Sudan

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and Alsir Sidahmed

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Stretching between the savannah and the equator, Sudan is a microcosm of Africa with one leg in the Arab world and the other in Africa. Sudan's development, however, has failed to address the differences among its diverse ethnic communities and the problematic relationship between religion and politics. This has resulted in political instability and a lack of national consensus – ultimately leading to long-term civil war.

This useful book provides a comprehensive introduction to contemporary Sudan, outlining the evolution of the state with emphasis on its post-independence experience. It includes chapters on the history, politics, society, international relations and economy of the country.

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Preface

The Sudan first came to be known as a political entity with approximately its present geographical borders in the nineteenth century, when it was administered as a Turko-Egyptian colony. In a little over six decades the Turko-Egyptian administration was overthrown by the Mahdist Revolution in 1885, and was succeeded by the Mahdist state, which lasted for only 13 years. Once again international politics came into play and Britain, afraid of French encroachment, re-occupied Sudan in 1898 with Egypt as a junior partner, in a unique arrangement that came to be known as the Condominium era, and which lasted until 1956.

Stretching between the savannah and the equator, Sudan is a microcosm of Africa, linking the northern and southern parts of the Sahara, with one leg in the Arab world and its culture and the other in Africa, but political developments have failed to reflect these realities. The result is a lack of national consensus and a political instability that has translated itself into continuing civil war for more than 35 years so far. As a result, Sudan, a country of immense economic potential, continues to be among the least developed countries, with a majority of its people living in poverty and suffering from occasional famines.

Post-independence Sudan saw three civilian parliamentary regimes (1956–58; 1965–69; 1986–89) and three military ones (1958–64; 1969–85; 1989–present). Exchange of power between military and civilian elites is indeed a common phenomenon in a majority of the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America and is not confined to Sudan as such. Yet it is the peculiarity of the Sudanese situation that no military regime was replaced by another military take-over. Even the 1985 coup that overthrew Field Marshal Ja'far Nimeiri was in fact a response to a popular uprising and eventually handed power back to civilians. Equally, neither has a civilian parliamentary government been allowed to stand for re-election.

It is disheartening to note that both the soldiers who usurped power through the 'barrel of a gun' and seasoned politicians who come to office through the ballot box, were initially judged by the mistakes and follies of their predecessors, not by what they promised or could do. However, it soon becomes clear that a corrupt or oppressive predecessor does not necessarily ensure a good successor.

The obvious questions to be asked in this connection are what are the real causes of the repeated failures that generate instability and chronic problems, and whether there is a way out. Naturally, answers to such questions are neither simple, nor

straightforward, and might represent various approaches and different levels of emphasis. For instance, some people believe that the central issue is the failure of the Sudanese people to agree on a viable democratic political system with workable institutions and mechanisms; others emphasize the north–south disparity; a third group concentrates on the economic crisis. Relevant issues to do with national unity, state and religion also continue to engulf the debate as well.

At the functional level the problem relates to the gross failure of partisan power politics by those in power and their inability to address these issues in any satisfactory manner, a failure which has repeatedly paved the way for military interventions as happened in 1958, 1969 and 1989. Yet none of these military regimes, which ruled the country for long periods, delivered the promised progress and prosperity. If anything, problems escalated even further under military regimes.

One issue that triggered most controversy in contemporary Sudan, particularly throughout the last two decades of the twentieth century, is the relationship between religion and politics. The issue perhaps reflect a wider debate that emerged in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa in association with the rise of Islamism. However, in the Sudanese context it also relates to the controversy over the country's identity and the rights of its sizeable non-Muslim minority, as well as the divergent political orientations among Sudanese Muslims themselves. The religo-political controversy furthermore cuts across a number of interrelated areas in state and society that include the nature of the state itself, its constitutional form, political culture, and most profoundly, the laws and citizens' rights. It is the last field in particular that has been a subject of experimentation and consequently the theatre of most of the controversy in the last decade.

The question of unity of Sudan, among other things, involves the concept of power sharing. This is relatively a new theme in Sudanese politics, though its underlying problem is not new. The question discussed today covers more than just the north–south disparity, which remains central to any possible arrangements. Other marginalized or peripheral groups in the West, East and Blue Nile have also been asking for more equitable distribution of wealth and power.

This book deals mainly with contemporary Sudan and devotes much attention to present developments. It is divided into six chapters: a historical background, the political setting that led to the current regime, foreign relations, the economy, the interaction between state and society in post-independence Sudan, and a conclusion.

The following chapters hope to provide an adequate background to understand present-day Sudan and its international relations, and to indicate a pointer to the way ahead as far as its political and economic development are concerned.

Abbreviations

ABS	Agricultural Bank of Sudan
AFESD	Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development
CAC	Constitution Amendment Commission
CCI	Campagnie de Construction Internationale
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CNPC	China National Petroleum Company
DoP	Declaration of Principles
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FEWS	Famine Early Warning System
GC	Graduates' General Congress
GG	Governor-General
GNPOC	Greater Nile Petroleum Company
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Countries
ICF	Islamic Charter Front
IDA	International Development Agency
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Agency for Drought and Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPC	International Petroleum Company (IPC)
LEJI	Libyan–Egyptian Joint Initiative
NANS	National Alliance for National Salvation
NBI	Nile Basin Initiative
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NF	National Front
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NIF	National Islamic Front
NUP	National Unionist Party
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan
PAIC	Popular Arab and Islamic Congress
PC	Popular Congress

PDF	Popular Defense Forces
PDP	People's Democratic Party
RCC	Revolutionary Command Council
RRC	Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
SAF	Sudan Allied Forces
SANU	Sudan African Union
SCP	Sudan Communist Party
SPI	Sudanese Peace Initiative
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SPS	Sudan Political Service
SSLM	Southern Sudanese Liberation Movement
SSU	Sudanese Socialist Union
SUS	Sudan Union Society
SWTUF	Sudanese Workers Trade Union Federation
TMC	Transitional Military Council
UBAF	Arab French Banking Union
USAP	Union of Sudan African Parties
WAA	Workers Affairs Association
WFL	White Flag League

Chronology

(This chronology relied primarily on Lobban *et al*. (2002). However, other sources such as *Kessings Reports* were also consulted in addition to the author's own observations.)

5000–3500 BC	Earliest known pastoral and agricultural settlements, as suggested by the Shahainab archaeological site (north of present-day Khartoum) among others.
2700–2100 BC	Period of growing contacts between Nubia and Egypt.
2250–2050 BC	Rise of Kerma state at third cataract, on the Nile.
1570–1090 BC	Egyptian New Kingdom Pharaohs rule the northern Sudan reaching as far as fourth cataract.
Ca 950 BC	Kingdom of Kush emerges at Napata.
800 BC	Kush expands northward into Egypt.
760–656 BC	Reunification of Egypt and Nubia under the Kushite 'Ethiopian' Dynasty XXV.
656–590BC	Kushite withdrawal back to Nubia/Napata when the Assyrians conquer Egypt.
590–ca 325 BC	Kushite Kingdom of Meroe rules most of northern and middle Sudanese Nile Valley.
270 BC	Napatan period and Kush comes to an end.
30–28 BC	Roman conquest of Egypt.
21–20 BC	Peace treaty between Romans and Meroites.
Ca 352 AD	Axumite/King Ezana of Axum begins Christianity in Ethiopia and destroys Meroe.
AD 350–550	Period of X Group. Little known of political and social organization during this period.
6th century	Emergence of three Nubian Kingdoms, Nobatia (al-Nubah), Makuria (Maqarah) and Alodia (Alawa).
Ca 543–580	Monarchs of Nubian Kingdoms convert to Christianity.
697–707	Nobatia and Makuria merge into the kingdom of Dongola (al-Maqarah) – under king Merkurius of Makoria.

640	Muslim conquest of Egypt.
646	Muslim rulers of Egypt attack Nubia.
652	Baqt (Pact) treaty, established between Nubia and Egypt.
720	Baqt treaty established between Egypt and Beja of the Red Sea.
Ca 800–1000	Nubian era of prosperity.
Ca 1000	Nilotic pastoral settlers expand into southern Sudan.
Ca 1200	Rise of the Daju Dynasty in Darfur (western Sudan). Movement of Dinka and Nuer population into Bahr al-Ghazal and Upper Nile (expansion of the Nilotics).
1235	Last priest sent to Nubia from Alexandria.
1250–1382	Bahri Mamluke Dynasty in Egypt.
1275–1365	Period of warfare between Mamluke and Nubians.
1289	Last Mamluke military campaign against Dongula.
1317	Defeat of the last Christian king of Nubia. The first Muslim Nubian King, Abdallah Barshambu, accedes to the throne of Dongola; first mosque built in Dongola.
1400	Probable time of the replacement of the Daju by the Tunjur Dynasty in Darfur; Luo migration from the southern Sudan leads to the creation of the Shilluk groups settled in upper Nile.
Ca 1500	The fall of Soba, capital of the last Christian kingdom of Alawa; rise of the Islamized Funj Sultanate of Sinnar.
1535	Tunjur defeated by Bornu from Nigeria.
1660	Beginning of the Keira Sultanate of Darfur.
1750s–1790s	Azande people spread southeast and north into southern Sudan.
1600–1700	Period of expansion and prosperity in Sinnar.
Ca 1770s	Sinnar in decline.
16th–19th centuries	Arabization and Islamization of northern and western Sudan (the domains of the Funj and Fur Sultantates).
1820–1821	Ottoman ambitions grow and autonomous viceroy Muhammad Ali Pasha, who ruled Egypt 1805–48, conquers much of the northern and central Sudan, ending the Funj Sultanate of Sinnar and establishing the Turko-Egyptian regime (1821–85). The Fur Sultanate survives the initial phase of the conquest, but with reduced territory.
1824–1825	Turko-Egyptian governor Uthman Bey establishes Khartoum as a military centre. It soon becomes the administrative centre of the new regime.

1826–1838	Ali Khurshid Agha, appointed as governor of Sudan, develops civil administration. Sudanese notables serve as advisors to the new administration. Khartoum develops, trade increases and economic activity – disrupted as a result of the invasion and its aftermath – is re-established.
1838–1843	Ahmed Abu Widan serves as Governor-General (*hikimdar*). Introduces fiscal and land regulation. Extension of government control toward Red Sea coast.
1838	Captain Salim Qabudan, Turkish sailor, successfully penetrates the *sudd* swamp in southern Sudan. This breakthrough launches an era in which the South becomes the object of ruthless plunder – primarily of ivory and slaves – first by the Egyptian government, then expatriate merchants, and eventually northern Sudanese.
1840s–1850s	Period of weak administration in Sudan: frequent changes of governors and reorganization of administrative structures. Trade in ivory and slaves on Upper Nile and Bahr al-Ghazal by European and and riverine Sudanese (known as *Jallaba*) intensifies. Christian mission operates in southern Sudan.
1863–1879	Reign of Khedivi Ismail in Egypt; largely unsuccessful efforts to suppress slave trade and establish khedival control in southern Sudan; European Christians in employ of Egyptian government including Samuel Baker (1869–73) and Charles Gordon (1874–76). Rise of 'merchant princes' – mostly drawn from *Jallaba* – in Upper Nile and Bahr al-Ghazal. Government steamers introduced on the Nile as well as a telegraph system linking Cairo to Khartoum and other major cities in Sudan.
1863	Red sea ports Suakin and Massawa added to Egypt by Ottoman Empire.
1873–1874	Freebooter Zubayr Rahama Mansur, who was recognized by Khartoum governor of Bahr al-Ghazal, conquers Darfur for the Turko-Egyptian regime.
1877–1880	Charles Gordon becomes first European Christian Governor-General of Sudan on behalf of Egypt.
1881	Muhammad Ahmed Ibn Abdullah (born in 1844 in Labab Island near Dongola) declares himself to be the 'Expected Mahdi', and invites followers to Aba Island on the white Nile. A government force sent to

	arrest him is defeated, and Mahdist supporters (known as Ansar) flock en masse to Jabal Qadir in Nuba Mountains where Mahadi has moved with his foremost aides and supporters.
1881–1884	Mahdist revolt spreads throughout the country. Mahdist forces engage and defeat the government forces in a series of battles, and establish control of most of western and central Sudan.
1884 January	General Charles Gordon is appointed Governor-General of Sudan with a mission to evacuate the country.
August–October	Khartoum is besieged by Mahdist forces. Mahdi himself encamps south of Omdurman.
1885 January	Fall of Khartoum. Gordon is killed by Mahdist troops. Mahdi moves capital to Omdurman.
June	Mahdi dies in Omdurman; Khalifa (successor) Abdullahi al-Talaishi succeds him as ruler of the Mahdist State.
1886 January	Mahdist forces invade Ethiopia and enter Gondar.
May–December	Migration of Baqqara western tribes (most loyal to Mahdiyya) to Omdurman increases friction between riverine (*awald-al-balad*) and western (*awlad-al-a rab*) people.
1889	Famine caused by failed harvest and continuous wars and mobilization.
1891	Revolt of Mahdi's kinsmen (Ashraf) in Omdurman is put down by Khalifa Abdullahi, who imprisons Khalifa Mohammed Sharif – cousin of al-Mahdi and fourth in line of succession – until 1896.
1894	Italians (in Eritrea since 1890) attack and occupy Kassala.
1896	Anglo-Egyptian invasion of Sudan commences.
1897	French expedition to upper Nile led by Captain Marchand.
1898 April	Advancing Anglo-Egyptian army defeats a Mahdist force led by Mahmud Ahmed at Atbara.
September	Mahdist forces defeated at battle of Karrari; Omdurman taken. Khalifa flees west with a small band of followers. End of Mahdist state.
1899	Dispute between Britain and France over Fashoda in Upper Nile is resolved by diplomacy. Marchand forces withdraw; agreement between Great Britain and Egypt establishes Condominium rule over the Sudan.
	Kharoum restored as capital.

	Khalifa Abdullahi and his remaining loyal followers killed at Umm Dibaykrat in Kordofan.
1900–1912	Pacification of the county punctuated by 'primary resistance' to colonial rule in western and central Sudan.
1902	Foundation of Gordon Memorial College, offshoot of the university of Khartoum.
1905	Work begins on building Port Sudan, which replaces Suakin as the major Sudanese sea port on the Red Sea.
1919	Missionaries return to southern Sudan.
1916	Revolt by Sultan Ali Dinnar is suppressed, bringing an end to the Keira Sultanate, and Darfur is incorporated in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.
1922	Nomads' Sheikhs Act promulgated giving heads of nomadic tribes certain judicial powers.
1924	Nationalist protests led by the White Flag League coupled with mutiny of Sudanese officers and cadets sparks what is generally known as 1924 revolt against colonial rule. Revolt suppressed by the British; Egypt forced to withdraw its military and administration personnel from Sudan.
1925	Completion of the Sinnar Dam and opening of the Gezira agriculture scheme for cotton cultivation.
1926–1934	Native administration actively pursued by the Sudan government.
1930	Introduction of southern policy aimed at separating the south from the north.
1931	Strike by students at Gordon Memorial College over pay cuts for Sudanese employees by the government.
1936	Anglo-Egyptian treaty signed, restoring limited Egyptian participation in the administration of Sudan.
1938	Formation of the Graduates' General Congress, which becomes a forum of nationalist activism of Sudanese intelligentsia.
1940–1942	Second World War. Fighting in north and east Africa. Sudanese soldiers and conscripts take part in fighting alongside British allied troops.
1942	Graduates' Congress presents a memorandum to the Sudan government asking for the right of determination to be granted to the Sudanese people. Government rejects memorandum.
1943	Advisory Council for the Northern Sudan is created by the colonial administration.

