europe, yet its European context has been standardized to formulate certain principle towards all the religions (including Islam), with its history which largely differed from that of the Europe church.
\textsuperscript{7} Heredia and Mahtias, n. 6, p. 20.
Therefore, drastic measures were initiated to strip the Catholic Church’s off most of its authority, and got it replaced by a modified or “civil religion,” which could accommodate the norms of secular modernization, besides catering to the religious needs of emerging pre-industrial revolution civil societies. Civil religion did not negate the basics of Christianity, as it aimed at rationalizing it; and that rationalisation was regarded as *sine qua non* for the civil religion. This enhanced the hypotheses that accommodatability of various aspects of modern Western secular societies in religion emerged as a necessary need. Therefore, religious rationalisation became an indispensable ingredient for modern secular society.

Civil religion, which broadly embodied a modified religion, became the secularist substitution for the traditional religions. Yet Christianity has always been regarded as one of the main pillars of the European civilization. So, it would not be possible to negate the imprint of the Christian experience to which Europe was...

---

*Ibid., p. 17.*  
*Ibid., p. 17.*  
exposed, and from which the salient features of European nationalism, in the eighteenth century, stemmed.\textsuperscript{11}

This would lead us to conclude that there is less difference between Christianity and civil religion.

Secularism and Christianity

The French revolution (1789), significantly imbued the major public issues in Europe, where socio-political issues were no longer dictated by religion; and its impact remarkably diluted the Church influence on European nationalism, which was also affected by the echo of the French Revolution and its aftermath.\textsuperscript{12} However, this did not completely waive the impact of the Church exposure on Europe. That exposure remarkably tinted the imperial-colonial policies, almost in all the colonies.\textsuperscript{13}

The Church's imprints on the European societies, however, continued till date, and in the United States of America (USA), for

\textsuperscript{12} Weiss and Green, n. 15, p. 274.
\textsuperscript{13} Some historian traced the genesis of the Western imperialism to the period when the Ottoman empire (1500-1750) was declining. It reached its height during (1870-1914), and was noticeably carried the features of the industrial revolution. See: Weiss and Green, n. 15, p. 269.
instance, Church enjoys considerable clout in the decision making circles.\textsuperscript{14}

Though, secularism appeared as an antithesis to the religions' socio-political role, yet Christianity is considered to be a bridge for the Western secular-culture to the rest of the world, in the past, and more conspicuous, in the present, after the end of the Cold War.\textsuperscript{15}

Secularism as an Ideology

The industrial revolution in Europe, in the sixteenth century, was a watershed in world history, for it actuated the expansionist policy of the Western countries spoused with the search for cheap resources and new markets. This declared the dawn of a long era of colonization, (1870-1914), which imposed a significant change in the socio-political, economic structure in most of the world societies.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14} Secular values enhanced its grip over the European societies due to the significant disassociation of religion from public live. Now there is an emerging tendency to revive, not only, the Church's traditional role, but also to vocally articulate its views on several socio-political issues. In the United States of America, for example, a strong line of thought assumes that: "democracies can not subsist without a Christian orientation." Leslie Griffin, ed., \textit{Religion and Politics}, (Noter Dame: Review of Politics, 1988), pp. 135-36, 143-44.
\textsuperscript{15} Barnes, n. 20, p. 947.
\textsuperscript{16} Weiss and Green, n. 15, p. 270.
Subsequently, all political trends which emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth century, such as nationalism, liberalism, constitutionalism and democracy, were encouraged by the industrial revolution.\footnote{Barnes, n. 20, p. 953.}

Obviously, to influence the colonies' socio-political structure, was a prime task for colonial authorities. It required a conducive atmosphere to facilitate its achievement. However, it was projected as a 'sacred mission' that carried on the task to civilize mankind through its variegated social fabrics, in order to transform the socio-political orders of the colonies into one that could be streamlined with the Western civilization.\footnote{Mark Juergensmeyer, \textit{Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State}. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 14. In the same subject see also R. Peet, \textit{Global Capitalism Theories of Social Development}, (London, New York: Routledge, 1991), p.46.}

Secularism, like any other theory of social sciences intended to give a method and perspective.\footnote{Robert Dubin, \textit{Theory Building}, (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1978), p. 43.} It constituted the crux of an ideology that guided the imperial-West in its 'mission of civilization', and significantly characterized its colonial policy. Ideology is defined as:

\begin{quote}
A way of life ... a system of ideas adopted to the lives of some particular group of people, with some particular identity or set
of identities. A general system such as Christianity, or liberalism, or nationalism, comes to have a particular shape in a particular time and place, where it meets specific problems. It becomes the ruling ideology when the problems it meets are those of the most powerful class. The most subtle ideologies are not merely accommodations to greed, or to the simplest needs of the people, though. They must solve the problems of existence, of meaning of life, of meaning of social order.  

Accordingly, secularism was regarded as an ideology and on its base the colonial-imperial powers imbued values, expectations and culture of their subjects, by dismantling or marginalizing the subject’s established socio-political set-up.

Furthermore, the colonial powers subtly worked for the dilution of aspects that carried a substantial contradiction with the basic concepts of secularism, in their subjects’ culture and religions. So, through long term policy, they replaced the essence of the indigenous culture by a completely alien model, which was anything but indigenous.

---

21 Peet, n, 23, p. 46.
22 In the case of Sudan, the colonial authority did its utmost to encourage non-political Islam, in form of Sufi orders to reduce the efficacy of any Mahdiyya-like resurgence.
This gave the colonial-West a pioneering intellectual edge over their subjects, and encouraged it to standardize its model, and globalize it, as it unequivocally appeared after the end of the Cold War and the demise of the erstwhile Soviet Union.

Secularism as a Culture

The colonial powers, were mainly guided by their capitalist interests. Hence, the expansion of their influence and domination over the new colonies, was identical with that vested interests. Bugh, it was expressed as if it was a true mission of civilization, for the subjects of those colonies. This postulated that: the pursuance of the mission of civilization would not have been possible without eradicating all the hindering trends in their subjects' cultures. 23

The appropriate method to achieve that task, was to expand their cultural influence, as intellectual emotion could be formed mainly through education. 24 So, greater importance was given to put in motion an educational system, which could oroduce up a

23 Historically, the major challenge for that mission of civilization and its cultural values, as in the case of the Sudan, was constituted by the legacy of the Mahdiyya Islamic state; and in the contemporary Sudan, the Islamic movements represents the major threat to the basic concepts of the secular-Western democracy.

new breed of natives strongly committed to the Western secular culture.

The colonial administrations sponsored the educational system in the colonies. Education in some cases was directly sponsored by the Western Christian missionaries, as happened in the case of the Sudan. The ultimate goal of the imperial powers was to perpetuate cultural domination and economic exploitation of their colonies, by projecting their model of secular democracy as an appropriate way for the socio-political development in the colonies’ post-independence era. To insure the continuity of the implanted model in their colonies, indigenous natives were engaged. 25 This revealed another stage of cultural colonization of the indigenous natives.

The upshot of the secular education policy shortly emerged in the form of a “die-hard Westernized elite,” who were highly abreast and influenced by the Western culture and values. 26

26 According to John L. Espesito, the covert aim behind the establishment of Gordon Memorial Collage (GMC), in 1906, at Khartoum, Sudan, was to produce a “die-hard Westernized elite.” John L. Espesito, Voice of the Resurgent Islam, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 232. Based on that one could presume that the prime objective for colonial-sponsored secular educational institutions, which were established in various colonies, was to produce a secular elite. GMC was established to commemorate the British national hero Charles Gordon, who was killed by the Mahdist soldiers in the liberation war of Khartoum, in 1885.
English, French, Spanish and Portuguese, as the languages of the biggest imperial powers in the world, have largely replaced, in importance, the local languages, specially among those secular-Western educated elite, who were trained by the colonial authorities to help in the governance of their respective countries, whose administrative systems were devised on the basis of Western paradigms.  

Their participation exposed them to various aspects of secular Western culture, and pushed them to further cling themselves to the idea of secular nationalism, which was supported mainly by the secular elite.  

Those secular elites, later formed and led the national liberation movements in their respective countries, which propelled them to ascend to the helm, ahead of the traditional leadership. Secular nationalism, for those elites became a pre-requisite for liberal democracy and modernization.  

This on the other hand, highlighted the importance of religious rationalisation, since modernization (as viewed in the  

---

28 Juergensmeyer, n. 23, pp. 12-13
29 Ibid., pp. 12-13. In the case of Sudan, secular elite led the national liberation movement, when they formed the Graduate General Conference in February 1938.
30 Fery, n. 7, p. 30.
contemporary West) means the role religion in the society ought to be benign, and not to actively get involved in the socio-political development of societies.\textsuperscript{31}

As religions in many non-western states are regarded by the West as highly combustible; hence, the only way to reduce that combustibility is to marginalize its socio-political role. In other words, to ‘privatize’ its role, specifically, in the religious societies.\textsuperscript{32}

The privatization of religion is aimed at limiting its socio-political role, and obviously its ability to play a critical political role among its followers, because that may hamper the continuity of the colonial cultural influence on their colonies.

Undoubtedly, the West’s technological advancement and massive economic strength, apart from its military supremacy, made the secular model, rationally, more acceptable to the secular nationalists elite to adopt and emulate as an ideal way for their countries’ future.

Later, after de-colonization when most of the colonies got their independence, Westminster model of democracy was almost followed in all the former British colonies, spoused by different

\textsuperscript{31} Juergensmeyer, n. 23, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p. 2.
degrees of secularism, which composed the salient feature of modernization.\textsuperscript{33}

Henceforth, the path of modernization seemed to be predetermined for the colonies by the colonizers, without the consent of its people, or any form of mandate for the ruling secular nationalist elite.

It is widely presumed that the advanced countries have always been more inclined to transmit picture of themselves to the less developed nations.\textsuperscript{34} In other words, inducing backward countries to adopt the Western model. And on the same pattern the attitudes of the contemporary advanced countries persisted towards the less developed ones, in which the previous imperial nations would not be excluded.\textsuperscript{35}

This may lead us to hypothesize that the less developed nations left with no options, are forced to modify their systems and to submissively accept and to largely streamline its system to be more compatible with the Western-originated paradigms of the secular modern state.


\textsuperscript{34} Dills, n. 39, p. 386.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 387.
Thus, secular democracy constituted the main concept of that paradigm. Secularism and democracy, thus, were regarded as essential ingredients for modernization.

Hence, secularized institutions were also regarded as a prerequisite for modernization to be stimulated and actuated in any society. Therefore, culture in the contemporary modern states has always been linked to secularism.

As modernization has been correlated to secularism, this greatly reduces the determinant role of religion, in almost all the socio-political arenas. This remarkably moulded the pattern of personal human behaviour, which became more secularized and less religiously bound, specially in the intelligentsia circles.

The reduction in the influence of the church 'obscurantism', paved the way for secular cultural values to pervade influentially. Nonetheless, secularism could not completely nullify the impact of religion on the societies. According to Max Weber:

---

37 Heredia and Mahtias, n. 6, p. 15.
38 Ibid., pp. 15-17.
Secularization is rationalisation of religion; it is concomitant with rationalisation process that affects other social phenomena and is ultimately bound up in a reciprocal casual relation with them. It is this process of rationalisation that results in the social differentiation and institutional specialization that eventually makes possible the autonomy of social institutions apart from the 'sacred canopy' that religion once provided. 39

This encompasses that secularism is a comprehensive process of rational social transformation, claiming to modernize societies away from the influence of the 'sacred canopy' of religions. Consequently, that process had shrunk to a great extent the church's role, from public lives and arrested it within the clerical activities.

However, the repercussions of modernization that aimed at obscuring religion's role, cast its shades on the process of identity development in many former colonies.

In accordance with that, secular elite at the helm believed to base the concepts of their respective countries' identities on secular pillars, while marginalizing the impact of the indigenous

39 Ibid., p. 17.
cultures and values. This created a form of identity trap, as in the case of many Muslim countries.

Identity Trap

By the end of the de-colonization era, secular culture almost inculcated its imprints on the socio-political fabric of various colonies, and made profound alterations on the prevalent natives’ indigenous culture.

As seen earlier, secularism constituted an ideology of its own, and it is presumed that “each ideology incorporate an identity frame,” and to thrive that frame of identity, a system of social relations was required.\(^{40}\)

Since it was impractical to completely replace the widely followed indigenous cultural identity, by an alien one professed by small native elite at the helm, it entailed that the indigenous identity be moulded and streamlined to accommodate the Western paradigms.\(^{41}\)

The process of imposing smaller, well positioned, elite group’s identity frame on the majority’s identity, came to be known as identity trap. It was defined as: “An identity frame

\(^{40}\) Preez, n. 25, pp. 67-71

\(^{41}\) Sills, n. 30, vol. 9-10, p. 392.
which cannot be negotiated in a social transformation. It allows too little room for manoeuvre ... and too little freedom".\(^42\)

The identity trap was more conspicuous in the societies where the wide indigenous frame of cultural identity, could not be assimilated into the smaller alien identity frame of the secular identity. The later led to complicated problems in many Muslim countries, and Sudan's case is unique among them.

### Democracy

The idea of democracy evolved in the first half of the fifth century BC in the Greek and Roman societies.\(^43\) However, in every society the capacities of its members to develop was best highlighted by consent rather than coercion.\(^44\)

This entails that the socio-political set up of a given society, structurally, stems from its culture and tradition, in order to insure the smooth development of its system, and not on the base of any alien imposed concepts.

---

42 Preez, n. 25, p. 71.
Therefore, democracy is a human exercise being practised in all the societies (whether in advanced or primitive) but in different patterns and methods. However, the equilibrium of power is an important pre-request for its continuation. Therefore, to develop the principles of political power, the maintenance of that equilibrium is possible through public consent.

The concept of contemporary secular democracy was evolved in Europe; it was initially a secular movement which was forced upon the reluctant church in Europe, which then became a popular force in the societies.

However, secular democracy along with its culture, was later inculcated by the colonial authorities in the African and Asian societies although, ostensibly, as a part of the comprehensive package of the 'mission of civilization'. In the course of that civilizing mission, secular culture was indoctrinated in the mind of the secular-Western educated natives. Accordingly, Western model of democracy was projected to them as the best alternative for prosperous development of their respective countries.

---

46 Ibid., p. 227.
47 According to Norbert Elias, that mission required the streamlining of the natives' culture into the culture of the accidental settlers, so as to assimilate it into the culture of the "white mother-countries or the father-land," in order to incorporate the natives'
Democratic Institutionalization

For democracy to flourish, secularism, as stated earlier, was regarded as a crucial pre-requisite. This showed that in the societies where religion formulate principal factor, a great deal of modification ought to be made to assimilate religion in the secular democratic structure.

Islam like any mature religion presumed that it is a superior religion. Accordingly, Shari’a, (the law of Islam) should govern individual Muslims, society and state as well.

Therefore, the Western perception of secular democracy could hardly be applicable in the Muslim societies, without its secular auxiliary. Subsequently, civil religion, which could digest the secular culture, began to surface as the modern alternative that, unlike rigid religion, provided suitable environment for democracy to grow.

Civil Religion

culture into a net work, which the West constituted its center. The repercussion of that policies, in the areas that came under direct beam of civilization, was a tremendous change in the structure and in patterns of human relations in its societies. Norbert Elias, The Civilizing Process, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), pp. 461-62.

48 Ibid., p. 237.
Civil religion in the West, as in the USA, for instance, is "based on Christian perspectives and rituals that are no longer assumed by the majority to be Christian, but include tenets which all may share."\textsuperscript{49} These widely shared tenets, though it had a Christian pillar, has been propagated as salient features of the modern Western culture, ostensibly not in any religious context, but freed from its Christian background.

In the light of this presumption, the process of globalization of the Western culture through democracy, covertly corresponds with the Christian background and the tenets of the civil religion; and at the same time directly negating the basic principles of Islam.

The ramification of this created a dichotomy in many Muslim societies between the popularly supported Islamic culture, and the elite's imposed civil religion and its cultural values. The dichotomy, however weakened the internal strength of the Muslim societies, which historically, got their superiority, partly, because of their strong Islamic unity in relations to outside world.\textsuperscript{50}


Thus civil religion largely helped in dismantling and transformation of the socio-political structure of various non-western societies, in order to pave the way for the Western paradigm. The course of that process subsequently, dictated the marginalization of Islam’s socio-political role, as an essential condition to enable the assimilation of Muslim societies in the Western secular culture, which hardly contradict with the concept of civil religion.

Democracy and Modernity

The contemporary secular democracy, which is presently propagated by the United States-led West, is inextricable from the European-grown and developed concept of modernity.

Modernity is traced back, according to some scholars, to the seventeenth century.\(^{51}\) However, many scholars emphasized the impact of the nineteenth century to modernity, when social science became more institutionalized in the post-industrial Europe.\(^{52}\) Also some other scholars referred its history to the beginning of the twentieth century, when the parameters of modern social order

---

52 Ibid., p. 166.
began to emerge in the form of secularized culture and values, in the industrially developed societies of Europe. According to the Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, modernism is defined as:

A movement in Catholic religious thought, and particularly in Biblical criticism, that developed in the late 19th century and spent itself, as a distinctive movement, before the World War I. It aimed at bringing Catholic traditions into closer accord with modern views in philosophy and other scholarship and with recent social political views.

The modern philosophy, to which Catholic religion's tradition had to be brought closer, directly corresponded to the secularism. Thus, if the Catholic religion was regarded as an obstacle for the assimilation in that secular modern philosophy, obviously, other religions and traditions could also stand as a hinder for the assimilation in the modern philosophy of secular culture.

Modernization in any society is based on two main pillars: institutionalization of modern values of secularism and democracy:

53 Ibid., p. 166.
and the adaptability of the concerned society to those modern values, through education, and various methods of cultural influences.\textsuperscript{55}

Notwithstanding, the widely prevalent modern secular values yet they are still viewed in some parts of the world as alien and "self evidently opposed to local tradition."\textsuperscript{56} Not only they are seen as obscuring local traditions, but even replacing them by the characteristics of the modern secular values.

Subsequently, certain degree of disintegration of the traditional elements of that society must take place, to enhance the prevalence of the required change, whose nucleus constituted the predilection for liberty, through which the secular modern values could be assimilated.\textsuperscript{57} Predilection for liberty is, partly understood as personal freedom, which directly related to social mobility.

Social mobilization, on the other hand, is a term coined by Karl Deutsch, from which the theory of modernization was derived. It is defined as:

\textsuperscript{55} Jain, n. 39, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{57} Pect, n. 26, p. 27.
The process in which major clusters of old social, economic and psychological commitments are eroded and broken and people become available for new pattern of socialization and behaviour... this in turn depends on things like exposure to modern life, the media, urbanization, literacy and so on.58

From the two above mentioned definitions one could deduce that secularism and its culture are inextricable from the process of modernization, which is also regarded as one of the prerequisite for democracy.