1943–1945	Formation of the first political parties in the Sudan, such as Ashiqqa and Umma.
1946	Administration conference organized to discuss the future of Sudanese administration with participation of Sudanese notables, civil servant and British officials.
1947	Juba conference convened to discuss the future of southern Sudan; southern representatives endorse the idea of the south merging with the north to form one political entity.
1848	Opening of the legislative assembly that includes representatives from the south as well as the north. Assembly boycotted by Ashiqqa and other unionist parties, as well as emerging radical groups.
1950	Egypt unilaterally abrogates the 1936 treaty and proclaims King Farouq as king of Egypt and Sudan.
1952 July	Army revolution topples Egyptian monarchy and signals a new approach to the Sudan question.
1953 January	Agreement between Sudanese political parties under aegis of the Egyptian government regarding the future of Sudan; south not consulted.
February	Anglo-Egyptian Agreement prepares the way for self-government in Sudan.
December	First Sudanese (self-rule) parliament elected with a majority seats won by the National Unionist Party (NUP – formed in 1952 as a unification of all parties calling for unity between Egypt and Sudan). Ismail al-Azhari, NUP leader, becomes the first Prime Minister.
1954	Formation of the Southern Liberal Party, first southern party.
1954 March	Sudanese parliament opens amid clashes between supporters of the Umma Party, the *Ansar* and the police.
1954–1955	Sudanization of the army and civil service.
1955 August	Equaitarian corps of the Sudan defence force mutinies in Torit amid fears by southerners of northern domination. Many northerners killed in the south. These events, although brought under control, launch the first civil war between north and south.
1955 December	Parliament votes for total independence of Sudan from both Egypt and Great Britain.
1956 1 January	Sudan proclaims its independence.
1956 February	Al-Azhari forced to form a ‘national government’, including the opposition Umma Party.

1956 July	NUP split; breakaway faction – primarily composed of pro-Khatmiyya politicians – forms a separate party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) under patronage of Sayyid Ali al-Mirghani, head of the Khatmiyya sect.
1956 July	Al-Azhari government is ousted in a vote of no confidence. Abdallah Khalil, secretary of the Umma Party, forms a coalition government from Umma and the PDP.
1956–1958	Controversy over American aid packages. Border dispute with Egypt over the village of Halayeb in north-eastern Sudan.
1958 March	PDP–Umma coalition restored after general elections.
1958 November	Army coup led by commander in Chief Lt General Ibrahim Abboud terminates parliamentary regime.
1959	Nile Water Agreement signed with Egypt. Leader of the Ansar sect, Sayyid Abdal-Rahman al-Mahdi, dies.
1961	Opposition coalition against the Abboud regime formed by main political parties in the north.
Early 1960s	War in the south intensifies.
1962	Government adopts new Missionaries Act. Foreign Christian missions asked to leave the country.
1963	Formation of Anya Nya movement to lead the war in the south.
1964 October	'October Revolution' ousts the regime of General Abboud. Formation of a caretaker government under Sir al-Khatim al-Khalifa.
1965 March	Roundtable conference convened by the government to discuss the conflict in the south; parties from north and south attend but fail to reach an understanding on a solution to the problem.
1965 April	Elections held in most of the country but postponed in some constituencies in the south for security considerations. An NUP–Umma coalition is formed under the premiership of Mohammad Ahmad Mahjoub (Umma). PDP boycott elections.
November	Constituent Assembly bans communist party on charges of 'advocating atheism'.
1966	Split within the Umma Party. Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi – Umma chairman – heads a cabinet composed of a coalition between his faction and the NUP.
1967	Muhammad Ahmad Mahjoub returns to power and heads a coalition between a faction of the Umma Party and the NUP. Khartoum hosts Arab Summit

	following the defeat of the Arab coalition led by Egypt during the 'Six-Day War' with Israel.
1968 February	Parties in government coalition dissolve the constituent assembly (parliament).
March	Unification of PDP–NUP to form the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP).
April	General election. DUP wins largest bloc of seats but falls short of an absolute majority. Mahjoub's coalition is restored between the reconstructed DUP and his Umma faction.
1969 25 May	Colonel Ja'far Muhammad Nimeiri leads a group of left-wing and Arab Nationalist officers in a coup ousting Mahjoub's government. He forms a radical Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) and a similar orientated government.
June	'9 June Declaration' by the new regime pledges to resolve the southern problem along the lines of giving regional autonomy to the south.
1970 March	Revolt by the leader of the *Ansar* Imam al-Hadi al-Mahdi is suppressed by Nimeiri's government; al-Hadi al-Mahdi is killed while trying to leave the country.
November	As a result of a protracted dispute between the Sudan Communist Party (SCP) and other factions in Nimeiri's regime, three Communist-leaning officers are removed from the RCC.
1971 May	First steps to form the Sudan Socialist Union (SSU) – as a ruling party – and a new constitutional regime for the country.
July	Government briefly taken in a communist-backed coup led by Hashim al-Atta (one of the officers removed from office in November 1970). Following Nimeiri's return to power, the leadership and hundreds of followers of the SCP are detained; some of the top leaders executed.
September	Referendum confirms Nimeiri as president of the Republic.
1972 January	SSU officially established with its first Congress adopting a 'National Action Charter' – which calls for development of the country along a socialist path – as the organization's basic programme.
March	Addis Ababa Accords that grant the south regional autonomy are signed and promulgated as the southern provinces' Self-Government Regional Act.
September	Elections for a new People's Assembly (parliament)

	are held. No candidates are allowed apart from those endorsed by the SSU.
1973 May	New 'Permanent Constitution' promulgated in the country establishing a presidential system and a one-party state.
August	Student and trade unionist unrest – instigated by opposition parties – staged in Khartoum and other cities against the government. State of emergency declared briefly.
December	First Regional Assembly for the southern region created.
1974	Relations deteriorate with Libya. Arab oil-producing countries agree to help finance Sudan's agricultural and industrial development projects.
1975	Closer cooperation announced between Sudan and Egypt.
September	Abortive coup led by Lt Colonel Hasan Hussein apparently backed by the National Front (NF) opposition parties (grouping Umma, DUP, and Muslim Brothers). Leaders of the coup attempt executed.
1976 January	$700 million plan for agricultural development projects announced.
June	Nimeiri visits United States for talks on economic and political cooperation.
July	Another coup attempt by the NF – carried out through infiltration of arms and men (from Libya and Ethiopia) into the capital and an attempt to take over military and strategic locations – is foiled by the government.
1977 July	Nimeiri declares 'national reconciliation' with Sadiq al-Mahdi and Muslim Brothers. Committee formed to make Sudanese laws conform to the teaching of Islamic *shari'a*.
September	Sadiq al-Mahdi returns from exile.
1978 July	Sudan hosts Organization of African Unity summit.
1978	Chevron company discovers oil in Bentiu in southern Sudan.
1979 January	Meeting of the High Ministerial Committee on Integration between Egypt and Sudan.
August	Urban riots over price increases. Sudan knocks at the IMF doors. First devaluation of Sudanese pound.
1980	Enactment of Regional Government Act in northern Sudan.
February	Nimeiri issues decree dissolving regional government

	and assembly in the south. A group of southern politicians led by Joseph Lago (leader of Anya Nya who signed the Addis Ababa Accord with Nimeiri) demand redivision of the southern region; redivision opposed by other veteran politicians in the region, some of whom are detained by government. Redivision controversy dominates southern politics throughout 1981–83.
1981 November	IMF reform package adopted by the government as a prerequisite for $230 million in aid; prices of sugar, oil and other necessities rise.
1982 January	Nation-wide student demonstrations protesting against economic reform measures.
October	Integration Agreement signed in Khartoum between Sudanese and Egyptian presidents.
1983 April	Nimeiri elected by referendum for a third term of office as president of the Republic.
16 May	Mutiny of battalion 105 of Sudanese army stationed at Bor, Pibor and Pochalla in the southern region triggers the second civil war in Sudan.
22 May	Nimeiri approves division of the southern region into three sub-regions.
June	Nimeiri issues Republican order No. 1 which abrogates the Addis Ababa Accords and regional self-government for the south.
July	The Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and its political wing, the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) is founded under the leadership of Colonel John Garang. The group soon grows to become the main southern-based rebel movement fighting Nimeiri's and successor governments in Khartoum for a more equitable share of power and wealth.
8 September	Laws incorporating Islamic *shari'a* penalties issued by Nimeiri to replace existing penal code in Sudan.
30 September	Sadiq al-Mahdi arrested for opposing the process of Islamization declared by Nimeiri.
1984 February	Southern rebels attack Chevron drilling site at Bentiu, the company halts its operations in the site. Rebels also attacks Jonglei canal construction and kidnap seven French workers, bringing work on the canal into a halt.
March–April	Strike by physicians and University of Khartoum teachers. Government declares state of emergency to contain the situation.

December	Heavy fighting between government and rebel forces around the city of Juba.
1985 January	Mahmud Muhammad Taha, leader of the reformist Islamic group the Republican Brothers, is executed on charges of apostasy.
March	US vice-president George Bush visits Sudan. About 100 leading members of the Muslim Brothers, including Hasan al-Turabi are arrested by the government. Wide protests in Khartoum against price rises; Nimeiri leaves for a visit to Washington.
April	*Intifada* (uprising) continues in Khartoum and across the country, demanding the ousting of Nimeiri and a return to democracy. Lt General Suwar al-Dahab, minister of defence, and senior officers seize power in a coup for an interim period. Army generals form a 15-man Transitional Military Council (TMC). TMC combines with professional organizations that led the *intifada* and political parties to form a civilian cabinet for a one-year transitional period before general elections are held. SPLA/M is not consulted.
May	Founding of the National Islamic Front (NIF), led by Hasan al-Turabi.
1986	Formation of the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Desertification (later re-named Intergovernmental Agency for Drought and Development – IGAD) including Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda.
March	Koka Dam Declaration signed in Ethiopia between the SPLA/M and several political forces in the north, but excluding NIF and DUP, proposing a peace framework.
April	First multi-parliamentary elections since 1968 are held in Sudan; elections are suspended in 37 southern constituencies for security reasons.
May	Sadiq al-Mahdi becomes Prime Minister heading a coalition government with the DUP. NIF emerges as the main parliamentary opposition group.
1987 March	An estimated 1000 southern civilians massacred by *Riziqat* militia in the town of al-Di'aain in western Sudan. Government inaction denounced by human rights activists.
April	Former US president Jimmy Carter initiates talks to end civil war in Sudan within the framework of the IGAD countries.

August–September	SPLA signs joint statements with other southern political groups – Anya Nya II, hitherto a pro-government militia, and the Union of Sudan African Parties (USAP) – in support of Koka Dam Declaration. SPLA scores military advances against government forces in the south.
1988 May	NIF joins coalition government alongside Umma and DUP.
July	Government introduces new Criminal Bill – also based on the *shari'a* penalties – to replace September laws.
August	Worst floods in four decades hit Sudan, around a million and a half become homeless.
September	Union of African parties withdraws from government in protest at the introduction of the *shari'a* Criminal Bill.
November	DUP and SPLA/M sign Sudanese Peace Initiative (SPI) and agree to freeze *shari'a* laws until a constitutional conference is held.
November–December	Controversy over the SPI as the DUP partners in government, NIF and Umma, refuse to endorse it. Constituent Assembly also rejects the DUP–SPLA agreement.
December	Mass riots and strikes sparked by a government decision to increase prices of sugar; demonstrations quickly turn into a mini *intifada* demanding the resignation of al-Mahdi and his government; government rescinds price increase. DUP quits the ruling coalition.
1989 January	Government re-structured on the basis of a NIF–Umma coalition.
February	Commander of armed forces and 150 officers submit a memorandum to the prime minister requesting the government to expedite its efforts to end the civil war, enhance the equipment and armaments of the armed forces, dissolve of militia, and address the deteriorating economic situation.
March	NIF–Umma coalition crumbles under pressure from the army and civilian opposition; government resigns but al-Mahdi stays as prime minister; a broad-based government with participation from trades unions and a representative of the army is formed; NIF declines to join the new coalition.
April	New government endorses the SPI and forms a ministerial peace committee to negotiate with

	SPLA; Constituent Assembly resolves to shelve *shari'a* bill to pave the way for the peace process to take off.
February–May	SPLA scores more military successes capturing Nimule, Torit, Akobo and most of Equitoria.
May	Both SPLA and government declare a one-month ceasefire.
30 June	Al-Mahdi coalition government is toppled in a coup led by Brigadier General Umar Hasan Ahmed al-Bashir and backed by the NIF. The new regime forms a 15-man Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), dismisses senior commanders of the army, detains government officials, bans all political parties and dissolves trades unions.
July	Former prime minister Sadiq al-Mahdi is arrested by security forces in Khartoum and detained with other political leaders.
	Al-Bashir declares a brief ceasefire in the civil war, offers amnesty to members of the rebel movement, and expresses willingness to discuss an end to the civil war with Garang.
September	Government convenes National Dialogue Conference (*mu'tamer al-hiwar al-watani*) to discuss ways to end the conflict in Sudan; participants appointed by government. Conference ignores all peace initiatives during parliamentary rule and endorses a 'Sudan Charter' prepared in 1987 by the NIF that calls for federalism and exception of the south from *shari'a* application.
October	Fighting resumes in the south after a six-month ceasefire.
	Formation of the opposition group, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) by main political forces: Umma, DUP, Communist Party, and trades unions.
November	Government legislates for the formation of the Popular Defence Forces (PDF) as a paramilitary militia to aid the government's war in the south. Strike by physicians is harshly put down by the government; some doctors tortured, others sentenced to death (later pardoned) following a summary trial.
December	Former president Carter mediates talks between SPLA and government in Nairobi; talks come to nothing. A young businessman is hanged for alleged violation of government regulations of hard currency