The secular-Western educated elites natives played pivotal role to bring the modern secular culture from the ‘realm of theory to the sphere of practice’ in their respective societies.

Therefore, the paradigm of that culture was not the choice of the people, as it was propagated, but was sustained and nourished by secular-Western educated elite at the helm of these societies.

This created a schism between the ruling secular-elite and the masses, which resulted in several anomalies in the socio-political development of many countries, including Sudan.

58 Ibid., p. 27.
This dichotomy revealed part of the dimensions of the unequal relations, drawn by the colonial West, towards their former colonies. Subsequently, this imbalance, continues as a relation between the powerful and poor states, center and periphery. This was aptly described by Karl Marx that: “The country that is more advanced industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future.”\textsuperscript{59} According to Marx, the less developed countries would not be emulating the model of the advanced one, but in fact would rather ape that model. By so doing they would perpetually remain in the bondage of the West.

As a result, the indigenous culture would be greatly eroded, and largely replaced by the advanced countries’ paradigm. The palpable consequences of that is best represented by the contemporary predicaments such as socio-political and economic situation in most of the less developed countries.

Therefore, democracy in those societies became a means to legitimize the secular-minority elite’s option.\textsuperscript{60} In other words, democracy as practised in many Muslim countries, could only be

\textsuperscript{59} Dills, n. 39, p. 386.
\textsuperscript{60} Algeria, Turkey and the Sudan could be sighted as in examples, where the secular minority elite, who were generally protected by the army, imposed their will against the majority’s Islamic option.
understood as a mean to manipulate the public opinion in a way that perpetuate their secular perception.

Adopting the Western secular paradigm, on the other hand, would clearly serve Western interests. This could be felt from the statement of Mr. Paul Dobriansky, who served in the State Department under Regan administration, when he said: “a word of democracy engenders international environment most conducive to US political, economical, and cultural interests.”

This may explain the American desire in the post-Cold War to advance the cause of democratization in the former Eastern Bloc, and in the Third World in general. However, ‘pushing democracy’ is regarded by many as ‘pushing American values’, as implied from Dobriansky’s statement. One could also perceive from the statement that endeavours to globalize secular democracy, and project it as a universal modern civilization is a Western idea.

Undoubtedly, in the aftermath of the Cold War the Western culture has become dominant throughout the world, but its predomination does not means it is accepted by all humanity.

---

62 Ibid., p. 203.
Islam and Democracy

As seen earlier from our discussion on the relation between democracy, modernity and secularism, we may postulate that the Western concept of democracy is based on two pillars: modernity and secularism.

Apart from democracy, the realm of these two concepts hardly permits religions (specifically Islam) to flourish. It is assumed that "religious activists, although modern, violates the principles of secularism enshrined in the ideology of modernism." Therefore, religious people in general are labelled as anti-modern, because of their reluctance to accept the global concept of secular ideology. Furthermore, for many in the West, Islam through Shari'a exerts firm control on the entire life of its followers, and therefore, it does not accept the secular Western model.

This may also mean that the increasing role of Islam in addressing Muslim societies' socio-political needs in many

---

63 All schools of Islamic thought assumes that Islam should governs all the spheres of life, this led to its direct confrontation with the concept of secularism in the Western democracy.
64 Juergensmeyer, n. 23, p. 204.
65 Ibid., p. 5.
66 Johnson, n. 51, p. 236.
countries, is viewed by the West as posing a threat to their interests, which is represented by globalizing secular democracy (after the collapse of communism).\(^6^7\)

That negative Western perception about Islam may justify their explicit support to the 1992 coup, which deprived the Islamist in Algeria a legal electoral victory.\(^6^8\) This at the same time enhanced political skepticism within Islamist circles over the Western propagated democracy.

As per the definition of John May, the Western model of democracy is a "necessary correspondence between act of governance and the equally-weighted felt interests of citizens with respect to those acts."\(^6^9\)

Thus, hypothetically, the interests of the citizens in relation to the attitudes of government should be in a state of equilibrium, whether, this interest is pro or anti-secular.

But in reality, liberal democracy has become a tool in the hands of the triumphant West, in the course of its endeavour to

---

\(^{67}\) The growing ability of Islam to address its followers' needs, appeared by the tremendous change in the vocabulary of the Arab nationalism in favour of religious symbolism, during the Kuwait liberating war, when Iraq decided to add the word: Allahu Akbar (God is the Greatest) to its flag. For more details see: Dan Tschirgi, ed., *The Arab World Today*, (Boulder & London: Lynne Piener Publishers, 1994), p. 209.

\(^{68}\) Ibid., p. 209.

globalize secular culture, in which Islam appears to be a hindrance for spreading that culture among the Muslim societies.

The sharp difference between the two ideologies appears in various degrees and strength; in a form of political competition as in Jordan. In some other countries, it exemplifies an explicitly demonstrated hatred, as in Turkey. Egypt, is another example, in which the official policy towards those group of citizens (labelled as fundamentalists), is expressed in parochial antagonism that diminishes the chances of any initiative for serious peaceful dialogue between the two sides. In Algeria, the level of dispute has exacerbated and almost transformed into civil war-like situation; and in the case of Sudan, during the third multiparty democracy, the schism between the two reached its climax.

As the surge for Islamization is mushrooming in many Muslim countries, which is viewed as undesirable development in the course of globalizing secular democracy, subsequently, the issue of human rights has been increasingly used by the West, and international institutions to implicate regimes of Islamic orientation. This is despite the wide difference in the perception

73 Ibid., pp. 20-28.
of the concept of human rights, between the West and many non-western countries.

Consequently, the importance of that issue is growing as an effective tool in the hands of the West against many non-western countries and Sudan is one of them.

The question of imposing secular-democracy along with economic liberalization, is largely perceived by many Muslim scholars as coercion, which could be regarded as an anti-thesis for democracy.74

The American policy and interests chiefly contributed to factors that generated the feeling of anti-West in general and anti-American in specific, in many Muslim societies.

However, the US administration emphatically denies that it has any intentions to impose its image on any other states, as per the statement of Herman Cohen, a senior foreign policy planner, and a former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, that: "while the USA favours a multiparty system, who are we to say it is good for everybody."75

---

75 Moss, n. 68, p. 204.
Anyhow, accusing some countries, (by the State Department), that they are sponsoring international terrorism, without providing evidence in all the cases, would, obviously, refute Cohen's statement.

This may lead us to conclude that the colourless experience of the Church in Europe, formulated a generic negative perception, not only about the erstwhile reign of the clergy in Europe in the past, but also about any religion that dare to thwart the trends of modern secular democracy. This dimmed the Western perception of other religions, as it began to see as obscurantist anti-modern.76

Contrary of that, Islam has always been looked upon by its followers as a masses' religion, which provides a complete way of life. Hence, the presumption that Western-inspired secular democracy could function smoothly in the Muslim societies, without thwarting Islam from playing a determinant role, seemed to lack in-depth understanding of the principles of Islam. Since, it (secular democracy) does not tolerate change beyond a narrow band of variation within its existing system, therefore, it is irrational optimism to think that secular democracy can tolerate any political role for Islam even in the Muslim society.77

76 Ayoob, n. 79, p. 55.
77 Siddiqui, n. 14, p. 7.
Secularism and Democracy

in the Sudan

The killing of Lord Charles Gordon, the governor of the Sudan during the Turko-Egyptian rule (1821-1885), by the Mahdist solders in January 1885, had inflamed the British public, who saw in him a "Christian hero who could somehow save the situation in this savage land of alien faith." This gave a new dimension to the process of secularization in the Sudan; in which the Mahdiyya Islamic state was established on the ruins of the defeated Turko-Egyptian colonial rule.

After the re-conquest of the Sudan in 1898 by the Anglo-Egyptian army, the paramount task before the colonial authority was to eliminate any possibility of another Mahdiyya revolt, and to put an end to the religious traditions that prevailed in the society during the earlier Mahdiyya epoch. In lieu of them the new colonial authority worked for abolishing them and inculcating

secular culture, the principles and concepts which were fundamentally different from the traditional one.80

Henceforth, secularization in the Sudan was a long and complicated process, which aspired to dilute the revolutionary spirit of the Mahdiyya, (which was deeply implanted in the mind of its supporters), and replace it by sectarian and tribal loyalties.

However, through secular Western education, the new middle class of natives, largely abreast by Western secular culture, were incorporated in low level of administration of the country. As a result of that policy, secularism was introduced in the post-independence Sudan, mainly by the secular Western-educated Sudanese nationalist elite.

Genesis of the National Movement

Secularism spread its impact on the national movement from its inception, while democracy followed after the formation of political parties in the 1940s.

The first organized national movement in the Sudan declared its formation, by November 1920, when an anonymous pamphlet, signed in the name of "sincere national advisor," was

covertly distributed by mail in Khartoum. Its main substance was on the need for greater role of Islam in the society; it also stressed the importance of unity and co-operation with Egyptian people, who like the Sudanese, shared the agony of colonial hegemony.

From that pamphlet, one could apprehend that the Islamic tone was vocal; which means that the impact of secularism on the nationalists, at that stage, was yet to appear. Although, the movement was more inclined towards the indigenous culture, and critical of the role of the sectarian and tribal figures, who for preserving their interests with the colonial authority, took a negative stand against the said pamphlet. Yet, the pamphlet could be regarded as a precursor to the establishment of the first nationalist organisation in the Sudan. However, Egypt’s 1919 national uprising against the British rule, notably stretched its influence on the Sudanese nationalists at that time.

The growing nationalist feeling, later culminated in the “White Flag League” (WFL), on 20.5.1924, which planned to develop a system based on indigenous values to enhance unification with Egypt. Its emergence was a gloomy sign for

---

82 Ibid., pp. 130-33.
83 Ibid., p. 130-37.
84 Ibid., p. 138.
both the sectarian leaders and the colonial administration, who viewed its members as “troublemaker,” and a mere stooge for the Egyptians in the Sudan. The efficacy of WFL, however, proved by the subsequent events to be truly nationalist, and not as propagated by the British administration. In fact, its relations with the Egyptian leaders was very weak. Anyhow, its impact shortly transformed into a massive public mobilization against the British colonial administration in the Sudan; which largely eroded the influence of traditional religious and tribal figures.

For Abd al-Rahman Al-Mahdi, the patron of Ansar sect, WFL was an “off-shoot of Egyptian nationalism which had nothing to do with the true national aspiration of the vast majority of the Sudanese.” His traditional antagonism towards Egypt, which was against the establishment and existence of the Mahdiyya state, actuated him to back the idea of forming a graduate club in 1919, which later constituted the hub of the Graduate General Congress.

The Western concept of nationalism is generally associated with “civilization and progress,” which are indispensable from the

---

85 Ibid., pp. 138-39.
86 Ibid., p. 143.
87 Ibid., p. 140.
contemporary concept of modernity and secularism. Therefore, the colonial administration was greatly disturbed by WFL's activities, which was about to precipitate a complete revolt against them by July and August 1924, not only, in the capital city, Khartoum, but also in other areas, as happened in Port-Sudan (Sudan's main sea port). Ultimately the colonial administration extinguished the 1924 WFL revolt in a brutal manner.

Sectarianism and the G.G.C.

Some of the stalwarts of WFL later founded the national movement in the country, which first emerged by the 1930s, as a forum aimed at attracting the Sudanese nationals, and as a prelude to gather themselves in one national body, that would reflect their own identity, which was desired to be least influenced by sectarianism, to lead the freedom struggle. Their efforts bore fruit by February 1938. The new body was called the Graduate General Congress (GEC). The GEC, structurally, was quite different from WFL. It was largely influenced and guided by the Western-educated

---

89 Lewis, n. 4, p. 67.
90 Haj Hammad, n. 88, p. 142.
91 Ibid, p. 211.
graduates, mainly from Gordon Memorial College (GMC), which was established in 1906, at Khartoum. With a covert aim to produce a “die-hard Westernized elite”, highly abreast and influenced by the Western culture and its values; however, they were also propounding the idea of a democratic Sudan united with Egypt, under the Egyptian crown.

It was also inspired by the Indian National Congress (INC). The latter’s victory in achieving independence for India had considerably boosted the GEC’s struggle for freedom.

But unlike the INC, the GEC did not have a charismatic leadership as Mahatma Gandhi, and it was largely an elite organisation, as its membership was restricted only for graduates.

For the British administration, secular culture was a prerequisite to create a conducive environment for co-operation with native people. It also worth mentioning here, that the idea of the GEC was even blessed by the British administration; mainly to prevent the GEC from emulating the Egyptian nationalists.

---

92 Ibid., pp. 209-14.
97 Ibid., p. 213.
Through their rapport with the GEC, the British paved the way for more co-operation with the senior graduates, rather than the juniors who appeared radical.  

However, the GEC's secular orientation seemed to have created an early stage of identity trap, between their secular identity compared to the Islamic one of the masses. Since majority of the people were not exposed to Western-secular education, hence they were more inclined towards their primordial-Islamic-tribal oriented identity.

If the GEC had eased its membership, their identity would obviously have been diluted, and they would palpably lose control over the organisation through which they aspired to eradicate the sectarian and tribal influence on the country's socio-political development.

However, the 'opportunity cost' of their perception, of making the GEC an exclusively graduate organisation, had deprived them from directly leading and mobilizing the masses. As a result their organisation lost its dynamism on the eve of independence, when the political arena was virtually controlled by the two sectarian parties.

---

Ibid., pp. 212-17.
As aforementioned, the British colonial administration was well acquainted with the political role of both the GEC and the sectarian forces. Yet, both the GEC and sectarian leaders were sincerely nationalist. However, this may lead us to an important assumption about the nature of relations between the sectarian groups and the senior graduates.\(^9^9\)

For some of those senior graduates, who maintained close relations with the British authority, working under the religious canopy of sectarianism, would no doubt protect their own future interests. In fact, absence of a collective political ideology to organize all the graduates together in one front, resulted in their fragmentation in a wide spectra of political ideologies. They had scattered into three main ideologies: the left and secular; the pro-sectarianism and traditional order, and a few hard core Islamist.\(^1^0^0\)

So, unlike the INC, the GEC could not successfully become a melting pot for all the people, nor could it play a substantial role in bringing true democracy to the Sudan; through which they could liberate the people from the firm grip of sectarian loyalties. Since sectarian parties lacked the basic democratic features, its

---

\(^9^9\) Actually both the sects were competing to polarize greater number of the graduates. This polarization later led to the fragmentation of the graduates. *Ibid.*, pp. 215, 220-24.

programmes, were anything but merely sects' centred. The GEC members fall prey to the polarization of the two sectarian parties.\textsuperscript{101} This was regarded as a crucial mistake which ripped up any expectations for their organisation to shape the country's future. By the early 1940s emerged the sectarian parties, Umma (nation) of the Ansar sect, and National Unionist Party (NUP) backed by the Khatmiyya disciples.\textsuperscript{102}

Controlling of the political scene by the sectarian parties, for the colonial authority was a real success. In fact, the colonial authority stacked both the sects, and also favoured the secular-Western educated nationalist close rapport with the sectarian parties. In so doing so, the colonial authority attained the following:

I. Egypt's role was greatly marginalized from exerting a visible impact on the Sudanese national movement. Despite the fact that the national movement, in certain juncture, was more inclined to Egypt. Nonetheless, all the slogans like "unity of the Nile Valley," before the

independence did not materialize in the post-independence era. Considerable number of Sudanese elite were highly influenced by the British insinuated motto “Sudan for Sudanese”,\textsuperscript{103} propagated by Abd Al-Rahman Al-Mahdi and his Umma party and this further contained Egyptian influence in the Sudan.\textsuperscript{104}

II. The spirit of revolutionary Mahdiyya Islamic resurgence was almost tamed, since its patron Abd Al-Rahman al-Mahdi, expressed unshaken loyalty to the British.\textsuperscript{105} Al-Khatmiyya, on the other extreme, was in no a better position. Its leader Ali Al-Merghani’s relations with the British administration, motivated him to preclude any possibility for his sect to be influenced by Egypt, which could annoy the British interests in the Sudan. Therefore, the British administration managed to fulfil its policy in the Sudan by exploiting the animosity, and conflicting ambitions of the two ‘life-long foes’, who in-turn sought their fortune in the appeasement of the colonial administration; which created a conducive

\textsuperscript{103} Haj Hammad, n.88, p. 212.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., pp. 98-101.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., pp. 101-103.
environment for the British administration, who benefited from that cleavage.

III. By introducing secular education, a new class of Sudanese graduates, soaked up by the Western secular culture, emerged in the national forum, as a guard for the idea of the secular modern state model.

Ansar-Khatmiyya Rivalry

The schism between the Sudan’s two largest religious groups, Khatmiyya and Ansar, had deep repercussions on the country, from the eve of independence till the last multiparty era. This affected the progress of the country’s socio-political and economic orders.

The Merghaniyya Sufi tariqah (order) was a combination of many toraq, established by Abdallah Al-Merghani, (of Hijaz). It was introduced to Sudan by Mohamed Osman Al-Merghani in 1853. It spread in most of the Northern, Eastern and part of the Central Sudan. He always maintained good relations with the

---

106 In Sudan and most of West Africa, the Sufi order is known as tariqa (plural: toraq).
107 Haj Hammad, n. 88, p. 428.
Turk-Egyptian authority. Since he was more accommodative to their rule, they did not hamper his tariqa to flourish.

Unlike Al-Merghani, Al-Mahdi looked to the Turk-Egyptian rule as un-Islamic. This propelled him to establish an Islamic state based on the concept of Jihad against the alien rule.

Al-Merghani on the other extreme, saw in the growing Mahdist advancement (in the areas known to be part of his traditional domain), not only as an encroachment on his domain, but a real threat to the existence of his tariqa. More importantly, he also saw it as a direct danger to himself personally. Henceforth, he refused to entertain Al-Mahdi as a political or religious reformer. Instead, he regarded him as a foe and an arch rival. The advancement of his foe-rival, therefore, forced him to flee the country to Egypt, where he took asylum, and lived there till he died in 1886.