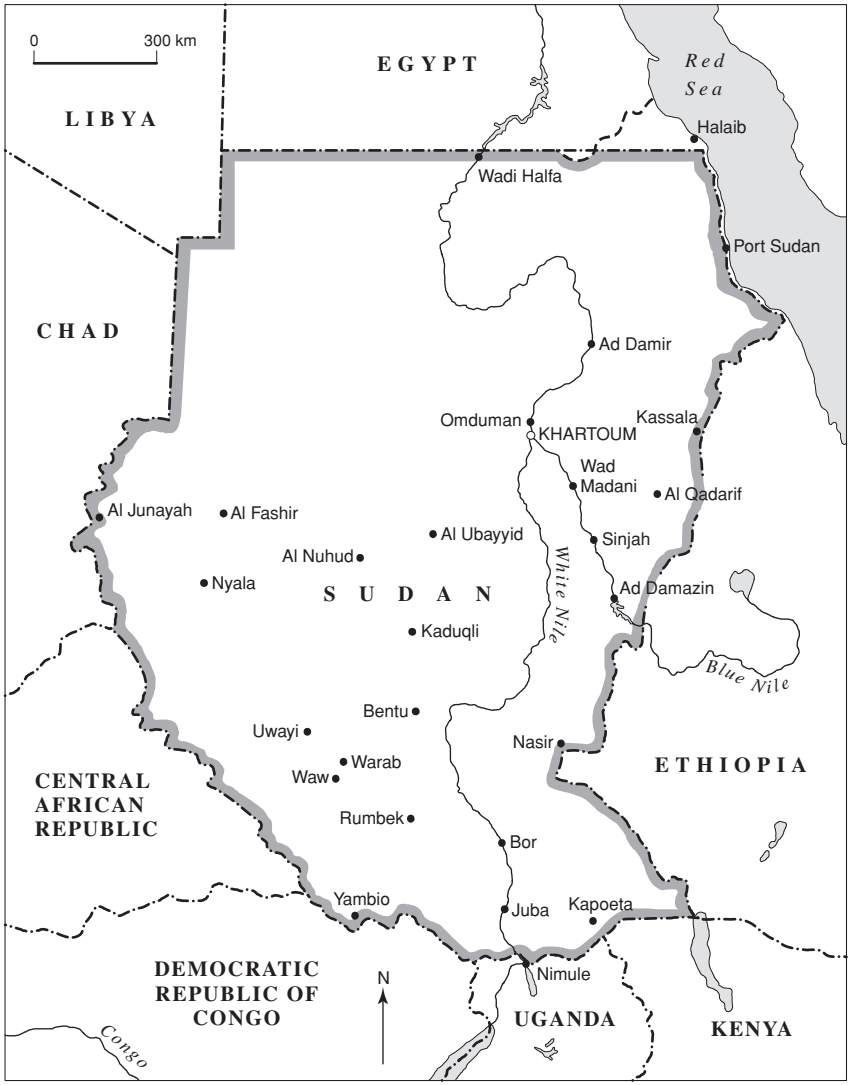
	exchange; reports of massacre of at least 600 southerners, mostly Shilluk, by pro-government militia at al-Jabalin in Upper Nile.
1990 April	Twenty-eight officers are executed a few hours after a failed coup attempt.
November	Widespread arrests in major northern towns following anti-government demonstrations by students and trades unions.
End of 1990	WFP and FAO warns of wide-scale famine in Sudan.
1991 May	SPLA forced to leave Ethiopia after the fall of Mengistu regime in Addis Ababa; some 300,000 southern Sudanese are forced to return to Sudan from border areas in Ethiopia; returnees overcrowd the town of Nasir under SPLA control.
August	SPLA commanders Riak Machar and Lam Akol defect from the SPLA, denouncing lack of democracy in the movement; the two commanders form breakaway Nasir faction, later renamed SPLA-United.
September	Rising malnutrition, especially in western region. Thousands are reported to have died by the end of the year from hunger-related disease.
October	Army seals off Nuba Mountains and begins operations to drive out the Nuba and destroy SPLA strength in the area.
November–December	Over 200,000 flee Bor district after 5,000 civilians are massacred by forces loyal to SPLA Nasir faction.
1992 January	*Jihad* declared in Nuba Mountains at a meeting in al-Obeid of regional governors of southern Kordofan.
February	A 300-member transitional national assembly is appointed by the government until parliamentary elections are held.
March	Government launches a major offensive against the SPLA; an estimated 100,000 are displaced.
June	Abuja I talks are held in Nigeria between the government and the two SPLA factions in Nigeria; question of *shar'ia* emerges as a stumbling block.
December	UN General Assembly (third committee) condemns Sudanese government for gross violations of human rights.
1993 January	Dispute resurges again between Egypt and the Sudan over the north-eastern border region of Halayeb. Each of the governments accuses the other of harbouring opposition elements.
April	World Bank and Arab fund for social and economic

	development suspend loans to Sudan, which has failed to pay its arrears.
May	Abuja II peace talks collapse.
June	Mosques and headquarters of the Ansar, Khatmiyya and Ansar al-Sunna al-Mahmadiyya are the targets of crackdowns by government security.
July	Ali Osman M. Taha, NIF's deputy leader joins the government as minister of the newly created Social Planning Ministry.
August	US State Department adds Sudan to its list of states sponsoring terrorism.
	Over 100,000 southern Sudanese flee into neighbouring countries as a result of the government offensive.
September	IGAD forms a committee composed of the heads of state of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya and Uganda to look into resolving the civil war in Sudan.
October	Package of political reforms announced by the government: RCC dissolves itself, al-Bashir is named as president and Al-Zubair Mohamed Salih as vice-president.
November	Leaders of SPLA rival factions, Garang and Machar, agree on 'self-determination' for the people of the southern Sudan, the Nuba Mountains, and 'marginalized areas'.
1994 January	Begninning of tension between Sudan and Eritrea when the latter claims that it killed 20 foreign Muslim extremists coming from Sudan.
February	Government adopts federal structure for the administration of Sudan; 26 states are created.
July	Reports of infighting between various factions within SPLA amid heavy loss of lives, primarily civilians.
August	The Venezuelan terrorist Carlos 'the Jackal' is captured in Khartoum and taken away by French security forces to be tried in France.
December	Eritrea breaks diplomatic relations with Sudan. Both governments claim that the other is providing training facilities for some of its opponents. Umma and SPLA mainstream (Garang's faction) sign an agreement recognizing self-determination for the south in the town of Chukudum in southern Sudan.
1995 February	Ali Osman Mohamed Taha becomes foreign minister.
April	Uganda breaks off diplomatic relations with Sudan.

May	Former prime minister Sadiq al-Mahdi is arrested after denouncing al-Bashir's government in Omdurman.
June	Sudan implicated in assassination attempt on the Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa. NDA holds a conference in Eritrea and adopts the 'Asmara Declaration', reaffirming its commitment to a democratic Sudan and to self-determination for the south.
September	Three days of widespread student anti-government demonstrations in Khartoum are harshly put down by government.
October–November	SPLA offensive succeeds in taking some positions.
1996 January	Sudan celebrates 40 years of independence amid political isolation and hostility from most of the neighbouring states.
	UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1044 condemning Sudan's 'terrorism'.
March	Parliamentary elections held under the shadow of escalating civil war. Tight political control and repression; NIF loyalists dominate the National Assembly, Hasan al-Turabi becomes the Speaker of the Assembly, al-Bashir is elected President.
April	UN Security Council approves sanctions against Sudan because of its alleged role in the assassination attempt on President Mubarak, and refusal to hand over suspects. Sanctions enter into force in May.
August, October	Reports of unsuccessful coup attempts.
December	Flight of Sadiq al-Mahdi to Eritrea; al-Mahdi joins other exiled NDA leaders to coordinate opposition to the NIF regime.
1997 January–February	NDA begins military offensive against government forces and positions in eastern Sudan. Sudan Allied Forces (SAF) – launched by former army officers – emerge as the main 'northern' military group on the eastern front alongside SPLA forces. Government call for *jihad* to counter the opposition offensive.
March	Upsurge in fighting in south and east.
April	Tension rises between Khartoum, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Uganda.
	Government signs the 'Khartoum Peace Agreement' with six southern factions that had broken away from the SPLA; agreement endorses the right of self-determination to be exercised after a three-year

	transitional period. SPLA mainstream rejects the Khartoum Agreement.
July	Sudan government accepts the Declaration of Principles (DoP) adopted by the IGAD group since 1994. Declaration included separation of religion and state; principle of self-determination for the south; recognition of Sudan as a multi-ethnic, multi religious country.
August	Riek Machar, leader of main faction that signed the Khartoum Peace Agreement with government, becomes chairman of the newly created Southern States Coordinating Council.
October	Talks between government and SPLA begin under the aegis of IGAD; no progress reported.
November	US government imposes economic sanctions on Sudan, accusing the government of supporting international terrorism and having an abysmal record of human rights.
December	US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright holds a meeting in Kampala, Uganda with NDA leaders including Johan Garang.
1998 January	Rapprochement between Sudan and Egypt.
February	Death of first vice-president al-Zubeir Mohamed Salih and 12 other senior government officials in a plane crash in the Upper Nile state in the south. Also killed in the crash is Arok Thoun Arok, one of the southern leaders who signed the Khartoum Peace Agreement with the government. Ali Osman Mohamed Taha becomes vice-president.
April	Famine warning in Bahr al-Ghazal region in the south.
June	War breaks out between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Government announces adoption of new 'permanent constitution' – signed into law on 30 June. New constitution stipulates formation of political associations on basis of a registration law (to be passed later). NDA leaders arrested.
July–August	Government and SPLA declare unilateral ceasefire to allow aid organizations to operate.
August	Talks in Addis Ababa between government and SPLA come to nothing. USA launches cruise missile attack against the *Shifa* pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum North, claiming that the plant was financed by Osama Bin Laden and was used to make nerve gas ingredients.
October	Heavy fighting between government and SPLA in

	eastern Equitoria; government declares wide *jihad* mobilization.
1999 January	Registration of Political Associations law passed by the government pursuant to the 1998 constitution. NDA parties reject the new law.
May	Turabi meets with Sadiq al-Mahdi in Geneva to discuss ways of finding a political settlement to Sudan's affairs.
October	Sudan starts oil production at 20,000 barrels a day.
November	Sadiq al-Mahdi signs Call of the Homeland (*nida' al-watan*) Declaration with President al-Bashir in Djibouti. Move criticized by other opposition parties, leading eventually to the Umma party leaving the NDA ranks.
December	Al-Bashir imposes state of emergency and dissolves the National Assembly as part of an ongoing power struggle with Hasan al-Turabi, hitherto the Speaker of the Assembly and Secretary General of the ruling National Congress party. The National Assembly is dissolved and al-Turabi loses both his positions.
December	Normalization of relations between Sudan and Egypt.
2000 May–June	War flares up between Ethiopia and Eritrea; Ethiopia re-establishes relations with Sudan.
June	Pro-Turabi faction declares breakaway party, the Popular National Congress (later re-named Popular Congress – PC); PC proclaims itself as an opposition force.
September	Umar al-Bashir holds exploratory talks with NDA leader Muhammad Uthman al-Mirghani in Eritrea.
November	Fighting between NDA and government forces around the city of Kassala in eastern Sudan.
December	Umar al-Bashir is re-elected president; opposition groups boycott elections.2001 February Turabi's PC signs a memorandum of understanding with the SPLA/M; government reacts by detaining al-Turabi and senior members of his party without charge.
2002 July	'Machakos protocol' is signed between the government and the SPLA. The protocol stipulates right of self-determination for the south after a six-year transitional period during which the south is to be exempted from application of *shari'a* laws.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Al Fashir
Al Ubayyid
Sinjah
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Blue Nile
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Uwayi
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Congo

1 State formation

As a geopolitical entity, the Sudan with its present borders is a relatively recent nation. Its component parts, however, experienced various degrees of state building and centralized power. The northern region, and particularly Nubia, is comparatively well documented, as the area has long been the focus of archaeological excavations and research. Little, however, is known about the early history of southern and western Sudan. As far as our knowledge goes the northern and central parts of Sudan experienced a fairly continuous history of political formation with a measure of centralized authority from antiquity down to modern times.

Historians usually divide the historical development of the Sudan into three main stages: ancient, mediaeval and modern. The ancient period extends from antiquity to about the fourth and fifth centuries AD, the mediaeval from the sixth to eighteenth centuries AD, and the modern history of Sudan from the nineteenth century onwards. For the purposes of the scope of this book, which deals primarily with the contemporary era, there will be a closer account of the history of state formation in the Sudan from the nineteenth century onwards, with a passing reference to developments during the earlier century periods.

Pre-nineteenth-century Sudan

Human life in the Sudan perhaps goes back to the early Stone Age, and there are suggestions that settlements in northern Sudan may be traced to the eighth millennium BC. The Shaheinab culture in the neighbourhood of present-day Khartoum is, however, generally referred to as the earliest in Sudan. This emerged around the fourth millennium BC in association with the appearance of settled agricultural communities.[1]

From about 3000 BC, the political history of northern Sudan (then known as Kush, or Cush) became intertwined with Egypt, which started to exert considerable cultural and political influence on the region. The Egyptian Pharaohs directed their attention to Kush, at times ruling it as a province of Egypt, from the time of the Old Kingdom (ca 2700–2180 BC) until the fall of the New Kingdom in the eleventh century BC. Egyptian hegemony over Sudan, however, varied in military strength, and at times of weakness or foreign invasion of Egypt, the Sudan developed its own political structures, independent from Egyptian influences and hegemony. Such

was the case of the first indigenous political entity to appear in lower Nubia, the kingdom of Kush, which emerged at Kerma near present-day Dongola after the fall of the old Egyptian Kingdom. Likewise, the Kushite kingdom of Napata (near the present-day Karima) emerged during the period following the collapse of the New Egyptian Kingdom and the end of Egyptian control over Kush. The founder of the dynasty of Naptan kings is given as Kashta (d. ca 751 BC).[2]

The monarchs of Napata gradually extended their control into Egypt and ruled both Kush and Egypt as the twenty-fifth dynasty for about a century. Kashta extended the rule of Napata to Upper Egypt, whereas Kashta's successor, Piankhy (751–710 BC) conquered the whole of Egypt down to the Delta and assumed the title of Pharaoh, thus launching the twenty-fifth dynasty. Piankhy's brother and successor Shabako consolidated Napatan rule in Egypt and transferred the capital of the kingdom to Thebes in Upper Egypt. As a result, most of the Nile Valley was united under the rule of the Kushite dynasty as their dominions extended from the Mediterranean in the north to at least the area of present-day Khartoum in the south.[3]

In the opinion of many historians of antiquity, the Kushite rule succeeded in arresting the progress of decay which had been a feature of Egyptian civilization for nearly three centuries. The reign of Taharqa (690–664) 'showed every promise of a cultural renaissance'.[4] Yet, a series of attacks by the Assyrians on Egypt (671–662/1), forced the Kushite kings – Taharqa and his successor Tanwetamni – to withdraw to their ancestral home in Napata. The kingdom of Napata, however, continued as the dominant political entity in Kush and extended its territory south and east.[5]

Following an Egyptian raid in 590 BC, the ruling Kushite monarchs (probably during the reign of Aspelta [593–568 BC]) withdrew their seat of government to the city of Meroe near the sixth cataract, thereby initiating the Kingdom of Meroe. Napata, however, remained the religious capital of the Kingdom for at least the next century. During the height of its power the Meroitic Kingdom – which lasted until the fourth century AD – extended over a region from the third cataract to the Gezira in the south, and even over the area of the *sudd* in Upper Nile according to some historians.[6] Meroe was famous for its iron ore industry, maintained trade contacts with India, Arabia and the Mediterranean, and incorporated some Hellenistic and Hindu influences in its daily life and culture.[7] Despite these influences, the Meroitic era represented an indigenous Sudanese civilization and laid the foundation of the Sudanese nation-state.

In this sense Meroe represented a transition from the previous Kushite phases of Kerma and Napata, which were strongly influenced by Egyptian culture and tradition. Such cultural and political affinity between Egypt and Nubia during these periods was not surprising in view of the lengthy Egyptian occupation of lower Nubia, which lasted for over a millennium. It has also been suggested that in those days the ethnic identity of the two countries was more or less the same, particularly when Upper Egypt was the centre of its political and religious institutions. The Kushite occupation and rule of Egypt furthermore enhanced this political and cultural unity between Kush and Egypt.[8]

With the rise of Meroe the two countries started to drift apart in both geopolitical and cultural terms. As the seat of government moved south in Sudan, it shifted north in Egypt. And as Egypt came under direct Persian, Ptolemaic, Greek and Roman rule and influences, Meroe developed its own political, religious and cultural institutions, including a unique Meroitic script. Hence, although Meroe was not immune from external influences as noted, being essentially an indigenous civilization, it was in a position to receive and assimilate these influences within its own cultural blend.[9]

In AD 350 an invading army from the Kingdom of Axum in present-day Ethiopia captured and destroyed Meroe city, ending the kingdom's existence. The event was preceded shortly by the arrival of a new ethnic group called *Noba* who came from the region of Kordofan in central/western Sudan and settled in the island of Meroe around the beginning of the fourth century AD. It was argued that the Noba's expansion had brought them into conflict with the Beja – who dominated the area between the Nile and the Red Sea, and were in effect subjects of the kingdom of Axum – thus incurring the wrath of the latter on Meroe.[10]

By the sixth century AD, three states emerged as the political and cultural heirs of Meroe: Nobatia in the north with its capital at Faras, al-Muqqarah (or Makuria) with its capital at Dongola in the centre, and 'Alawa (or Alodia) with its capital at Soba southeast of Khartoum in the south. The rise of these three kingdoms coincided with the advent of Christianity in the Nile Valley and the conversion of Nubian monarchs to the Christian faith. The Nubian church, however, acknowledged the spiritual authority of the Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria. Christianity maintained a strong connection with the political institution as the church sanctioned legitimacy of the Nubian kings, whereas the latter ensured the protection of the church's interest. Externally, the adoption of Christianity renewed Nubia's cultural and ideological ties with Egypt and reopened its channels of communication with the Mediterranean world.[11]

The invasion and conquest of Egypt by Arab Muslim armies in 640 posed a threat to Christian Nubia and is widely believed to have been the reason behind the unification of Nobatia and Makuria sometimes before AD 700. Indeed, the Arabs invaded Nubia in 642, and again in 651/652 when they laid siege to the city of Dongola, capital of al-Muqqarah but the Nubians put up a strong resistance. Consequently, the two parties concluded a treaty known as the treaty of *al-baqt* (Pact). The terms of al-baqt (which were regularly renewed in subsequent occasions of conflict) recognized free travel and trade to proceed unhindered across the frontier from both sides; that neither party would come to the aid of the other in case of an attack from a third party; and that both parties were to exchange tribute as a symbol of goodwill: the Nubians in slaves, and the Arabs in grain and other provisions.[12]

Some contemporary Sudanese writings regard the Pact as a humiliating treaty for Nubia in that it compelled them to send slaves from their people to the Muslims, and so on. In reality, however, the Pact was not a treaty between victors and vanquished, but rather a truce between two parties to affect a cessation of hostilities and an agreement for the exchange of benefits. Put in its historical context, slavery was widespread in those days, be it in the Christian Nubia or the Muslim world. It

is thus no wonder that slaves – who were most probably procured from raiding enemies – were exchanged as commodities for grain and wine. Yet, the Pact is significant in another aspect, namely as a symbol of religious co-existence or tolerance. Although not written explicitly in any of the texts, it has been confirmed by various traditions that Muslims were paying Nubians wine as part of their annual tribute of provisions. On the other hand, some versions of the Pact (most likely a later one) speak of the duty of the Christian Nubians to maintain the mosque built by Muslims in Dongola.[13]

In juristic and historical terms the Pact was subjected to various interpretations and changing conditions, not least because of shifting political circumstances in Egypt under Muslim rule. Nonetheless, the spirit of the 'Nubian Pact' represented a diplomatic framework for peaceful co-existence between Egypt and Nubia for more than 600 years. Within this *modus vivendi*, trade and economic contacts flourished between Nubia and Egypt and eventually facilitated Arab migration into Nubia.

In spite of the Muslims' control of Egypt and the initial pressure they posed on Nubia, the Christian kingdoms lasted until the beginning of the fourteenth century in the north, and the middle of the fifteenth century in the south, and achieved the peak of their prosperity and military power in the ninth and tenth centuries AD. By the thirteenth century, however, a host of internal and external factors led to the disintegration of al-Muqqarah, and it eventually fell around the first quarter of the fourteenth century. The kingdom of 'Alawa, however, lasted a little over a century after al-Muqqarah but eventually fell, probably by the mid-fifteenth century AD.[14]

Little is known about the period that spanned the interval separating the fall of the two Christian kingdoms. The most significant characteristics of this period were perhaps the absence of a centralized political structure in place of al-Muqqarah, the extensive demographic movements, and the inward migration of Arab tribes in the Sudan and their gradual settlement in the Nile Valley, and on the western and eastern plains. The fall of Soba, capital of 'Alawa, to a confederation of tribes led by an Arab warrior known as 'Abdullah Jamma' represented the culmination of these demographic movements and the pressure of Arab tribes.[15]

The Funj and the Fur

The period between sixteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed the rise of two Islamized kingdoms: the Funj Sultanate, which dominated much of the Sudanese Nile valley, and the Fur Sultanate which controlled western Sudan (present-day Darfur).

The Funj

In 1504 the descendants of Abdullah Jamma, (the Abdallab) – who prevailed over Soba – clashed with a new expanding force from the south, the Funj. The Funj, whose exact origins are still an issue of controversy among historians but who

probably came from the White Nile, subdued the Abdallab, and established the Funj Sultanate of Sinnar. Also known as the Black Sultanate, the Funj kingdom was founded by 'Amara Dunqas (1504–33), the first known of its sultans. The Sultanate, which had its capital at Sinnar in southern Gezira, lasted from the early sixteenth century through the first quarter of the nineteenth century. At the height of its power and prosperity the Funj Sultanate extended from the third cataract in the north to Fazughli in the Upper Nile (or the area of the *sudd*) in the south, and from Kordofan in the West to the Red Sea hills in the east.

The Funj ruled directly over some parts of their kingdom such as the Gezira, southern Blue Nile, and established tributary relations with other territories that came under their jurisdiction by virtue of conquest or necessity (as was the case for the nomadic tribes, and the kingdom of Taqali in the Nuba Mountains). Thus the Abdallab, who were conquered by the Funj at the establishment of their empire, became tributary vassals of Sinnar with over-lordship on the entire northern region from the Nile confluence to the northern border of the Sultanate.

Although the Funj royalty embraced Islam in the early days of the Sultanate, their political system closely resembled the Meroitic and Nubian kingships and was in a way a continuity of their traditions. The wealth of the Funj Empire rested on tribute and long-distance trade, which was a monopoly of the sultan who maintained a well-trained army of slave soldiers and cavalry force. By the mid-eighteenth century the Funj central authority was in decline. The deposition of Sultan Badi IV (also known as Badi Abu Shulukh) initiated a period when real authority in Sinnar passed to the warrior clan of the vizier Abu Likaylik who became the king-makers. Regions hitherto under Funj control became effectively independent or remained part of the sultanate with but a nominal allegiance to Sinnar. The last decades of the Funj era were characterized by dynastic and inter-dynastic disputes and wars. The end came when Sinnar was conquered by the invading Turko-Egyptian army in 1820–21.[16]

The Fur

The Fur, who were probably related to some tribes of Western Bahr al-Ghazal further south, were the largest non-Arab tribe in Darfur. The early history of Darfur was rather obscure, but at least two states were known to have ruled the region between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries: the Daju and the Tunjur. After a period of disorder in the sixteenth century, the Kayra clan led by Sulayman Solonge (*Solongdungo*) prevailed until the end of the Fur Sultanate in 1916. Sulayman Solonge (1596–1637) was said to have driven out the Tunjur, united the Fur and non-Fur peoples of Jabal Marra, conquered the area around the mountain, and declared Islam to be the official religion of the kingdom. The Fur Sultanate expanded north and westwards during the reign of Sultan Ahmad Bakr (1715–28), and his son Tayrab (1762–85) who extended the Sultanate eastwards to the White Nile at the expense of the Funj Kingdom. Thus by the eighteenth century, the Kayra Sultanate, which perhaps grew out of tribal chiefdom in the first half of the seventeenth century had consolidated its rule over Darfur, established a permanent

capital at al-Fashir, and fought the Funj for control of Kordofan. By the end of the eighteenth century the Fur Sultanate extended from the present Sudan–Chad border in the west to the White Nile in the east, covering approximately the combined area of the present-day provinces of Darfur and Kordofan.

By and large, the political system of the Fur closely resembled that of the Funj to the east and the tradition of the Sudanic kingdoms in West Africa. The reign of Ahmad Bakr witnessed large-scale Islamization of the kingdom, as did that of Abd al-Rahaman al-Rashid (1786–1800) who reorganized the Sultanate's administration to conform more to Islamic practices and norms, and encouraged immigration of religious scholars and merchants from central and northern Sudan into Darfur.[17] The Kayra Sultanate ruled Darfur from the seventeenth century to 1874 when it lost its independence to the Turko-Egyptian regime (the latter had previously taken control of Kordofan in 1821). Kayra's rule was restored over Darfur in 1899 by Ali Dinar who maintained the kingdom's independence until 1916 when Darfur was conquered by the British and annexed to the Condominium Sudan.

Arabization and Islamization

Under the Funj and Fur Sultanates, the northern and western parts of Sudan became Islamized and largely Arabized. Arabization and Islamization of these parts came through a lengthy process that involved demographic movements, particularly the migration of Arab tribes and their settlement in various parts of Sudan, commercial contacts, and preaching and educational efforts of individual Muslim scholars. Although both the Funj and Fur Sultanates were essentially based on pre-Islamic political and ideological institutions their nominal allegiance to Islam coupled with a host of complex socioeconomic and political factors had led to accelerated Islamization and Arabic acculturation. This Arabization and Islamization process, which lasted for about three to four centuries and reached maturity during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, seemed to have passed through three main stages. The first stage saw the preliminary introduction of Islam through demographic movements and migration, commercial and political contacts, and eventually the conversion of the ruling dynasties of the Funj and Fur Sultanates. The second stage witnessed the growth of a comparatively more vigorous process of Islamization through the efforts of an expanding network of Muslim scholars and leaders of Sufi brotherhoods. Finally, the third stage represented the adoption, within a Sudanese particularity, of Arabic and Islamic culture in north-central and western Sudan.

Although this process was more or less common to both Funj and Fur polities, the patterns differed between the two. The pattern that emerged in the Sudanese Nile Valley, the Funj domain, was clearly characterized by the emergence of a network of independent Islamic schools, and the rise of community religious centres around prominent Sufi shaykhs and their descendants. However, no central religious or educational institution emerged in the Funj Sultanate to regulate or coordinate among those numerous religious centres.

Darfur was a different story. The kingdom emerged as an Islamized kingdom about a century later than the Funj, and was rather isolated from the mainstream influences emanating from Arabia and Egypt to which the Nile Valley had been exposed. As such Darfur was more exposed to influences from the Nile Valley itself and the Islamized Sudanic kingdoms of West Africa. However, despite strong political and cultural influences coming from West Africa, it is believed that 'the main impetus for Islamization came from the Nile Valley'.[18] Over the centuries groups from riverian Sudan, known as *awlad al-balad*, who were forced by virtue of economic and political pressures to leave their homes and migrate to the west, represented agents of change and acculturation. As previously noted, the era of Sultan Abd al-Rahaman al-Rashid encouraged immigration of *awlad al-Balad* and their settlement in Darfur. His reign also witnessed the consolidation of the Fur's control over Kordofan, which had previously been a tributary of Sinnar, and was indeed subject to more vigorous influences of Islamization and Arabic acculturation.[19]

Although both traditions of Sunni – or 'orthodox' Islam, and Sufism – or mystical Islam – were introduced in the Sudan, the latter became the predominant form of Islamic religion and was widely known as 'popular Islam'. By the nineteenth century, however, Islam gradually became integrated into the spheres of politics and ideology alongside other affinities such as kinship and tribalism.[20]

The southern Sudan

Little is known about the early history of southern Sudan, but it is clear that the region definitely witnessed a different pattern of development from the one experienced in the north. Sheltered and isolated by virtue of natural barriers of mountains and rivers, the region was less exposed to external influences and therefore maintained a separate social and cultural identity.

Much of the present-day southern Sudan and northern Uganda was probably peopled by speakers of central Sudanic languages in the last decades of the first millennium AD. Thenceforth, the region became subjected to the expansion of the Nilotic groups who were primarily located in the western part of the south, or present-day Bahr al-Ghazal. The major Nilotic group, the Dinka (who constitute the single largest tribal group of modern Sudan) gradually settled in areas that roughly correspond to their present homeland in Bahr al-Ghazal and Upper Nile. The Dinka, however, did not develop a centralized political institution, but a large cluster of tribal groupings with a common cultural identity. The second grouping of Nilots was the Nuer, cattle herding people, who again shared a common cultural identity but had no centralized political institutions. The Shilluk (or Chollo), who settled in Upper Nile and engaged more extensively in agriculture, were the only Nilotic grouping to develop a centralized political structure.[21] Another group with a degree of a centralized political structure were the Azande who settled in southwestern areas of the Sudan sometime in the sixteenth century. The Azande expansion in the eighteenth century brought together earlier groups and assimilated others in a unified kingdom.[22]

Although the southern and northern regions of the Sudan lived in isolation from each other before the nineteenth century, there were occasional political and military interactions, as well as economic and commercial activities across the 'frontier' between them. The Shilluk, who settled in Upper Nile near present-day Malakal probably at the end of the fifteenth century, did so after dislodging the Funj from their original home in the region between Tonga and Muomo.

In the seventeenth century the Shilluk started a two pronged expansion: northwards where they succeeded in dominating the White Nile from Muomo to Alays (present-day al-Kawa on the White Nile), and westwards where they tried to occupy the Nuba mountains. Their expansion however was checked on both fronts by the Funj sultans who established a garrison at Alays and laid control to substantial parts of the Nuba Mountains, turning the kingdom of Taqali into a tributary state. Though the Funj and Shilluk remained generally on hostile terms, they were forced to join forces and form an alliance against the Dinka who invaded the southern fringes of the Funj kingdom in about 1630. Eventually the Funj–Shilluk alliance drove the Dinka eastwards to the region adjacent to the present Sudan–Ethiopian border. When the Funj power started to decline during the second half of the eighteenth century, the Shilluk again extended their influence northwards and were in effective control of Alays by 1772. The Shilluk probably dominated the White Nile waters until the advent of the Turko-Egyptian administration that forced them to retreat southwards to their original settlement in the Upper Nile.[23] In the territories south of Bahr al-Ghazal, the Kayra Sultanate began to administer a form of control over Dar Fertit and levied tribute from the inhabitants of Hufrat al-Nahas well before AD 1800.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the main cultural identities that characterize the Sudanese regions today were more or less formed: ranging from Arabic-Islamic orientation of the north-central region (the former domain of the Funj Sultanate), to the strong African orientation of the south. In between, both Darfur and the Nuba Mountains retained a strong regional identity, and so did the Beja of eastern Sudan. In terms of state formation, both the north-central and western lands developed a strong tradition of centralized forms of political power, but allowed a measure of autonomy to local traditions and structures. Southern Sudan, however, experienced a rather different pattern of development that on the whole did not include supra-tribal centralized forms of political structures comparable to the northern and western areas.[24]

The Turko-Egyptian Sudan

In 1820 Muhammad Ali, the viceroy of Egypt, which was nominally a province of the Ottoman Empire, invaded the Sudan regions with a two-pronged campaign that penetrated the Nile Valley and western Sudan. By 1821 the Egyptian army had subdued all the territories of Sinnar, taken control of Kordofan from the Fur Sultanate and established what came to be known as the Turko-Egyptian regime in Sudan (1821–85).

Muhammad Ali's motivation for occupation of the region was primarily his need for the human and economic resources of the Sudan to boost his modernization programme of Egypt and his ambitions of empire building. A second phase of expansion took place during the reign of Muhammad Ali's grandson Khedive Ismail (1863–79), who extended the Egyptian empire in the Sudan to cover the western coast of the Red Sea and its ports, the southern Sudan up to northern Uganda, and Darfur. In 1880 the Turko-Egyptian domain extended from the second cataract on the river Nile in the north to the region of the Great Lakes in the south, and from the shores of the Red Sea in the east to approximately the present-day Sudan–Chadian border in the west. That is to say, the Sudan with approximately its current political borders came into existence during the Turko-Egyptian period.

Turko-Egyptian rule of the Sudan established a countrywide central administration managed from Khartoum and supported by a standing army with garrisons in major cities and strategic locations. The country was divided into provinces under the *hikimdar*, or Governor-General in Khartoum. Each province was administered by a *mudir*, a provincial governor, and subdivided into districts (called *qisms* in rural or nomadic areas and *khatts* in settled areas). Throughout the Turko-Egyptian period, however, the administrative system fluctuated between centralization and devolution. A more complex bureaucracy developed under Egyptian rule as specialized departments or *divans* – dealing with administration, accounts, mining, etc. – were established in Khartoum and the provinces. Mainly Egyptian clerical and administrative employees staffed these *divans*.