His son Ali Al-Merghani who succeeded him, returned to Sudan after his sojourn from Egypt. While in Egypt he established close relations with Sir Reginald Wingate, a senior intelligence officer in Egypt’s British colonial authority at that time who later became the Sudan’s Governor General. Al-Merghani, due to the

108 Warburg, n. 86, p. 21.
109 Haj Hammad, n. 88, p. 104.
strong backing of Wingate, was honoured with CMG title by the Queen Victoria.\textsuperscript{110} He also became the first Sudanese to get the title of ‘Sir’ in 1900, soon after the conquest.\textsuperscript{111}

Abd Al-Rahman Al-Mahdi too, was bestowed with the same title in 1926.\textsuperscript{112} He also became recipient to huge amount of financial assistance from the British administration, since 1919.\textsuperscript{113}

The relationship between the leadership and the masses structurally was based on loyalty to the houses of the two sects patrons, who represent, for the disciples Islamic authority. The two patrons and their houses, were largely symbolizing Islam, for their mostly uneducated followers. The colonial factor significantly contributed to enhance that situation, which reached to such an extent that the concept of sectarian loyalty among the many committed disciples came to be seen as a sacred religious duty. For the majority of the disciples in the two sects, being blessed by their patrons was a pre-requisite for a prosperous thrived life.\textsuperscript{114}

\textsuperscript{110} Warburg, n. 86, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{111} Haj Hammad, n.88, pp. 104-5.
\textsuperscript{113} Haj Hammad, n.88, p. 204.
\textsuperscript{114} For the most of the followers direct criticism of their sects patrons is ranked same as blasphemy. No doubt the spread of education in the rural areas has brought significant change in the concept and pattern of loyalty among disciples of two sects. Yet, the trends in the last Parliamentary elections, showed that the two sects were still having considerable support in the peripheries, mainly on the base of that loyalty, while Islamist and secularist drove backing from the centers.
According to this apprehension, loyalty, became an inherited element, in both the sects. This largely contradicted with the concept of loyalty in Islam.

Here one could hypothesize that the absence of feudalism in the social structure of the country was to a great extent substituted by religious loyalty, which was similar to feudal-like pattern in some aspects of the disciple-patron relations with their devoted-farmers.\textsuperscript{115}

Therefore, the relations between the two sects patrons with their disciples, in this context were a sort of feudalistic exploitative lineament, as they used their respective disciples, under the canopy of Islam, to achieve material and political ends.

The essence of that relationship did not witness any remarkable change after the merger of the secular elite in both the sects. Although they might be against the exploitative nature of the sectarian system unacceptable to them, but at the same time their Catholic marriage with sectarianism went on smoothly. As they could not politically survive on their own, so, sectarianism for them was the only vehicle which can lift them to the helm.

\textsuperscript{115} The phenomenon was more significant in the sect of Ansar, whose patron (Abd el-Rahman al-Mahdi) was running one of the Sudan’s largest privately hold agricultural projects.
In the light of this background, one could realize that the contemporary political difference between them goes back to the Mahdiyya era, and that is a multi-dimensional one. For besides their confronting political ambitions, they also belonged to different Islamic schools. In addition, the colonial policy of divide-and-rule had its negative impact on both of them.116

The Pre-Independence Era

The British colonial authority decided to treat Sudan as a separate administrative entity, through this policy they advanced the cause of the protagonists of independence (complete independence propagators) who were supported by the Umma party, and demanded an end to Egyptian-influence from Sudan. This policy simultaneously weakened the Khatmiyya-backed, protagonists of unity with Egypt (unionists).117

That was a triple-edge policy, through which Britain marginalized Egypt’s chances to influence national movement in the Sudan; and widened the rift between the two rivals (Ansar and Khatmiyya) on one hand, and manipulated both of them to see

117 Ibid., p. 127.
their future only through their relations with Britain, and not Egypt, as in the case of Khatmiyya.\textsuperscript{118}

However, political cleavage was not an exclusive feature of the two sects; for it cast its black shadows on the graduates, even before they established their GEC. That was way back in 1931, on the eve of the famous GMC students strike.\textsuperscript{119} Two lines of thought were evolved: the hard liners, who refused any flexibility in negotiating their demands with the colonial authority; and a more pragmatic group, which propagated more rationality in dealing with the colonial government. The latter got the backing of Ansar; while the earlier one was supported by Khatmiyya.\textsuperscript{120}

The rift among the graduates was aggravated by the sectarian interference, as the two groups received support, and were almost contained by the two competing sects.\textsuperscript{121} This aggravated the differences between them, by adding sectarian dimension to the problem; which gradually transferred most of the

\textsuperscript{118} Egypt used to consider Sudan, after its second conquest (the first one was the Turko-Egyptian), that (Sudan) its own had been restored to her. Ibid., pp. 126-7.

\textsuperscript{119} The international recession seriously debilitated Sudan’s economy, which mainly based on cotton production. The recession was, however, a golden chance for the British administration to reduce the impact of the nationalists from the government working force by canceling (1000) jobs from the civil service, and largely reduced the salaries of only Sudanese officers. This provoked the students of GMC, whose future fortunes were related only to the Sudan civil service. Anyhow, the strike became a national issue against the British colonialism, who intern threatened to shut down the GMC; that development enhanced the Ansar and Khatmiyya to interfere, to diffuse the tension.

\textsuperscript{120} Haj Hammad, n.88, pp. 192-93.

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., p. 321.
historical differences between the two rival-sects, to the graduate class.

Perhaps this might be one of the important motive, which later induced many of them to join one of the two sects. This resulted in intra-party differences, between the secular elite on one side, and the traditionalist in each party. In other words, between the propagators of a modern secular state, and the protagonists of an Islamic ruled Sudan.

If ideology is said to be a way of life, then secularism constitutes an ideology of its own. The strong impact of Islam, made it virtually impossible for the secular-educated nationalist elite to exert their influence on the country's polity from their own forum; unlike secular nationalists in many other Muslim states, where the socio-political role of Islam in their societies was greatly disrupted. The case of Turkey stands as a vivid example.

Therefore, the secular nationalist in the Sudan, realized the fact that evacuation of Islam from the political arena was impossible. Henceforth, the only alternative was to use the

---

123 Frye, n. 7, p. 8.
124 The secular nationalists, the secularists, or the secular forces in the case of the post-independence Sudan, constituted a combination of anti Islamization front, as exhibited in the election for the third democratic government 1986; the same pattern
accommodative religious-sectarian parties, as a suitable vehicle for their own cause.

The Mahdiyya disciples (Ansar) were permitted by the British authority to establish their own political party, on 28th January 1948, under the banner: “Sudan for the Sudanese.”

Their rival sect, al-Khatmiyya, on the other side, backed the National Unionist Party (NUP), which (in its inception) was more inclined towards the slogan of the unity of the Nile Valley, and sought to maintain friendly ties with Egypt. Thus Egypt saved no effort in supporting it.

Post-Independence Political Scene

It is assumed that nationalism often goes hand in hand with democracy. However, the Sudanese national movement by the time the country got its independence was almost fragmented, and the track of the GEC was virtually lost in the competition between the two sectarian parties, which were anything but democratic.

---

had been demonstrated almost in every election in the Sudanese universities students’ unions. So, the terms. secularists or secular forces, in the Sudanese context, is discerned as anti-Shari’a, or anti-Islamization.

126 NUP originated from the “Brothers Forum”, which was initiated by Isma’il Al-Azhari in 1943. It was mainly supported by the middle class, under the umbrella of Khatmiyya, Makki, n. 109, p. 30.
127 Mahgoub, n. 104, p. 175. Also see Fadl, n. 32, p. 492
Few months after the independence, the incumbent United Front Government decided to consider an attempt to draft a National Charter to formulate a vision for the country's future development. The idea did not attract the two sects. Presumably, they feared that the charter may take the matter out of their hand, as the idea did not emanate from them.

However, after the rejection of this attempt, differences began to loom between Khatmiyya and the NUP, which was composed of influential non-sectarian figures, such as Isma'il Al-Azhari, the country's first Prime Minister, whose emergence as a charismatic leader was viewed by the Khatmiyya as a potential threat to them. Consequently, they ceased their backing to the NUP, which was becoming influential.

The repercussion of that materialized in a sectarian alliance between Ansar and Khatmiyya, which dug the last nail in the coffin of the Khatmiyya-NUP alliance in July 1956. Shortly before this event Khatmiyya formed a new party, People's Democratic Party (PDP).¹²⁹

The sectarian alliance which overthrew al-Azhari's government, brought Abd Allah Khalil, from the Umma party, as

¹²⁹ Mahgoub, n. 104, pp. 175-76
Premier. This development has been described by Mohamed Ahmed Mahgoub (an elite from the Umma party), who held the post of Premier several times:

The alliance between AL-Mahdi and Al-Merghani was the most catastrophic in the history of the Sudan politics. The two life-long foes, prompted by their greed for power, their vanity and personal vested interests, sought to dominate the field of politics.\textsuperscript{130}

Both Umma and PDP were supported by the disciples of the two major sects; and they were also influenced by the secular elite, who constituted an influential minority. This strange combination eventually, inherited all the shortcomings of the traditional sectarianism, and the post-1931 cleavage among the graduates, unmistakably carved its marks on both the two parties.

The root of political crisis in the Sudan, like many other developing countries, is largely attributed to the colonial era, in which secular model was imposed and standardized.

In the light of that, the nationalist endeavours in the Sudan, was to revive an indigenous alternative model, to guide the nation

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., p. 176
towards the real source of its strength. But this was suppressed, which led to a deadlock.\textsuperscript{131}

The elite in the sectarian parties tried to amalgamate their concept of secular modern state with the prevailing traditional primordial Islamic culture. However, in the absence of a clear vision and widely accepted ideology, the overlapping of the secular identity with primordial Islamic one, failed to provide a proper model of rule in the three democratic experiments the country had.

Although it appeared easy to lead a national liberation movement (in a conducive environment, where people's emotions highly inflamed by the slogan of liberation) but to build a nation, was not an easy task; when both the secular elite, and the patrons of the two sects conspicuously lacked adequate vision which vindicated that the process of modernization in democratic governments of less developed societies, always generates a lot of difficulties and schisms among the traditionalist and modernist.\textsuperscript{132}

The repercussion of this had, therefore, characterized all the three democratic periods, by several imperfections.