Following the initial period of conquest and pacification, the standing Egyptian army was reorganized in a blend of French and Turkish military traditions and drill. It was supported by irregular cavalry forces, mostly recruited from loyal Sudanese tribes, for the purposes of tax collection.[25]

For mainly economic reasons, the Sudanese were allowed to take part in administration at local level from the beginning of Egyptian rule. Yet during the course of Egyptian reign, more senior posts were allocated to Sudanese, as in the cases of Ahmad Abu Sin (from the Shukriyya chieftain) who held the post of *mudir* of Khartoum, and Hussein Bey Khalifa (of the 'Ababda tribe) who was the governor of Berber.[26]

A centralized judiciary system based on *shari'a* courts and dealing primarily with personal affairs, was established under the auspices of a *qadi umum al-Sudan*, chief justice for the Sudan, and lower courts at provincial and district levels. The era also witnessed other innovations, such as the introduction of modern means of transportation and communication (steamships and telegraph), partial secularization of the legal and educational systems, and the opening of parts of the country, particularly the south, to Christian missionary activities.[27]

The major impact of the Turko-Egyptian period was that for the first time in its history the Sudan came into existence as one political entity. The conquest brought together under a single administration the domains of the Funj and Fur sultanates, Nuba, and southern Sudan, as well as the country of the Beja in eastern Sudan, and the Nubian territories in the far north. As a result of this development larger

clusters of diverse ethnic groups, cultural traditions, and sociopolitical structures were brought together. Within this new polity more centralized forms of organization developed within tribal and religious institutions in addition to widespread trade and population movements.

Under the centralized system of Turko-Egyptian administration the major tribal groupings of the northern Sudan were for the first time fully integrated into the political system. During the Funj and the Fur times the main tribal and ethnic groupings, with the exception of the Beja, had either been integral parts of the sultanates or had established tributary relations with them. With the decline of the Funj central authority in the second half of the eighteenth century most of the tribal groupings and former provinces asserted their independence. The appearance of tribal genealogies (often claiming Arab descent) may be traced to this era. The period also witnessed the emergence of large tribal confederations such as the Shukriyya in the east, and the Kababish in the west. With the advent of the Egyptian regime these tribal groupings underwent important transformations. Certain tribes like the Shukriyya and Kababish were co-opted into the new regime but retained a measure of autonomy. The Shaiqiyya, who were also co-opted 'became soldiers, merchants and lower level officials throughout the country' and lost their regionalism and emphasis on local politics. Yet, other tribal groupings who initially resisted the Turko-Egyptian conquest, like the Beja, began to organize themselves in larger tribal structures under more centralized chieftains.[28]

With regard to religious institutions the era witnessed two important developments: growth and consolidation of centralized Sufi brotherhoods; and the rise of a new class of orthodox *'ulama* (religious scholars). By the start of the nineteenth century the Sudanese Nile Valley began to receive representatives of Sufi reformism which began in Hijaz and other parts of the Islamic world during the eighteenth century. Chief among these movements were the Sammaniyya and the Khatmiyya. The Sammaniyya was introduced in the Sudan by Ahmad al-Tayyib al-Bashir (born 1742/43) who travelled widely and spent some time in Hijaz wherein he was initiated into the order by its founder Abd al-Karim al-Sammanan (d. 1775). On the eve of the Turko-Egyptian conquest, the Sammaniyya had spread widely in Gezira. Both *tariqas* – but more so the Khatmiyya – grew and expanded during the Turko-Egyptian era.[29]

Muhammad Osman al-Mirghani, founder of the Khatmiyya visited the Sudan in the years 1817–18 when he was still a disciple of Ahmad Ibn Idris al-Fasi (d. 1837) and travelled widely in northern, eastern and western Sudan, preaching the teachings of his master and recruiting potential followers. He seemed to have enjoyed considerable success in the eastern and northern provinces. Al-Mirghani eventually returned to Hijaz where he founded the *Khatmiyya tariqa* in 1837. Although Muhammad Osman al-Mirghani maintained contact with his followers in the Sudan through pilgrimage seasons or visits by himself and other members of al-Mirghani family, the organized establishment of the *tariqa* in Sudan was the work of Hasan al-Mirghani the son of Muhammad Osman from a Sudanese wife. Building on his father's legacy and pockets of followers, Hasan al-Mirghani (who died in 1869) organized the *tariqa* on a new hierarchical basis and a centralized

structure. Founded on a combination of scholastic and esoteric traditions the Khatmiyya received the recognition and favouritism of the Turko-Egyptian regime, a factor which must have contributed to the *tariqa*'s spread and its transformation into a proto-national Sufi order.[30]

On the other hand the Turko-Egyptian regime encouraged the formation of a class of orthodox *'ulama* through systematic training of Sudanese *'ulama* both locally and at the famous al-Azhar University in Cairo. A twin development in association with the rising *'ulama* elite was the introduction and systematization of the Islamic judiciary system.[31]

By and large, the Turko-Egyptian regime introduced two different patterns of politico-ideological discourses. On the one hand, it contributed to the advancement of Islamic orthodoxy, especially in the fields of education and law, and by its consolidation of the *'ulama* sect. On the other hand, the Egyptian government introduced, for the first time in the history of the country, 'modern' systems of secular administration, education, and civil law that were virtually based on European traditions.

As the *raison d'etre* of Muhammad Ali's conquest of the Sudan was primarily exploitation of the country's resources, the economic policies of the Egyptian administrations were all geared towards realization of that aim at any cost. Considerable efforts were exerted, particularly during Muhammad Ali's reign, to boost agricultural output and the mining industry for the benefit of Cairo, but to no significant success. Instead, the major source that yielded some revenue to the Egyptian budget in addition to tribute and taxation, was the procurement of traditional Sudanese commodities such as ivory, gum Arabic, and slaves (those were also wanted for army conscription). Although trading in these traditional products did not entail any changes in the economic structure of the country, the Turko-Egyptian establishment as a whole provided new and fairly unprecedented commercial activity. Thus Turko-Egyptian rule amalgamated vast territories together in one political entity, integrated it with more advanced networks of transportation and communication, and established a better system of security.

For the first time in the history of the Sudan's regions, the south became integrated with northern Sudan under one political entity. The crucial factor in this process seemed to be the development of river navigation under Egyptian rule. In November 1839, a Nile voyage led by Salim Qapudan, a Turkish captain, sailed from Khartoum up the White Nile with instructions from Muhammad Ali to explore the source of the Nile. The British Royal Geographical society was said to have given £50 to the expedition.[32] Salim's voyage was the first of three expeditions that penetrated the south and reached Gondokoro in Bahr al-Jabal, which subsequently grew to become an important trading station and government post. During the years that followed Salim's expedition, the *hikimdar* in Khartoum dispatched a small annual trading enterprise to obtain ivory from the south. Yet under pressure from European powers and domestic European traders in Sudan, Egypt was forced to relinquish its trade monopoly over ivory trade.[33]

Another track of expansion was to the south and west when armed parties of foreign and indigenous traders, the *jallaba* (traders with riverian origin and

nation-wide economic activity), and adventurers penetrated into the region of Bahr al-Ghazal in 1855. Fortified stations known as *zaribas* were established by the newcomers who soon engaged with the locals first in commercial contacts and eventually in violent conflict. An important figure in the new community of *jallaba* in Bahr al-Ghazal was al-Zubair Rahma Mansour, a Ga'ali (from the Ga'aliyyin tribe in the north) and resident in al-Jaili north of Khartoum, who arrived in Bahr al-Ghazal in 1856 as an assistant to one of the *jallaba*. After several adventures he built a *zariba* which grew into a town known as Daim Zubair, and established himself as one of the formidable freebooters in the region with his private army and flourishing trade in slaves and ivory.[34] In 1872, having defeated a rival he was appointed *mudir* of Bahr al-Ghazal, and in 1874 he invaded the Fur Sultanate following a dispute with its sultan. Darfur, the land of the Fur Sultanate was subsequently annexed to the Turko-Egyptian Sudan.

In Bahr al-Ghazal, as in Bahr al-Jabal before, ivory was the major attraction for all intruders in the region. During the 1850s and 1860s, Europeans, Egyptians and other nationals, and ultimately northern Sudanese *jallaba* flocked to the newly discovered areas in Upper White Nile and Bahr al-Jabal, attracted by the prospects of ivory trade. In 1851 the Sudan was exporting about 400 quintals (estimated at the value of 100,000 French francs) to the Cairo market; by 1857 the amount of exported ivory from the Upper Nile increased almost fourfold.[35] Despite these profits, dealing in ivory soon became a complex business, either because its sources were exhausted, or because it became difficult to obtain from the locals. Hence traders, or a majority of them, turned to the slave trade, which had all along been a subsidiary of the ivory trade.

Although never absent from Sudanese society since ancient times, slavery acquired new and important dimensions during the Turko-Egyptian period. As one of the aims of the Egyptian conquest was to obtain slaves for conscript in the army, the first instigator of slave raids was the Egyptian administration in the Sudan itself. Within one year of the conquest 30,000 Sudanese slaves were sent to Egypt for training and conscription into the Egyptian army. In addition to direct raids mounted to obtain slaves (known as *ghazwas*), the Egyptian government used to demand tribute payment in slaves. These actions unleashed an unprecedented trafficking in slaves, an enterprise which attracted numerous foreign and indigenous traders. Most of the procured slaves were exported, enlisted by the government in the army as *Jihadiyya* to be soldiers, or used in the domestic market. As a result of this government-sponsored and private slave plunder, considerable numbers of slaves were therefore brought to the northern and central markets of the Sudan. The opening of Upper White Nile and Bahr al-Ghazal to private slave hunting and trade largely compensated the end of government *ghazwas* in 1850s. Most of the slaves sold domestically were apparently used in agricultural labour.[36]

Introduction of steamships, firearms, and the possibility of government protection, allowed countless freebooters, adventurers, and merchants to penetrate remote parts of the country in pursuit of slave plunder. The southern provinces of the former Funj Sultanate, Nuba Mountains and the southern Sudan after the opening of the Upper Nile in the 1840s, became particularly vulnerable to the

slave trade. In ideological terms Islam seemed to have provided the dividing frontier between the sector of population who could not be enslaved by the Egyptian government, and the non-Muslims who became the objects of slave plunder.

The intensified slave trade in the nineteenth century had tremendous consequences for the traditional social and economic structures of the country. The social fabric and structure of the southern tribal groupings, and other communities which fell prey to slave plunder, suffered tremendously from the impact of this human haemorrhage, with gradual disintegration of their traditional institutions, and a perpetual state of insecurity and vulnerability of their homeland.

On the other side, the Southern Blue Nile, Kordofan, and later on Darfur – the adjacent province to the sources of slaves and ivory – were also affected by the immense commercial activity and became attractive spots for both foreign and (mostly northern) Sudanese merchants and settlers. Some of the tribes in northern Kordofan, like the Kababish, became the most active in the commercial transportation of caravans through the desert to Egypt. At another level, the slave trade and expansion of the slave market during the period in question intensified the use of slave labour in agricultural production, particularly in north and central Sudan. Employment of slave labour in agriculture had the consequential effects of increasing agricultural output in riverian and rainland regions, relieving households, particularly among upper and middle classes, from exhausting fieldwork, and provided them with ample wealth and time to promote their commerce.[37]

By the 1860s new trading centres had grown in different parts in the south in close association with the growth of settlements composed mostly of northern Sudanese *jallaba* and their families. There was, however, no government administration in most of the south. Under Khedive Isma'il's reign the Egyptian government adopted a policy of suppressing the slave trade. Between 1869 and 1876, the Egyptian government employed two Englishmen – Samuel Baker and Charles Gordon – in its administration, with the mandate of exploring the area up to the Great Lakes, fighting the slave trade, and extending Egyptian rule in the region. Thus, by the 1870s, Egypt had extended its official rule to most of southern Sudan and parts of northern Uganda, but its administrative structure there was quite rudimentary.

The Mahdiyya (1881/5–98)

The accumulated grievances and discontent generated over the years by the Turko-Egyptian occupation and its policies erupted in a nation-wide rebellion in 1881 that came to be known as the Mahdist Revolution. After a series of battles the Mahdist Revolution succeeded in ousting the Turko-Egyptian regime, and established an independent state in 1885.

Muhammad Ahmad Ibn Abdullah who was born in Labab (Dongola region) in 1844, rose as a Sufi Shaykh of the Sammaniyya order and ultimately proclaimed himself the awaited Mahdi (leader and saviour) in June 1881. This proclamation brought him into direct confrontation with the Turko-Egyptian regime and the first battle was fought between the two sides at the island of Aba on the White Nile, the first base of the Mahdi, in August 1881. The Mahdi emerged victorious

from this initial confrontation and chose to move with his followers away from the government's reach and, in October 1881, settled near the mountain of Qadeer in the Nuba Mountains in south Kordofan. From there the Mahdi overcame two government expeditions; the first, led by the Governor of Fashoda, Rashid Ayman, was annihilated in December 1881; the second, led by al-Shallali the Governor of Sinnar, was defeated by Mahdist forces in May 1882. The Mahdi's followers then launched a guerrilla war that soon engulfed the whole of western Sudan. In January 1883 the Mahdist armies captured the town of al-Obeid, capital of Kordofan. A few months later they overcame the province of Darfur and in the same year they routed a British-led army sent from Khartoum to suppress the Mahdist uprising at the battle of Shaykan in October/November 1883. Meantime the Mahdist rebellion spread throughout the country and by mid-1884 Khartoum, the seat of the Turko-Egyptian government, became completely isolated. The Mahdi then began his march towards Khartoum, which fell after a long siege in January 1885. The Mahdist state that dominated most of the present-day Sudan lasted for 13 years until the country was re-conquered by an Anglo-Egyptian army in 1898.[38]

At the political level, although discontent with the Turko-Egyptian rule and policies had always existed, it takes both adequate leadership and mass action to transfer discontent into a revolution. In this case, Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi emerged as the charismatic leader who was able to foment a wide coalition of discontented sectors of the population around a nucleus of his religious followers, and he led them against the Turko-Egyptian regime. At that particular moment the Egyptian government itself was standing on shaky ground due first to Ahmad 'Urabi's revolution (1881–82) and subsequently the British occupation of Egypt. These related events did not allow Egypt to devote due attention and resources to the situation in Sudan.

The Mahdist coalition – as in similar movements – was joined by several heterogeneous forces, each having their own grievances against the Turko-Egyptian regime. Yet this coalition was built gradually and at various stages until the Mahdist Revolution became a nation-wide movement. Thus the outbreak of the revolution was preceded by a period of secret propagation (*da'wa*) and clandestine recruitment of followers and supporters. Between 1880 and declaration of his mahdiship in June 1881, Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi and a small band of his followers visited various areas and communicated with some religious figures about the idea. It was during a visit like this to Kordofan that he acquired the support and promise of future protection of Mak Adam Um Daballo, chief of the Nuba Mountains, hence the Mahdi's choice to move to that particular region after the battle of Aba.[39]

Following the declaration of Mahdism, the movement remained limited both geographically as well as in terms of followers. As pointed out by P.M. Holt, 'for two years it was practically confined to the southern fringe of the Arab provinces, centring in Kordofan, the conquest of which was the major achievement of the *Mahdi's* followers. It spread only gradually to other parts of Sudan'.[40] Holt was also right in his assessment that the reasons for early Mahdist successes lay primarily in the local conditions of the Kordofan province.

Under Egyptian rule, Kordofan was subject to significant socioeconomic transformation as a result of intensive demographic movements and trading activity, particularly in view of Kordofan's proximity to sources of important commodities such as ivory, gum and slaves. At the same time Kordofan was home to a complex tribal structure composed of tribes accustomed to raids and plunder and jealous of their independence. All in all, the situation in the region produced powerful groups whose interests more often than not ran counter to the policies of the Turko-Egyptian government (such as taxation, trade monopoly, suppression of slave trade, and centralized control). Following the declaration of the Mahdism, the movement remained limited both geographically as well as in terms of followers.

However, although the early combination and achievement of the *Mahdiyya* have their roots in local conditions, the cosmopolitan nature of its leadership and early disciples, the eschatological vision of the Mahdi himself, and the presence of a strong contingency of *jallaba*, had from the outset endowed the movement with a national potential. The military victories scored by the Mahdist forces seemed to have played an important part in transferring the movement from a local into a nation-wide one. These military successes raised the prestige of the Mahdi and enhanced the popularity of his movement, whereas the booty captured from his enemies boosted his resources.

When the Mahdist armies captured al-Obeid, subdued Darfur, and established control over the whole of western Sudan, the stage was set for the transformation of the *Mahdiyya* into a nation-wide movement. Revolts against the Turko-Egyptian regime sprang up in different parts of the country, mostly instigated by local religious or tribal leaders who swore allegiance to the Mahdi. Therefore, the revolution, which lasted for about four years until the fall of Khartoum was joined gradually and at various stages by its different factions as each victory induced a fresh group to join in.

As a movement, the *Mahdiyya* relied on the tribal and religious loyalties. Through utilization of these tribal and religious bonds the Mahdist movement achieved its mass character, and was able to realize its immediate goals of ousting the Turko-Egyptian regime and establishing an independent state.

At the religious and ideological levels, Mahdism represented a significant stage in the development of Islam in the Sudan. The concept of the awaited Mahdi (*al-Mahdi al-muntazar*) appeared in Muslim tradition first as a *Shi'ia* concept, then a Sufi (mystical) concept, and then grew up as an independent popular tradition with elements from both *Shi'ia* and Sufi traditions.[41]

Although the Mahdi cult was deeply rooted in popular traditions of the Islamic heartland, in the context of nineteenth-century Sudan it may well be regarded as an indication of the transition of Islam from a primarily local cult into a universalized ideological framework widely accepted by the masses and leaders nation-wide. Turko-Egyptian rule accelerated the process of Islamization through its destruction of the vestiges of the Funj traditional (and virtually pre-Islamic) order, importation of scholastic and orthodox Islamic traditions, and support and consolidation of the reformist and centralized Sufi brotherhoods such as the Khatmiyya and Sammaniyya. Several writings of famous nineteenth-century Sufi leaders in the

Sudan were said to have discussed the idea of a Mahdi, his conditions and qualities. Those writings soon found their way to the followers and eventually the idea of a Mahdi became part of Islamic popular tradition in the Sudan. On the other hand, the oppressive rule of the Turko-Egyptian regime in the Sudan was said to have created the historical context for the reception of the idea of a Mahdi.[42]

The vision of Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi – who regarded himself as a person endowed with a special mission – was much wider than just liberating Sudan from much-hated foreign rule. The central theme of the Mahdist mission was 'the abandonment of this world and pursuit of the Hereafter' and waging of a *jihad* to revive the true Islamic faith on earth. Towards this end the Mahdi took the model of the Prophetic state (the state established by the Prophet Muhammad and his immediate successors on the rise of Islam in seventh-century Arabia). Whether or not such a goal was too idealistic to be realized or seriously pursued, the Mahdi died in 1885, a few months after the fall of Khartoum, before he could embark on any meaningful process of state building. Construction of the Mahdist state was therefore the lot of al-Mahdi's successor, the Khalifa Abdullah al-Ta'aishi, who was also faced with the tasks of consolidating the gains of the Mahdist revolution and waging jihad beyond the Sudanese borders.

By its very heterogeneous character, the Mahdist movement was not ready for such grand tasks. As noted, various groups joined the Mahdist Revolution for different reasons and most had little in common but their desire to rid themselves of the Turko-Egyptian regime. Furthermore, most groups, such as the tribes and Sufi brotherhoods were primarily concerned with regaining their autonomy and freedom of action rather than assimilating themselves into a theocratic state. Thus, with the departure of the charismatic figure of the Mahdi from the scene, the stage was set for a struggle for power, and the appearance of internal opposition.

Opposition to the Mahdist state may be classified into three groups. The first included groups and tribes which from the outset did not support the Mahdiyya, either for political reasons (such as the tribes and groups which benefited from the Turko-Egyptian rule – the Kababish, Shukriyya and Ababda), or ideological reasons such as some of the *'ulama*. The second group of opponents included those who joined the Mahdist movement primarily to rid themselves of Turko-Egyptian rule, rather than to become subject to Mahdist theocracy and particularly the autocratic rule of the Khalifa Abdullah. Examples of this category included Darfur, led by surviving members of the Fur royal house, and the Rizayqat tribe in southern Darfur. The third group included those who struggled with the Khalifa for the control of the Mahdist state, following the death of the Mahdi (such as the Mahdi's kin the Ashraf), or groups that were alienated by the Khalifa's policies (for example most of the riverian population, or *awlad al-balad*). Following the ideological overtones set forth by the Mahdist movement and revolution, some opposition figures/leaders claimed eschatological roles as leaders entrusted with a mission similar to that of the Mahdi's (such as the movement of Abu Jumayza in Darfur), whereas others claimed to be the Prophet Jesus (*al-nabi 'Isa*), whose return according to popular tradition would follow the time of the Mahdi.[43]

Faced with challenged authority and precarious legitimacy, the Khalifa Abdullah could rule only after a series of liquidations and suppressions of his rivals in Omdurman, particularly during the period of 1885–89. During the same period the Khalifa's administration was able to crush all the opposition movements, whether religious or tribal-based, in the regions. By the year 1890–91 the authority of the Khalifa was almost free of any internal challenge, but the social base of the Mahdist state had significantly shrunk. As such the Mahdist state that developed under the Khalifa Abdullah was less a culmination of the Mahdist movement than a product of the power struggle that took place briefly after the death of the Mahdi.

Khalifa's administration

The Mahdist administration centred around the person of the Khalifa Abdullah, both as the ultimate authority as well as the prime mover of the administrative system and initiator of policy. It has been noted that the Khalifa used to consult with his closest aides (such as his brother Ya'qub, and son 'Uthman Shaykh al-Din), and occasionally call for a meeting of the 'State Council' – apparently an advisory council – to which the Mahdi's surviving companions were invited. The chief officers of the administration were the commissioner of the treasury, the Chief Justice, or *qadi al-Islam*, with subordinates of both at provincial levels. Other officials included the commander of the police in Omdurman, and controllers of the dockyard and arsenal.[44]

At the provincial level, there were two types of administrative structures under the Mahdist state: military and metropolitan provinces. The military provinces were mainly frontier provinces, the chief concern of which was defence of the land and the waging of *jihad*. As such their governors or *'amils* were exclusively military commanders and the whole structure of administration was dominated by military personnel and orientation. The administrative structures of the metropolitan provinces on the other hand were mostly concerned with the collection of revenue and rendering it to the treasury, and were therefore mostly dominated by fiscal rather than administrative matters.[45] Simply put, the frontier provinces were busy waging war, whereas the rest of the provinces were responsible for feeding and supporting them. Among other things such a situation was the main cause behind the famine of 1889 (popularly known by its *hijri* date 1306 AH) that inflicted heavy loss of life among the population.

The Mahdi's idealism and his model of a prophetic state notwithstanding, the Mahdist state bore many features of its contemporary secular states. For all practical purposes it also retained much of the machinery of the Turko-Egyptian state: firearms and gunpowder, steamers, the printing press, the telegraph and the mint. The Mahdist state also employed the services of the old clerks and accountants of the previous regime, and incorporated the trained *jihadiyya* soldiers, who were trained in the use of firearms in the Mahdist armies. Systematic taxation also continued during the Mahdist era, although redefined and structured in Islamic terms (*zakat* [alms in tax], *'ushur* [10 per cent of the crop], *ghanimah* [booty]).

Likewise, the Mahdist state sustained a centralized bureaucracy with elaborate administrative, financial and legal departments.[46] Yet, though the Mahdist regime retained almost all features of a 'modern', if an Islamist, state it was a short-lived experience that lasted for only 13 years. Internal strife and conflict generated by the struggle for power, continuous wars that disrupted the economy and strained the country's human resources, and external imperial pressures all brought the Mahdist state to its tragic end at the battle of Omdurman in September 1898.

In spite of the destruction of the Mahdist state by the British-led imperial force in 1898/99, the impact of the Mahdiyya was indeed very deep. It resulted in important demographic and social transformations in the country, affected the Sudanese political fabric, and added to it a new ideological discourse. Moreover, it left a formidable sociopolitical force – the Ansar sect – that strongly believed in the Mahdi, his Khalifa and their cause, and was destined to play a very important role in the contemporary history of the Sudan.

The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan

A combination of growing signs of weakness of the Mahdist state and an increasing European presence and competition in central Africa led finally to favour the policy of the re-conquest of Sudan.

The Berlin Treaty of 1884 between the major European powers delineated areas of influence between various players, but later developments showed increasing European activity around southern and eastern Sudan, to the worry of Britain. The most worrying was the French establishing their presence in Bahr El-Ghazal, southern Sudan, in 1896 and sending Captain Marchand to Fashoda in the following year. In the same year the Belgians occupied the Lado enclave. This intensive European activity in the region coincided with the growing signs of weakening of the Mahdist state. The Italians had already defeated Khalifa's army in Agordat in 1893 and took Kassala the following year. Four years later the eastern front witnessed another setback, when Osman Digna, the legendary Mahdist leader, was finally defeated in Suakin. From then on the Red Sea area became a free land for foreign armies' movement. With these signs of weakness, London became worried that Sudan may fall prey to another European power, with all the ramifications for the Nile waters and its control on Egypt – the safe route to the jewel of its colonies, India.

It took only three years to complete the retaking of Sudan. The military operation that started in 1896 was finally accomplished in 1898, with the defeat of Khalifa Abdullah in the famous Karari battle, where 10,800 of his followers were killed, in addition to 16,000 wounded, against 48 killed and 382 wounded from the invading army side. In the following year, Khalifa Abdullah himself was killed in the Umm Dibeikrat battle (September 1899), thus bringing a final end to the Mahdist state.[47]

Although the reconquest was made in the name of Egypt and France was asked to leave Fashoda on that basis, Britain was given trusteeship on the basis of right of conquest. The Condominium agreement, which was concluded on 9 January

1899, gave Britain the upper hand in running the new colony while Egypt was left to meet the cost.[48] The Condominium, a unique agreement without precedent in international law, reflected the fact that Britain could not rule Sudan directly in a formal way as yet another colony, but for all practical purposes did not leave the country for Egypt to administer on her own.[49]

Conquest, pacification and consolidation

The immediate task before the new colonial power was to pacify the country and establish law and order through its territories. Coercion was employed as a by-product of the conquest, first to subdue the Mahdist state and then to quell all forms of resistance. Force was generally used to face up to primary resistance, be it in form of spontaneous uprising mainly in the south like that of the Agara Dinka in 1901 or the Shilluk and Nuer disturbances in 1912–17, or a religiously-motivated one like the Wad Habouba in 1908 in the Gezira region. The peak of this period was the revolt of Ali Dinar, the Sultan of Darfur, which pushed the administration into sending an expedition led by Huddleston that re-took Darfur. The event brought the British once more against the French, but this time regarding Sudan's western frontier. A conclusive settlement was reached finally in Paris whereby the Masalit and Gimr tribes were brought inside Sudan and it was only in 1924 that the western borders were delineated between Britain and France.

It was concern with pacification that gave the early period of the administration in the Sudan a strong military character. The first three Governor-Generals were military: Lord Kitchener 1899–1900, followed by Sir Reginald Wingate 1900–16 and Sir Lee Stack 1916–24. Yet the new administration had only 11,000 soldiers under arms, so it had to look for methods to govern the country and in an economic and effective way given the meagre resources (Egypt had started only in 1913 to provide regular financial support). That was why the colonial administration decided to extend support and patronage to traditional Islamic groups that could stand up against potential resurgence of the Mahdiyya.

The British colonial administration opted for a policy of cooperation and development of mutual interest especially with local, religious and tribal chiefs. Through the effective use of the state organ, the carrot and the stick were applied and policies were adjusted accordingly to win supporters and allies. The first choice of collaborators concentrated on the religious and tribal leaders of the groups that had opposed the Mahdiyya.

Thus three months after the conquest, a military expedition led by Major McKerrell and Wilkinson escorted Sayyid Ali Al-Mirghani, leader of the *Khatmiyya tariqa*, from Suakin back to Khartoum. The Al-Mirghani family were known to have ardently opposed the Mahdiyya, fought against it in Eastern Sudan, and eventually took refuge in Egypt for some time. The *Khatmiyya*'s mosque in Kassala was the first to be rebuilt after the Condominium and Sayyid 'Ali became the first Sudanese to be decorated before the First World War when he was given the KCMG in 1900.[50] Other tribal leaders, such as the Nazirites (chieftains) of the Kababish and Shukriyya, were equally rehabilitated. In the course of time, however, the policy

of the Sudan government sought to engage expanding strata of the population in its network of collaborators.

At the outset, the government was intent on using Islamic religious institutions as a safeguard against the revival of the Mahdiyya. This was pursued through encouraging centres of Islamic orthodoxy, which were deemed antithetical to religious fanaticism. At the same time, the government went out of its way to present and improve its religious credentials: building mosques, helping *waqfs* (endowments), training *ulama* and promoting pilgrimage to Makkah. Religious figures were recognized as the spiritual and social leaders of their respective communities.[51]

The policy of allying the support of religious leaders paid off. Responding to an appeal from the Governor General and with the help of *ulama* a donation of 15,000 Egyptian pounds was made to the Red Cross in addition to £8,400 made to the Prince of Wales Fund in 1915.[52] The peak moment in cultivating the support of Sudanese notables came with the delegation that went to congratulate Britain after winning the war in 1919: it was composed of the three top religious leaders, including Sayyid Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi, three *ulama* and four tribal chiefs. Interestingly enough *no* southerner was there in the delegation, but it also showed clearly how successfully the policy of alliance adopted by the British had started to pay off. During the meeting between the delegation and the British King George, Abd al-Rahaman al-Mahdi chose to present his father's sword as a sign of loyalty.

Abdel Rahman al-Mahdi was instrumental in convincing some 500 religious and tribal chiefs to sign the Book of Loyalty in 1915 as a gesture of support to Britain against Turkey. He was given additional land on Abba Island and a loan of £4,500 that was later forgiven. In a significant development, the young Mahdi was permitted to reprint the *Ratib* (the al-Mahdi prayer book) as early as 1921; and by 1933 he had 13,000 *feddans* (a *feddan* = 1.038 acres, or .042 hectares) under cultivation. His annual income was estimated at between £15,000 and £40,000 with a labour force of 4,500 people. By 1936 and by all standards, 'he was economically prosperous and politically important'.[53] Though al-Mahdi was the most successful, the same policy was adopted towards other religious leaders. Ali al-Mirghani was given land on the Red Sea and northern Sudan and al-Sharif Yusuf Al-Hindi (the third religious leader who also joined the 1919 delegation), was given land in Gezira to be utilized for agricultural development.