\textsuperscript{131} Muddathir A. Rahim, n. 13, pp. 11-13.
In the light of the political development that took place, neither the secular elite could have their own secular forum to propagate secularism, nor could they completely merge in the religious-based sectarian parties, nor could they forget their differences, which further aggravated the already weakened structure of the two parties. So, all these factors arrested their capabilities to present a modern democratic system.

This created a unique situation in the Sudan, as it experienced neither a full-fledged secular democracy, as aspired by the secular elite, nor a real Islamic government, as propagated by the traditional Islamic sectarian parties.

Subsequently, the amalgamation of secular elite with sectarianism, which represented a synthesis between their two contradicting aspirations, largely lacked any clear principles or in-depth vision, and to some extent was of an opportunistic nature, despite the fact that some of those elites joined the two sects, under the influence of their sectarian background.

However, the amalgamation was an unmitigated contribution to the country’s socio-political and economic post-independence polity, as proved in the three subsequent multi-party reigns.
The Aftermath of October, 1964 Revolt

The intra and inter-sectarian relations between them and the secular groups was inadequate to present either a secular or an Islamic model. Therefore, most of the first democratic government's policies were not based on any well-defined strategy or clear principles. It seemed to merely stem from their tactical short-lived alliances, which aggravated the political arena, and invited the army to intervene for the first time. The intervention came only two years after independence, at the behest of the ruling Umma party, to curb what it viewed as a tangible threat to their continuation in power.\(^{133}\) The army Chief of the Staff, General Ibrahim Abbood, took over on 17\(^{th}\) November 1958.

The military interference led to the dissolution of the government of the two patrons' coalition. Surprisingly, it was hailed by the two patrons, who, interestingly, described it as a national act.\(^{134}\)

The coup marked an early signal of the danger to democratic rule and also indicated the crisis of multiparty

\(^{133}\) Haj Hamad, n. 88, p. 369.

\(^{134}\) Ibid., p. 371.
democracy in the Sudan.135 However, the down fall of the military regime by a popular uprising on 21st October 1964, showed that the popular demand for democracy was disproportionate with the preparedness of the political parties for it. Since, it failed to preserve and develop democracy in its first experiment; it was also an exposition of peoples’ predilection for democracy, which was unprecedented in the region.

The Sudan Communist Party (SCP),136 despite being small, was well organized which took advantage of the opportunity created by the collapse of Abbood regime, under the banner of the United Front of Professionals (UFP), in which the communists had an influential position.137 Although, not all the member of UFP had good rapport with leftist forces, but the common parameter that brought them together, was directly related to their aspirations to build a modern secular state.138

The secular-sectarian synthetic fabric was never based on mutual confidence. So, for the sectarian parties, the activities of

---

136 The Sudanese Communist Party, was a well organized party in the region. It had a strong hold in most of the country’s major trade unions, which were effectively used to serve its interest; the party and most of its senior leadership were liquidated by Nimieri, after their abortive attempt to overthrow him, in July 1971.
the UFP was, therefore, looked at by a suspicious eye. For it was aimed at gradual marginalization of sectarian political presence. This made all the post-October short-lived coalition governments stumbling around on what direction and principles the nation should be built.

Consequently, the failure of the modern secular forces in its endeavour to create a secular democratic model, exposed both: its inability to project its concepts in an acceptable manner; and the deficiency of those concepts to adequately address and mobilize masses, who yearned for better political participation. 139

The performance and the impact of the modern secular forces in the Sudanese society, revealed clear functional deficiency; that deficiency was described by Monsour Khalid, a former foreign affairs minister, who was known for his secular inclinations, that it was “like a thin cement layer plastered on a thick mud-built wall.” 140 In other words, secularization effect was just a superficial operation that did not go beyond the surface.

The close rapport of the left and secular forces with Khatmiyya, paved the way for coalition, between Umma and

139 Ibid., p. 92.
140 Ibid., p. 95.
Islamist, represented by the Islamic Charter Front. The latter coalition supported the demand for an Islamic constitution.

The Ansar-Islamists co-operation managed to attain what they described as a significant achievement against the communist party, after been charged with atheism and blasphemy, in November 1965. The incident was utilized by the Islamist, who skilfully mobilized very wide sections of the society in Khartoum and other cities, supported by Umma parties, which generated tremendous pressure which forced the government to dissolve the Communist party.

For the Islamists, communist public abomination largely served their long-term interests in curbing the effects of secularism on the society.

Interestingly, Khatmiyya-backed PDP stood against the decision to impeach the communists, and this might be viewed in the context of their rivalry to Ansar who backed the move. This also revealed the influence of the secular and leftists on the sect.

However, the Khatmiyya stand against the impeachment seemed to be right, as the incident brought a new turn in the

---

141 The incident took place when a communist student during a symposium on the Role of Women in Islam, insulted the prophet Mohamed and his family. The repercussions were largely politicized by the Islamist along with Umma party. Makki, n. 109, pp. 127-29.
country’s political scenario. It enhanced the communist and the secular forces to resort to their leftist and secular officers in the army. As a matter of fact, the communists planned to resort to the army (as a shortcut to power) crystallized long before their party being banned. 142

Moreover, the debilitating economic conditions and the worsening situation in the southern region, in the absence of cohesive government, encouraged the army to intervene.

It was unlike the earlier coup, in which Umma party primarily conspired with the army’s top brass. The second, bloodless coup, was initiated on 25th of May 1969, by middle-ranking Free Officers, as they called themselves. 143 It clearly bore an ideological flavour, as it was spearheaded by the well organized communist party.

The Secularist Dismay

The communist flavour was strongly felt in all the spheres of life since May 1969. 144

143 The Free Officers Organization was a secret organization of young officers in the army, established shortly after the Egyptian Revolution in 1952. It bore inclinations towards Pan-Arabism and leftist ideology, also it was highly abreast by the Egyptian Revolution. It was behind several abortive attempts on power, before their successful one of May 1969. For more details see: M.A.M. Karar, Sana war ai-Ghavboha: Al-Hizeb al-Shiyoo’i al-Sudani, Sana Ola May’yo, (Khartoum, Sudan: 1987), pp. 21-25.
144 Karar, n. 154, pp. 1 ff.
The leftist, socialist and Arab nationalist and their impact on May Revolution in its first phase,\textsuperscript{145} induced them to propagate secularism for their aspired modern state, at the expense of Islamic identity.\textsuperscript{146} This proved that the military junta regarded all the Islamic and sectarianist parties as reactionary forces, and their elimination was seen as an essential step to pave the way for progressive reforms.\textsuperscript{147}

The period of Nimieri could well be divided into three phases, (1969-1971) also known as the leftist era; the (1972-1976) period when the secularist had an upper hand and (1977-1985) period during which the Islamists dominated.

**The First Phase:** The regime during this period (1969-1971), was backed by the communists. During this phase the secular colour of the regime was not hidden, and this instigated

---

\textsuperscript{145} The 16 years of May Revolution rule could be divided into three phases: The socialist-secular phase, with strong leftist inclinations (1969-71); the secular phase(1972-76), which was featured by closer rapport with the West and the rich pro-West conservative Arab states; and the third phase (1977-84) which was dominated by anti-secular, pro-Islamic.


\textsuperscript{147} Ansar and the Islamist led political and armed resistance against Nimieri’s regime. It was in April 1970, that a savage extermination of Ansar’s two strong holds, at Wad Nubawi, in Omdurman, and their traditional base in Al-Gazira Abba, from which Al-Mahdi launched his movement in the early 1881, it is located about (200 km.) south of Khartoum, on the Western bank of the White Nile river. In those two confrontations the government used heavy weaponry, including the air force. Karar, n. 155, pp. 47-59.
opposition from the Ansar and Islamists, which for the first time carried arms against the regime.

The short-lived phase ceased as the 72 hours communist coup, of 19\textsuperscript{th} July, 1971, was branded as the most bloodiest and brutal in the Sudan's post independence history.\textsuperscript{148} As a result of the communist coup, relations between Nimieri and the communist elements were completely severed. It also correspondingly brought dramatic changes in his relations with the Eastern bloc,\textsuperscript{149} and gradual warning of ties with the West.

**The Second Phase:** (1972-1976), began with the launching of the Sudanese Socialist Union (SSU), as the regime's only recognized political organisation, in January 1972. Its paramount task was to erase the primordial tribal and sectarian-religious loyalties; and in lieu of it, its aim was to establish a modern secular state.\textsuperscript{150}

The SSU claimed to represent all spectra of the society, yet it excluded the communists, whose party and leadership were

---

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., pp. 93-105.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., p. 101. The abortive communist coup against Nimieri got immediate recognition by many Eastern bloc countries, this later motivated the regime to sharply reduced the level of relations with most of them, including the former USSR, which was pre-informed about the coup.
liquidated; and also the largest sects, Ansar and the Islamist for their opposition to the regime’s ideology.\textsuperscript{151} This period saw close rapport developing with the West, which helped the regime to achieve of a peaceful settlement of the southern Sudan dispute, on 3\textsuperscript{rd} March, 1973. It also coincided with burgeoning relations with the oil rich Arab regimes, which was reflected in relative economic progress, accompanied by relative stability encouraged by the drafting of the permanent constitution for the country. It greatly, enhanced the role of the pro-Western secular elite in the regime. The repercussion of this was tangibly noticed in drafting the secular constitution of 1973; another watershed of that phase.

The task of dismantling the traditional-primordial loyalties (which was deeply rooted in the country’s socio-political set-up), and replace it by the SSU, proved to be a difficult task. However, the SSU’s method to introduce its alternative identity, (which based on negating the traditional-primordial one), had resulted in an inevitable clandestine political war, between the government and the opposition. Nonetheless, to dissolve the sectarian and other political parties, did not actually mean terminating their existence. Thus, its members infiltrated into the regime’s, partly,

elected parliament known as the People’s Council. The pattern of 
participation and performance of the People’s Council, did not 
bring any qualitative improvement in the political system. Actually 
it only resulted in a cosmetic change on the impact of primordial 
loyalties.

In addition to that many primordial loyalty-bound members 
of the People’s Council, instead of co-operating with the 
government, were rather competing with it.\textsuperscript{152}

Moreover, the SSU’s lack of vision and ability to positively 
contribute towards solving important issues, such as, religion and 
state relations, governance complications in general, besides the 
in-effectiveness of the People’s Council, had notably, 
incapacitated the role of the two bodies (the SSU and the People’s 
Council). The repercussion of that was almost complete 
transference of power and authority, from these institutions to 
Nimieri, who became the supreme authority in the country.\textsuperscript{153}

So, political opportunism and corruption flexed its 
influence in all the spheres of the country’s polity to the extent

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., p. 38.
\textsuperscript{153} Abd Al-Latif Al-Boni, \textit{Tajribat Nimieri al-Islamiya fi al-Sudan}, (Khartoum: 
Institute of Research and Social Studies, 1995), p. 47.
that the experiment of secular state-controlled democracy increasingly seemed non-starter.

In the wake of that debilitating development, came the daring military attempt against Nimieri's regime in July 1976, which was organized by the opposition Ansar and the Islamists.\textsuperscript{154} Although it did not succeed militarily, but politically, it opened a window of opportunity for the opposition and the regime to venture for a political settlement. It also brought a good chance for the Islamists, who seemed to have succeeded in influencing the regime's last phase.

**The Third Phase: (1977-1984)** The year 1977 was a turning point as it witnessed an end of an era in which the secular elements were instrumental; it also declared the dawn of another new epoch, characterized by vocal Islamic voice.

The change began with the ratification of the national reconciliation agreement in July 1977, between the government and the National Front (the opposition forum, composed of Ansar, Muslim Brothers and few figures from the National Unionist Party-NUP). The NUF however, refused to take any reconciliatory

\textsuperscript{154} The Ansar, Islamist, and some of Khatmiyya affiliated politicians, formed the National Front, to depose the regime. It was mainly supported by the Nimieri's socialist foes (Ethiopia and Libya).
step towards the regime. However, the agreement brought relative stability to the regime; it could also be understood as an endeavour to contain the opposition and to absorb its influential figures in the regime.

Accordingly, most of the erstwhile opposition figures were politically incorporated in the SSU, as were the rest of the regime’s political organizations, such as, youth, women, etc.

Since the second half of the 1970’s, Islam gradually started to gain grounds, in many countries of the Maghrib and Sudan was not exception.

Under the pretext of expanding the Islamic cause, the Islamist saw in the agreement an opportunity to bring the desired change from within the regime’s apparatus. So, they enhanced the efficacy of their participation, by properly utilizing the atmosphere of freedom that provided them by the agreement, through which they incorporated their cadres in the government system, and widened their popular support, on the one hand; and established their own financial institutions on the other.


156 The Islamists need to exert their influence in the socio-political arena required huge funds, which could not be unconditionally raised from abroad. So, they successfully established their own strong financial organs, which made Sudan one of the pioneering countries in the field of Islamic banking, insurance and financing.
The Islamist activities soon reflected on the regime apparatus. Their participation actuated binary reactions: one sympathized with greater Islamization, while the other insisted on sticking to its initial secular system.

The Ansar, on the other hand, visualized their participation that it would permit them to participate in power-sharing, which failed to materialize, and soon precipitated a rift between Nimieri and Saddiq Al-Mahdi

For the SSU’s secular elite, allowing such an ‘unprogressive’ thought to filter into their secular organisation, was a real set back, as it would refute the basic principles and objectives on which the organisation was built.

However, the strife between the two, enhanced the Islamist cause, when a committee was formed in August 1977, to revise all the laws that contradicted with Islam.\textsuperscript{157} The formation of the committee had obviously eroded the political influence of the Islamist foes (the secularist) on the regime’s political organs. The committee recommended a gradual and lenient application of the Islamic Laws (Shari’a).\textsuperscript{158}

\textsuperscript{157} Khalid, n. 150, p. 614.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., p. 615.
This gave an indication about the regime's new direction of change towards Islamic path, which was officialized by September, 1983, by declaration of few Islamic Penal codes.

Saddiq Al-Mahdi was critical of Nimieri's Islamization project from its outset, presumably, for political reason. Nevertheless, his criticism was articulated from an Islamic viewpoint.

The pronunciation of Shari'a by Nimieri was negatively received, regionally and internationally,159 This was linked with the eruption of May 1983, (communist-inclined) mutiny in the south, and the worsening economic condition; as also accompanied by scarcity and price hike of consumption goods; along with severe drought that hit parts of Western Sudan. In addition to the mounting external and internal pressure, Nimieri was forced to recant his alliance with Islamists, as a prelude to the repeal of Shari'a.

The situation reached its zenith, when things apparently went out of government control. This led the army intervention for the second time on 6th April 1985.

159 Ibid., p. 93. Nimieri's Islamic experiment was also not hailed by many Muslim scholars outside Sudan.
The bloodless intervention was followed by formation of a one-year Transitional Government (TG) which paved the way for a new elected government.

Transitional Government and Secularization

The TG era was characterized by formation of more than fifty political parties, of tribal, regional and ideological inclination, and sharp differences in their views on many vital issues.

This was regarded as a negative indication for the long awaited democracy, and it appeared that it would repeat the same mistakes of the earlier period. The 'clash of identities' between Islam and secularism, seemed to have reached its climax.

The secularist spared no effort to persuade the TG to use its wide authority to repeal the Islamic penal codes (Shari'a).

The paramount task of the TG was to prepare the country for elections, and not to decide on any major issues related to the country's future shape, which was left for the forth-coming elected government.

That was regarded as the first blow for the secularist, who accused some of the TG's members, of clandestinely supporting the Islamists.
The political scenario during the short-lived TG indicated that the third democratic period would not be as stable as people desired. And this was clear from the sharply conflicting views of different political parties; debilitating economy; and aggravating condition in the South, where the rebels were advancing at a fast pace.

At any rate, the transitional government's firm decisive response to the secular groups, could be viewed as another clear sign of the Islamist growing influence on both the army and trade unions, besides the students community, which constituted the major tools for public mobilization in the Sudan.

Third Democracy and Disenchantment

The era that followed the transitional government eventually declared the dawn of Islamization, at the cost of a gradual declining in the efficacy of secularism in politics and culture.

In contemporary democracies, political parties are regarded as an organisation devised to link the people and their leaders, and this symbolizes the key to political performance. But the

\[16^o\] G. Bingham Powell, n. 144, p. 74.
structure of political parties in the Sudan is largely based on tribal and religious loyalties. That is why the two sectarian parties depended on the traditional religious loyalties, and they drove their support mainly from the rural areas, which were exclusively reserved for them.

This conspicuously contradicted with the concept of the modern secular state, in which religion was envisaged to be separated from politics, as propagated by influential secular elite.

For the Islamists, the importance of Islam as a crucial factor that shaped the Sudan's socio-political structure became unavoidable. That was vindicated by the emergence of the Islamists new forum: the National Islamic Front. But the NIF was received with great apprehension in both - the sectarian and secular circles. The sectarian group viewed it as an undesirable rival; as its clearly defined Islamic programme would attract the support in the reserved areas, known to be traditionally supporting the two sectarian parties.

161 That was vindicated by Saddiq Al-Mahdi, Milton Viorst, "Sudan's Islamic Experiment", Foreign Affairs, vol. 74, no. 3, 1995, p. 57.
For the secularist, on the other hand, NIF constituted a real challenge for their programme, and even posed a threat to their political presence.

However, the prevailing feeling of anxiety in those two circles appeared to have been based on realistic expectations. This was proved by the significant change in the pattern of voting in the elections of 1986, in which the NIF, notably, competed and achieved considerable progress in the centers and peripheries.

Ansar, whose party was divided into three factions, won 90 seats; while their rival sect, Khatmiyya, got only 54 seats. That result was achieved in 174 rural constituencies, which was reserved for the two sectarian parties.

Excluding the southern region; the NIF, on the other extreme, won 15 seats, for the first time in those 174 previously reserved constituencies.  

The advancement of the NIF in the Capital city Khartoum, authenticated the palpable change in the pattern of traditional loyalty, which was overshadowed by the NIF propaganda, which

---

outdid the two sectarian, the secular and leftist parties in the capital constituencies.\textsuperscript{164}

However, the defeat of the secular and leftist forces came in the Graduate Constituencies, which was generally dominated by the communist.\textsuperscript{165} The IF won 25 seats out of the 28 reserved seats for the graduate.

This idea had emanated from the British era, since the country’s first election of 1953, when the colonial authority decided to reserve certain number of seats for the educated elite, in a move to prevent the two sectarian parties from monopolising the whole seats in the parliament.\textsuperscript{166}

The result showed that the IF managed to address wide sectors of the society (specially the educated segment which used to be largely influenced by the secularist) in a very effective manner, as confirmed by the election result.