Another group that benefited economically was the tribal chiefs, whose powers were enhanced through the two ordinances of 1922 and 1927 which gave the tribal heads a measure of autonomy, enabling them to manage the affairs of their communities as long as they maintained their loyalty to the government, implemented its policies, and ensured the collection of taxes. Thus the power of the state was used effectively to consolidate the regime by extending help to religious and tribal leaders, since the government had control of land and credit. And it became clear that the road to wealth and influence should pass through cooperation with the government.

The second phase of the Condominium rule in the Sudan, which roughly coincided with the inter-war period, was one of consolidation. It witnessed elaboration of an

administrative structure that grew more complex in the course of time, as well as the accomplishment of the most important economic venture in the country, the Gezira scheme.

In view of the Condominium status of the Sudan, the country was not ruled directly from either Cairo or London. Rather the administration centred around a Governor-General who was to be nominated by Britain and appointed by Egypt. Under the Governor-General were the civil, legal and financial secretaries, and below these the provincial governors. Provinces were divided into districts, each managed by a district commissioner, their assistants, aided by a *mamour*, and a sub-*mamour* as well as clerical and technical junior staff.[54] Though it was not specified as such in any agreement, all the Governors-General as well as the senior administrators of the Condominium Sudan were British. An autonomous administrative body, known as the Sudan Political Service (SPS) grew under the command of the Governor-General of the Sudan. Up until 1924, the *mamours*, some sub-*mamours*, and other junior rungs of the administration were occupied by Egyptians.

Increasingly, however, the educated Sudanese joined the administration, mostly as sub-*mamours* and junior administrative staff, but gradually replaced the Egyptians as *mamours* after 1924. Traditional Sudanese sociopolitical structures (tribal and villages) were utilized and later developed into native administration. Each district was divided into *khatts* under a head chosen from a dominant or acceptable tribe or clan. The *khatts* were further divided into two or three *'Umodiyya*s (mayorships) and each comprised several *sheikhships* headed by junior *sheikhs* under the auspices of *'Umdas*. As native administration developed during the inter-war period, traditional tribal and village officials were gradually given authority to collect taxes and administer justice among their localities.[55]

Again, the Condominium status of the Sudan allowed the SPS to work on its own on a more professional basis and with an almost totally free hand in policy matters, to the extent of switching from one extreme to the other (note for example the switch from a totally closed policy towards the south in the 1930s to integration of the two parts of the country in the late 1940s; and from native administration based on tribal leaders to encouraging the educated elite to play an increasing political role).[56]

As pointed out before, the first Governors-General were all military men who jointly held the posts of Governor-General of the Sudan as well as *Sirdar* (Commander-in-Chief) of the Egyptian army. The first civilian Governor-General was Sir Geoffrey Archer (1924–26), who was unpopular with both Cairo and London. His tenure, though short, opened the way for an almost decade-long rule of Sir John Maffey 1926–33, whose native administration – formulated around the principle of indirect rule – was rigorously pursued during his tenure. Native administration sought to utilize tribal structures and leaders in the local government system, particularly in rural and nomadic areas.

During this period, the British concluded that tribal and religious leaders were trustworthy since there were no clear-cut religious activities, or general support for a pan-Islamic cause, and because the leaders and their followers opted to work

in a secular framework set up by an alien, foreign and secular government. This policy was partially motivated by the revolt of 1924 (see below), which was primarily led by the educated elements. Yet, it was also guided by other political considerations. In 1921 the Milner Report called for developing Sudan independently from Egypt and to adopt recommendations to reform the administration that had been tabled as early as 1917. Those findings found their golden chance during the 1924 incidents and the assassination in Egypt of Governor-General Sir Lee Stack, which was used as a pretext to drive Egypt out of Sudan, and to de-Egyptianize the administration.

The process also evolved through the gradual growth of the administrative machinery in association with the 'Native' authorities. The first step was the creation of native courts (*'umda*'s [mayor's] courts) as a first instance – courts with limited jurisdiction over small civil and criminal offences – *nazir*'s (tribal chief's) courts, with wider jurisdiction and appellate authority over the *'umda*'s courts. In the course of time the system developed into petty administrative bodies with clerical and technical staff, police force or guards, and prisons. Then the native administration authorities became responsible for the assessment and collection of local and tribal taxes within the areas under their jurisdiction.[57]

In the 1930s the policy of indirect rule in the Sudan was reviewed: its application was curtailed in urban and 'de-tribalized' areas, and maintained – albeit through reorganization and refinement – in rural areas. When local government was introduced (from 1937 onwards), native administration became the arm of local government in rural Sudan.

The same period also witnessed the elaboration and implementation of a 'Southern Policy', which sought to drive the south in the direction of an independent, different route of development from the north. By 1930 all forms of primary resistance in the south were crushed and the region was generally pacified. In 1922 the Sudan government issued the Passports and Permits Ordinance that restricted free movement between northern and southern Sudan, and generally sought to curb the flow of Arabic and Islamic culture through personnel, dress or trade. A Church Missionary Society held a conference in 1924 in Rajaf in Equatoria that decided on using English as the main lingua franca in the South in addition to seven indigenous languages.

Though these steps were seen by many northerners as the stumbling block before the country's unity, the southerners had different opinions. To them, though slave trade was officially banned, routes from Bahr El-Ghazal to Upper Nile, Dar Fur and Blue Nile were still active and measures had to be taken to suppress it. Also the potential threat of a religious revival was still there. A spillover of Mahdiyya sentiments from western Sudan to the south could not be tolerated by the new administration. And with the primary resistance in both north and south, the fear was for that sentiment to develop into political resistance around the country. Besides, as the 1924 uprising had shown involvement of a number of Sudanese of southern origin who were calling for the Nile Valley unity, if left unchecked it would have given Egypt an undesired edge. For all these reasons separating the two parts of the country was seen as rational policy at the time.[58]

Another aspect of consolidation of Condominium rule in the Sudan was to improve communication and control over this vast territory. The government made use of its revenue increase from £35,000 in 1898 to £1.25 million in 1914 to extend the railways between Suakin and Berber in 1906, to Wad Medani in 1909, to Obeid in 1911, then between Suakin and Tokar in 1921, Kassala and Gedaref two years later and Gedaref to Sinnar in 1929. Port Sudan was opened in 1909 to provide an alternative window for the country away from Egypt. Clearly, there were both security and economic considerations behind the pattern of expansion of this railway network.

Since conquering Sudan was done for external reasons and had nothing to do with the country itself, Britain did not feel obliged to develop it. The burden of meeting the administration cost was left to Egypt, in whose name the operation was conducted. At the same time, the Sudan government – fearful of reviving memories of the Turko-Egyptian regime, which was known for its tough taxation policy – was careful to keep taxes to the minimum.

On the other hand, the Sudan government adopted a policy that left the state with considerable economic resources and initiative. In the first year of the new administration, it issued a land ordinance that, in effect, transferred all lands with no documented ownership to the custody of the government. In 1905 another law was promulgated that prohibited any exchange of land without prior permission from the government, and in 1925 the Land Registration Ordinance was issued.

The government extended its control and monopoly over economic activity through its control of means of communication like railways and river transport, as well as trade. The government was the largest importer of capital goods and largest employer of wage labour as well. It has been calculated that 35 per cent of government income was derived from trade profits, while direct taxes accounted for 13 per cent, equivalent to the revenue generated from the sugar trade monopoly. Despite all these economic resources and initiative in the hands of the government, the Sudan at the time lacked any central agency to promote economic development.[59]

However, the only project that proved to be an exception to this conservative economic policy was the development of the Gezira agricultural project. It was a large-scale venture that needed the support of the British government to enable Sudan's administration to raise the necessary funds from the international money markets. The project was seen as a way to curb dependence on Egypt's coffers, link Sudan directly to international market and increase British influence. More important, it was to serve the immediate British needs by providing a stable source of cotton to its Lancashire mills.

The whole project was made possible by an initial loan of £3 million in 1913, which was then raised to £6 million. Two other loans in 1922 and 1924 were secured, totalling £7 million. Work on the project started in 1913, but was held up because of the outbreak of the First World War. The Sinnar Dam, constructed on the Blue Nile near the town of Sinnar to facilitate artificial irrigation of the scheme, was completed in 1925. By 1927 a total of 300,000 acres were brought under cultivation, and two years later the area was extended to 526,484 acres.[60]

When the Gezira scheme started production, Sudan witnessed an unprecedented prosperity, seeing its revenues jump from £4,86,883 in 1925 to £6,646,883 three years later. That enabled the government to overspend.[61]

Though the Gezira was a pioneering project, the fact remains that the scheme was motivated by external reasons and its setting up was accompanied by injustice regarding land expropriation in addition to the risk of basing the country's economy on one commodity subject to world market fluctuations. By the late 1930s, cotton accounted for 80 per cent of Sudan's exports, a percentage, which was to continue well after the country's independence.

Resistance and de-colonization

From as early as 1915 official correspondence and some steps started to surface aimed at the de-Egyptianization of the administration. One of the steps taken was the setting up of the sub-*mamours* school to provide necessary training that would eventually allow the removal of middle and lower level Egyptian employees from service. However, that development contributed, among other things, to the growth of indigenous Sudanese nationalism, by expanding the ranks of Sudanese educated and administrative strata who soon became exposed to and influences by ideas and experiences of nationalism prevalent in the region, such as the Egyptian nationalist revolution of 1919.

The years 1920–23 witnessed the first manifestations of Sudanese nationalism, which started to take on a clearer shape in the form of organized bodies and groups. Unlike the stage of 'primary resistance' the new nationalist movement was initially spearheaded by non-religious, non-tribal organizations led by the intelligentsia group. In 1920 the Sudanese Union Society (SUS) was set up by graduates of either Gordon Memorial College or the Military College who were mostly employed by the government as junior administrators or army officers. The SUS, however, was soon superseded by the more militant organization, the White Flag League (WFL), which was established by breakaways from SUS in 1923/24. An intelligence report at the time showed that out of 104 members listed there were 40 junior government staff, 27 army or former army officers, ten workers, eight merchants, six clerks, four students, four religious judges, three teachers and two sub-mamour. The composition clearly indicates how the society's membership had spread among the educated class and different professions.[62]

The breadth of the movement over a large spectre of professions enabled it to stage demonstrations covering major towns throughout the country from Khartoum to Omdurman, Wadi Halfa, al-Obeid and Port Sudan. The response of the Sudan government to these protest actions was to arrest and imprison all the prominent members of the league, including its leader Ali Abd al-Latif who was arrested in July 1924.

On 27 November 1924, three 'platoons' of the 11th Sudanese battalion rebelled and took to arms at the forced evacuation of the Egyptian troops in the Sudan (following the assassination of Sir Lee Stack). The Sudanese rebel troops clashed with a British unit in a pitched battle near the Blue Nile Bridge, but the British

were able to subdue the revolt easily. Whether the rebel officers and men were acting as an integral part of the WFL is not clear, but their actions were indeed – directly or indirectly – inspired by the agitative activities of the League and its leaders. In any event, the violent confrontation of November brought the revolt of 1924 to an end.[63]

Apparently, the leaders of the WFL were greatly influenced by the Egyptian nationalist revolution of 1919; they called for the withdrawal of Britain from both Egypt and the Sudan and raised the slogan of 'Unity of the Nile valley'. Yet the WFL was also raising other issues – such as high taxation, land control, government monopoly of sugar distribution and prices – that reflected real and immediate worries of the Sudanese people at the time. In that sense the movement was not, as has been depicted, a mere puppet of Egypt. On the other hand the WFL was able to raise at that early stage the call for self-government, a request that was later picked up by the 'Sudan for the Sudanese' group, who were mostly regarded as a pro-British camp.

The policy of indirect rule, which was feverishly pursued during the inter-war period, particularly after the events of 1924, was in a way a reflection of dismay from the side of the administration towards the educated class. Yet, at the same time the government was pushing for more modern projects like the Gezira scheme, expansion of the railway network, and technical education with the setting up of a medical school, and the sub-mamours. The Sudan government thus seemed to be running a policy with conflicting tendencies: modernizing the economy while giving the upper hand only to traditional and tribal forces. Both tendencies, however, were applied to serve the British administration.

The world economic depression came to have a severe impact on the society and in particular the graduates, who found their salaries slashed and job opportunities curtailed. By 1931 the situation became so severe that the Gordon College Students Union went on strike. It was the first such drastic and direct anti-government move after the 1924 events. Two years later when Maffey was leaving office, the graduates were more confident to enter a new era of their activity.

With the arrival of Sir Stewart Symes 1934–40, the era of indirect rule seems to have come to an end, paving the way for a new policy opening its doors to the intelligentsia. In 1938, and following the conclusion of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, the graduates of Gordon College formed the Graduates' General Congress (GC). The Sudan government acknowledged the GC as the unofficial voice representing the north. The first GC memo was prepared with the help of J.G. Penny, controller of public security in 1938. The Sudan government's interaction with the GC was the restoration of a policy that encouraged the formation of a modernized educated elite that had started in 1902 with the setting up of Gordon Memorial College. From there on the GC became a hotbed of political activity until the formation of the main political parties in the 1940s.[64]

Yet, when the GC raised a memorandum in 1942 calling for self-determination for Sudan, the government made it clear that it could not recognize the GC as the sole speaker on behalf of the whole of Sudan since it could only claim to represent a small strata in the society, the graduates. As a result, the graduates split into

two camps each, looking for allies with popular support. One faction grouped under the slogan 'Sudan for the Sudanese' and sought the support of Sayyid Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi and his Ansar sect, whereas the other faction rallied behind the slogan: 'Unity of the Nile Valley' and enjoyed the support of Sayyid Ali al-Mirghani and his *Khatmiyya* sect. Subsequently, the two factions developed into political parties which were formed by the mid-1940s: the *Ashiqqa*, or brothers, founded in 1943 by Ismail al-Azhari with the support of Sayyid Ali al-Mirghani, and the *Umma* Party founded in 1945 and backed by Sayyid Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi.[65]

Though the attempt by the Graduates' Congress in 1942 to speak on public political issues was rebuffed, the move had opened the way for some sort of a constitutional reform. A year later the Advisory Council for Northern Sudan was promulgated and was seen as a step to involve the Sudanese in the administration of their country.

The 13 years that followed saw increasing political activity that eventually ended up with independence in 1956. Meantime, the period witnessed a widening gap between those who opted for a more gradual development under the tutelage of the British (the 'Sudan for the Sudanese' camp), and those calling for more cooperation with Egypt, under the old slogan: 'Unity of the Nile Valley'.

By then it had become clear that the issue of the sovereignty over Sudan between Egypt and Britain could not be resolved by direct talks between Cairo and London or through international channels like the UN Security Council. Hence, the British thought of going ahead to effect constitutional developments in the Sudan.

Though dubbed, 'Too little, too late', the scheme envisaged a gradual devolution of power to the Sudanese. Thus the Advisory Council of Northern Sudan was followed by an administration conference in 1946, which recommended the setting up of a legislative assembly, and a conference to discuss the status of the south (held in Juba in 1947). The Legislative Assembly, which was elected in 1948, established after lengthy debates a Constitutional Amendment Commission (CAC) in March 1951. The statutes adopted by the CAC for regulation of a self-rule period were to affect Sudan's constitutional future for decades to come.

Egypt, however, became frustrated with Britain's position and its policies. Mustafa al-Nahas Pasha, leader of the ruling Wafd party at the time, declared unilaterally the abrogation of both the 1899 and 1936 agreements and promulgated King Faruq as King of Egypt and the Sudan. The decision could have backfired as the 1899 agreement provided the constitutional framework for the Condominium, which at least gave Egypt a theoretical right in the rule of Sudan.