Societies are led by the intelligentsia. The significant performance of the IF in the election, decisively, gave signal about the future directions of political change in the Sudan. It led to two major directions which dominated the political arena. They were

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., pp. 153-54.
\textsuperscript{165} Al\textit{\textsc{waan}} (Khartoum), 12 July 1997.
\textsuperscript{166} Khalid, n. 150, pp. 118-19.
based on two fundamentally different ideas: the pro and anti-Shari'a.

As consequence of that, the political sphere was largely bifurcated. The IF, along with small Islamic groups and many Sufi orders trenched in the pro-Shari'a camp, while the left and secular forces grouped in the opposite.

The sharp schism left the two sectarian parties in an ambivalent situation. Their traditional Islamic background prevented them from explicitly siding with the anti-Shari'a camp, and at the same time, they did not want to be subordinated to the newly formed IF, which appeared before the society as the strongest defender of Shari'a.

However, Khatmiyya was always opposed to the IF engagement in the coalition governments; while Ansar, on the other end, from their revolutionary background, had a soft corner for the IF; but the secularist pressure within and outside their party hindered co-operation between IF and the sectarian parties.167

167 The coalition government in which NIF participated did not last longer, after Khatmiyya withdrew from it; and the subsequent one was a mere congregation of the anti-Shari'a camp. This precipitated a group of Islamists and nationalist officers in the army to intervene; the intervention was largely viewed by the left, secular and sectarian parties as NIF's one.
The viability of democracy is related to the social structure and social trends. The social structure in Sudan has historically been inseparable from Islam.

The contemporary social trends, during the third democratic reign, were also inextricable from Islam. Consequently, Islamization generated little wonder, as the three major parties were Islamic oriented.

The West was least interested to see Islamization successfully stem from the secular system. On the other hand, the post Cold War Western policy, was based on twin-pillar ideas: political and economic freedom; which constituted the theme of the present trends of democracy globalization and this could be seem as sharing of the perceptions which corresponded to the democratic values and culture, as perceived in the West.

Therefore, Islamization clearly emerged as an insurmountable barrier to the globalization of democracy.

Sudan in this connection, has been regarded as one of the hotbed of potential threat of Islamic resurgence in the region. This may justify the US and some Western countries to pursue

---

unfriendly policy towards Sudan.\textsuperscript{170} In fact, this was confirmed when Holland decided to sever its economic aid to the Sudan, for the latter's its failure to reach a peaceful settlement with the rebels, in the South.\textsuperscript{171}

The mounting economic crisis, internal instability and the attrition war in the south, conspicuously, revealed lack of clear policy and decisiveness of the government, which enhanced the army leadership to politically interfere in February 1989, by presenting a memorandum in which they lambasted the government for lack of adequate weaponry and logistic support to the army in the South, where many strategic posts had fallen in the hands of the rebels.

The Islamic oriented government at that time, represented by coalition of Umma and IF along with some other parties (after the withdrawal of the Democratic Unionist Party), actively worked for approving the Islamic code from the Parliament.

The DUP, agreement with the rebel movement was signed on 16\textsuperscript{th} November 1988,\textsuperscript{172} in which the Khatmiyya patron Mohamed Osman al-Merghani agreed to cancel the Islamic laws.

\textsuperscript{170} \textit{Al-Anbaa (Khartoum)}, 3 July 1997.
\textsuperscript{171} Salah Mohamed Ibrahim, \textit{Azm\textsuperscript{a} al-Wifaq: Waqa'\textsuperscript{i} al-Democrat\textsuperscript{i}yya al-Thalitha}, (Khartoum: Kamal Graphics, 1994), p. 88.
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., p. 105.
till the convening of a plenary constitutional conference, whose date was not specified.

The agreement was rejected by the Islamists. Saddiq Al-Mahdi, on the other hand, was initially reluctant to accept it. Thus the army's demand for a more balanced policy, and a government of wider participation, was perceived (by the Islamists) as a political manoeuvre to pave the way for a new coalition to replace the incumbent (relatively pro-Islamization government), by a new anti-Shari'a one, mainly consisting of a conglomeration of sectarianists, leftists and secularists. This maneuver was backed by the largely nominal Council of the Head of the State.

However, the secular parties along with the Khatmiyya-backed DUP, insisted that Islamic penal codes, should be frozen till the proposed plenary constitutional conference be convened.

IF, on the other extreme, refused to take part in any national government that would exclude Shari’a; as it saw in its freezing a government which had succumbed to internal pressure of the DUP, and also external pressure mainly of the rebels in the South and the powers that supported them. All of this was aimed at liquidating the Islamic programme in the country.

---

173 Karar, n. 154, pp. 72-76.
The new coalition did not last long as the ghost of another military take over unequivocally began to loom in the cloudy political sky, after a short span of four years.

Triumph and Dismay

The army move came on 30th June 1989, in a clear indication that the multiparty democratic governments had virtually failed to adequately respond to the peoples' need. However, even the two earlier military regimes has also failed to produce a comprehensive solutions to the country's problem of instability. However, the National Salvation Revolution government, (as it called itself), claimed not be a repetition of the same episodes of the vicious circle, that engulfed Sudan since its independence, in which the army and civilian democratic governments were replacing each other without any tangible progress.174

Secularization as a process, was brought to a halt, by the regime as it promulgated its Islamic orientation. It soon became obvious that state-adoption of any specific ideology or religion in a multi-culture or multi-religions country, appeared to be

174 Karar, n. 160, pp. 103-5.
problematic. However, the case of Sudan is different from many other states in the Muslim world; as the country's socio-political structure was remarkably formulated by Islam more than any other perceptions or ideology. Thus, we find that both secularism and secular democracy were largely alien to the society's cultural background. 175

Therefore, it was secularism, in the case of Sudan, which encircled Islam, and largely obscured its development as a determinant social force. It was contrary to what has been propagated by the secularist, that "Islamic resurgence in its present form poses a serious challenge and potent threat to the process of secularization in the Islamic world, and if no corrective steps are taken might retard its evolution for decades." 176 However, the result of the 1986 elections, clearly refuted their claim, in which the IF managed to generate considerable public support for its Islamic programme.

In fact it was Islam which was obscured by secularism, as it was planned and promoted by the colonial administration directly.

175 Judith Miller, "Faces of Fundamentalism: Hassan al-Turabi and Muhammed Fadlallah", Foreign Affairs, vol. 73, no. 6, 1994, p. 137.
176 Ayoob, n. 79, p. 73.
and later, through the secular elite. Yet, the failure of secularism was confirmed by its dismal performance.

So events of the 30th June 1989, can be regarded as a watershed for Islamic movements, as it could be a triumph, and a real challenge to materialize its aspiration in building a modern democratic Islamic state; while it was a clear setback for secularism and its propagators.

The process of democratization in the country, however, took a new turn, as it has been portrayed in a non secular frame, which required the dismantling the structures of both the secular and traditional loyalties.

Conclusion

The process of secularization in the Sudan, from its inception by the colonial rule, failed to establish a secular political system that managed to stand on its own, without relying on the sectarian parties. The interdependence between the secularist and the religious sectarian parties, constituted a strange kind of relationship which negatively cast its shadow on all the three democratic eras.
The sectarian parties, though they were religiously originated, yet their co-operation with the IF was largely cautious as for instance, such as Shari'a and their weak policy towards the southern rebellion, which virtually controlled one forth of the southern region.

The constitution highlights the features of any democracy, and reflects the cultural background of its people and democracy was therefore, expected to reflect the true culture of the people, which in the case of Sudan is Islam.177

However, democracy came to mean secularizing the largely Muslim Sudanese society. This was described by Hassan al-Turabi as an "un-deeply rooted alien plant, so, it did not thrive for more than four years each time it came to power."178 And it was always succeeded by military coup.

Anyhow, its return after a sixteen years-long pause, generated disappointment to most of the people, as it was expected to bring qualitative change and tangible reforms in the country's economic and social arenas, and peaceful settlement for the dispute in the south. Its performance, was limited as exhibited in the deficiency of most of the political parties to agree on certain

177 Powell, n. 144, pp. 60, 68.
178 Al-Sudan al-Hadith (Khartoum), 30 January 1996.
principles to insure the durability and development of democracy in the country, rather than indulging in polarization and party politicking.

Notably, polarization in the third democracy was confined on two issues: pro and anti Shari'a, which revealed that the conflict between the two concepts was almost crystallized and reached a point of sharp dichotomy.

The backlash of that polarization took a serious turn, as for the first time in the post-independence Sudan not only foreign pressure, but direct foreign interference in the country's policy was testimonized in the role played by some of the neighbouring states, and foreign powers, through financing some of the political parties, newspapers and direct military support to the Southern rebel movement. This jeopardized and destabilized law and order in various parts of the country and undermined stability.

The major difference between the two earlier coups and the last one, lays in the fact that the earlier coups were more secular in nature, while the third one had a strong Islamic orientation. Hence, if the incumbent regime remains in power, the chances for secular

---

179 Karar, n. 154, p. 103.
democracy could become almost non-existent, unless a major
diversion in its course takes place.

Social mobilization is regarded as an indispensable pre-
requisite for democratization, but as long as the incumbent regime
closely adheres to the Islamic programme, it is difficult to mobilize
the society under secular canopy.\textsuperscript{180}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{180} Nancy Bermeo, "Myth of Modernization, Confrontation and Conflict During
Democratic Transitions", \textit{Comparative Politics}, (Philadelphia), vol. 29, no. 3, 1997,
p. 305.