Members of CAC called on the administration to prepare Sudan for self-rule by the end of 1953 as a reaction to the Egyptian declaration. The Governor-General agreed to speed up plans in this respect, and a draft statue was prepared and approved by Britain, but not Egypt. Meanwhile, Cairo tried to open direct talks with Sayyid Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi and his *Umma* party. The talks, which were held in May 1952, broke down on the issue of sovereignty. Two months later, Egypt itself was to undergo a drastic political change which would have its impact on Sudan as well.

The new military regime that came to power in Egypt in July 1952, following an army revolution, had four leaders who had first-hand experience in Sudan. The new regime declared its readiness to separate the issue of sovereignty on Sudan from that of the withdrawal of the British troops from the Suez Canal. The new policy was followed by resuming talks with the *Umma* party. By October 1952, only three months after taking power, the new Egyptian government stipulated clearly that it supported the right of self-determination for Sudan. A similar agreement was reached with the Unionist parties in February the following year.

Prior to these moves Egypt had managed to unify the 'Unionist' parties in one political forum that brought together the *Ashiqqa* led By Ismail al-Azhari, the Unionist Party led by Hammad Tawfiq, the Liberal Unionists led by Khiddir Hamad and the Nile Valley led by al-Dirdeiri Ahmed Ismail. All these parties were calling for some form of relationship with Egypt that ranged from confederation to total unity. The new party was called the National Unionist Party (NUP), and it elected al-Azhari as its leader.

The agreements Egypt reached with the Sudanese political forces called for the right of self-government for the Sudan, establishment of an international commission (including Sudanese members) to supervise elections, a Governor-General's commission for help on policy matters, a Sudanization commission, and the removal of both Egyptian and British troops by the end of the self government period. On 12 February 1953 the Anglo-Egyptian agreement – incorporating all the above-mentioned steps – was finally signed.

Elections were held in November and December 1953 and on 1 January 1954 the NUP emerged as the winner, netting 51 seats out of a total of 97, while the *Umma* party returned only 22 seats. Nine days later, the first nationalist cabinet was formed with al-Azhari as the first Sudanese prime minister. He continued to serve after independence until his government lost a confidence vote in parliament in July 1956.

Two events with important future implication occurred during the self-rule period. The first was the clash of the *Ansar* (followers of Sayyid Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi) and the *Umma* party with the police on 1 March 1954, on the eve of the opening of parliament. The incident was apparently sparked by the determination of the leadership of the *Ansar* to demonstrate a show of force to Major General Muhammad Najib, Egypt's president, who came to attend the inauguration ceremony of the parliament, and his Unionist allies in the Sudan. It was a manifestation of the bitter dispute between the supporters of complete independence, and those who called for unity with Egypt. The other event was the mutiny of the southern battalion stationed in Torit in August 1955, which later developed into the first civil war between the north and the south that lasted until 1972. Both events made it hard for the new government to go ahead with its unity pledges, so an independent Sudan seemed to be the only viable option.

The parliament agreed in August 1955 to carry out arrangements to expedite self-rule. During the same month the Sudanization committee accomplished its work, and the armies of the two Condominium governments withdraw accordingly in November 1955. On 19 December 1955 the joint session of the two chambers

of parliament declared independence. The motion was passed unanimously on the strength of a promise that 'the request of the southern members of Parliament for a federal status for the south will be given due consideration by the constituent assembly'.

On 1 January 1956 the Republic of the Sudan officially celebrated its independence.

Southern aspirations were not taken into consideration by either the British administration or the northern politicians. The all party negotiations in Cairo that paved the way for self-government did not include a representative from the south, and in the words of the southern politician, Abel Alier, the British administration had sacrificed the southerners to win over northern politicians against Egypt. This had happened before during the 1947 Juba conference and again in granting independence without guarantees for the south.[66]

Sudan was invaded and ruled for more than half a century for basically external reasons. The same was true for the only viable economic project – Gezira – and even the ease with which it gained its independence could be attributed to those external reasons. Through its legendary SPS, the colonial administration was instrumental in creating the country's political infrastructure based on the two pillars of sectarianism and modern elite. Through its effective way of using state facilities to forge alliances, the administration played the role of referee. With its departure a vacuum was created, which partially explains the incessant chase between parliamentary and military regimes, and reflects the absence or inability of a national force or a figure to fill that role.

2 Complex politics of a post-colonial state

Impediments and instability

Independent Sudan has seen three civilian parliamentary regimes (1956–58; 1965–69; 1986–89) and three military ones (1958–64; 1969–85; 1989–present). Each civilian regime was preceded by a transitional period (1953–56; 1964–65; 1985–86) designed for the dissolution of the previous regime and the setting up of the conditions for a new one, and during which, mostly fair, general elections were formally conducted.

The continuous fluctuation of the country's political system between civilian and military government may be regarded as both a manifestation of instability as well as an impediment to the implementation of policies and programmes. Other manifestations of instability were the civil war, lack of a consensus among the main political forces over the political system, and the ongoing controversy over the relationship between Islam and the state.

Partisan squabbles

Throughout the three parliamentary eras Sudanese politics were beset by persistent internal and partisan squabbles. Since the main players had no coherent political programmes, policy was reduced to mere manoeuvres and personal approaches. The schism that characterized the Sudanese political scene from the imperial period played a great role in developing this attitude. From the outset there was the Condominium regime with its two powers, Britain and Egypt, each with a different outlook and different interests to serve. Then there was the sectarian division between the *Ansar* and *Khatmiyya*, and between them and the intelligentsia represented by the Graduates' Congress at the time. Then there was the split within the graduates between the Unionists and Independentists and later on between the Islamists and secularists or those with left-wing orientations. Power holders and main contenders found it easier to play one group against the other or respond to positions of their adversaries, rather than devising their own visions and policies.

Moreover, issues were handled from preconceived positions and through a personal approach. For instance, the *Umma* party had been working for independence, but their stance towards Egypt became not a matter of policy, but a

conditioned reflex. On the other hand none of the unionist parties had ever elaborated a coherent plan for that union and what it meant in practical terms, and the whole thing was shrouded in political romanticism. When the unionists joined the 1953 elections for the self-rule parliament and won it – with Egypt's help – they were supposed to further the cause of unity. Instead they ended up being the vehicle that took the country to independence away from Egypt.

The emergence of Ismail al-Azhari, who became the first prime minister, as the country's new leader forced the two sectarian leaders to patch up their long-time differences and rally their forces together. Sayyids Ali Al-Mirghani, head of the *Khatmiyya*, and Abd al-Rahman Al-Mahdi, head of the *Ansar*, called in a joint communiqué issued on 3 December 1955 for the setting up of a coalition government that could usher Sudan into independence. The move forced Ismail al-Azhari, who hoisted the flag of the new independent Sudan, out of office after only seven months. He was replaced by a coalition of the political wings of the two sects: the *Umma* party of the *Ansar* and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), of the *Khatmiyya* (founded in July 1956).[1]

Aside from their desire to remove al-Azhari, the two coalition parties had nothing in common, and they seemed to disagree on every issue. The National Unionist Party (NUP) on the other hand, which found itself out in the political cold, moved to adopt more radical policies and allied itself with trade unions and the Communist Party, the very forces it had been trying to curb a year earlier while in power.

Aware of the NUP's growing popularity, the coalition government of the two Sayyids opted for amending election laws to deny the NUP the opportunity of staging another majority that could bring it back to power. For that purpose, geographical constituencies were redrawn to favour rural representation where sectarian influence was greater, and loosened nationality regulations to allow immigrants from West Africa to vote in the elections for the *Umma* party. Nonetheless, when the results of the 1958 elections were declared, support for the NUP was almost equal to that of the coalition partners. It secured 340,000 votes compared to 310,000 for *Umma* and 147,077 for the PDP. However, due to the changes in the division of constituencies the NUP returned only 42 seats, whereas the *Umma* and PDP parties won 62 and 26 seats respectively.[2]

The sectarian coalition secured its position and stayed in power, but with growing dissension and disagreement on almost every issue, the government was unable to perform and lasted only ten months. On 17 November 1958 the army intervened at the request of the Prime Minister Abdullah Khalil to take control.

The problem with the first parliamentary experience was not only that it was easy to topple but also that the two Sayyids gave their blessing to its replacement. Their position showed how much commitment they had to democracy. Later on, when the National Front was set up in 1961 to fight the military, chaired by Imam Siddiq al-Mahdi, the new leader of the *Ansar* sect, the Khatmiyya and their party who remained ardent supporters of the military regime boycotted it.[3]

On the intelligentsia side, Ahmed Khair who supported the coup from the outset became foreign minister and one of the pillars of the new regime. He apparently wanted to settle old scores with Ismail al-Azhari from the Graduates' Congress

days, though he might have believed that a military regime could be well-suited to fight sectarianism.

In October 1964, a popular uprising overthrew the military regime of General Ibrahim Abboud. The October uprising was unique in many ways. A peaceful, people's unrest using strike and civil disobedience was able to dislodge a military regime at a time when the economy was in reasonable shape and the war in the south was far away and had been hardly felt in the north. A combination of political traditions that were still intact, the natural desire for freedom by the people and, crucially enough, the fact that Abboud himself was not keen to hold on to power, facilitated the change. The moment he saw signs of popular dissatisfaction he dismantled his regime despite calls from his colleagues not to do so. There were also signs of dissent among the junior officers of the army.[4]

Though the October uprising opened the way for addressing the country's basic problems in a climate of national consensus, the traditional forces pressed ahead with elections that would bring them back to power, even if some parts of the south were to skip elections for security reasons. Ironically, the five-man Supreme Council was divided on the issue of going ahead with elections. The southern member, Luigi Adowk, broke the deadlock by casting his vote for the go-ahead for elections, against even the policy of his own party, the Southern Front.[5]

The first government after the elections of 1965 was a coalition one between the *Umma* and the NUP with Muhammad Ahmad Mahjub of the *Umma* as prime minister. (The PDP had boycotted the elections, and elections were delayed in the south.) As the two mainstream parties, the *Umma* and the NUP became the government bloc; the main parliamentary opposition came from the left with the Sudan Communist Party (SCP) as its hardcore. The latter had dominated the specially allocated Graduates' Constituencies, returning 11 out of 15 candidates. Accordingly, the political scene became more polarized on ideological grounds between left and right. A few months later, however, the government submitted a bill that banned the SCP on grounds that it advocated atheism in an Islamic society. The move was triggered by an incident in which a student alleged to be member of the SCP spoke pejoratively of the Prophet Muhammad and his family in a public rally. Subsequently, the Constituent Assembly passed another bill that stripped the communist deputies of their membership in the Assembly.[6]

About a year later, the young chairperson of the *Umma* party, al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, joined the parliament when he turned 30 after winning a by-election in an *Umma* safe constituency that was purposely vacated for him. Soon after, al-Sadiq made a bid for power, arguing that the party and government's leadership should be combined. The move alienated both his uncle al-Hadi al-Mahdi, the *Imam* of the *Ansar* and al-Sadiq's uncle, and prime minister Muhammad Ahmad Mahjub. Al-Sadiq prevailed but the *Umma* party split into two factions, one led by Sadiq himself the other by the *Imam* of the *Ansar* al-Hadi. Nine months later, al-Sadiq's government lost a vote of confidence and Mahjub was restored as prime minister, although his party and its parliamentary majority had significantly shrunk; both factions of the *Umma* became dependent on NUP support in order to continue in government. In 1968 the Constituent Assembly was dissolved to avoid a no

confidence vote from al-Sadiq's bloc, which became the main parliamentary opposition.

Most of the rest of the second parliamentary period was spent in partisan squabbles and factional disputes (there were disputes between the two *Umma* factions, each faction and the NUP, and between the latter and the PDP, in addition to the traditional conflict between the left and the traditionalist parties). Although they were all in dispute with each other, with the looming presidential elections each side moved to consolidate its own power base. Al-Azhari went back to the *Khatmiyya*, and the reunification of the PDP and NUP took place, resulting in creation of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) in 1968. The DUP scored a landslide victory during the 1968 elections. Such a victory, and the looming presidential elections prompted *Imam* al-Hadi and his nephew al-Sadiq to patch up their differences and start negotiations to reunite their *Umma* party in early 1969.[7]

A week before Ja'afar Nimeiri came to power in May 1969, al-Sharif Hussein al-Hindi, a prominent DUP leader, announced that the alliance between his party and that of the *Umma* had outlived its usefulness and would be discontinued. Just like the last days of 1958 before the coup of General Abboud, the same scenario was being repeated: there was a shambles of a government with no political strength, and no commitment to any policies, apart from holding on to power.[8]

It was yet another conducive atmosphere for military intervention. Not surprisingly, therefore, a military coup led by Colonel Ja'afar Muhammad Nimeiri managed to unseat the second parliamentary regime on 25 May 1969. Unlike the first one that more or less followed the status quo, Nimeiri's coup had an ambitious programme for radical change: to dismantle the power base of the regime of the 'traditionalist' parties and open the way for new political forces to come to the fore.

Nimeiri's regime lasted for 16 eventful years during which it was, at different times, opposed and supported by almost all the political forces in the country. The first group to support the military takeover was the left, including the SCP, which entered into a troubled alliance with the new regime and contributed to its leftist orientation during 1969–71. The alliance came to a violent and abrupt end following an abortive communist-inspired coup in July 1971. The right-wing forces on the other hand opposed the new regime from the outset, given its leftist orientation and 'communist' influence at the time. In 1970, a violent uprising led by the *Imam* of the *Ansar*, al-Hadi was defeated by the regime, which overran al-Mahdi's stronghold at Aba Island, the birthplace of the *Mahdiyya*. Subsequently, the showdown with the SCP notwithstanding, confrontations continued between the regime and the right-wing parties, which formed an opposition coalition (that grouped the *Umma*, DUP and Muslim Brothers) known as the National Front (NF). The NF led a series of actions against the May regime in an attempt to overthrow it, as in the cases of the 1973 student demonstrations and unions' strikes, the coup attempt led by Lt Colonel Hasan Hussain in September 1975, and a more serious attempt in July 1977 when armed NF who were trained abroad infiltrated the capital and stormed army and government strategic locations.[9] None was successful in bringing down the regime.

Although the last attempt was easily defeated because – among other things – the army officers and men did not accept a challenge from a group of civilians, it nevertheless showed clearly to Nimeiri that he had to reach out for some sort of accommodation with the NF opposition.

In July 1976, only weeks after the bloody coup attempt led by the NF, contacts started and finally culminated in a secret meeting in Port Sudan between Nimeiri and al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, the NF leader. The bottom line was that al-Mahdi accepted the presidential system and its one party state as a way of overcoming fragmentation of Sudanese political life. Nine months later al-Sharif Hussain al-Hindi, the second most important opposition figure and leader of the DUP in exile, reached an agreement along the same lines with Nimeiri's regime and declared in a press conference hosted by the Sudan embassy in London his support for both the one party and presidential systems. Thus the two main pillars of the multiparty, parliamentary system, like the two Sayyids in the 1950s, came out in support of a totalitarian regime, which shows how shallow were the roots of liberalism and democracy in Sudan.

As for the 'modern forces', the communists had their chance and were highly marginalized politically given their involvement in the initial phase of the Nimeiri regime and then the 1971 communist-backed coup. On the other hand, the right-wing Islamists, who were opposed to the new regime from day one, adopted a new strategy the outline of which stipulated pushing for more Islamization of state and politics as a way to embarrass the sectarian leaderships of *Umma* and the DUP and win over some of their supporters; they utilized their membership of the NF to make use of foreign support and opportunities of military training, particularly from Libya, to consolidate themselves.

By the end of the 1970s the Islamists, who had spent the first eight years opposing Nimeiri's regime, ended up being the only supporters of that very regime during its last years. Moreover, Hassan al-Turabi, the Muslim Brotherhood leader, became the first and only Islamist political leader throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds to take an oath of allegiance to a 'socialist' regime, and became a member of the political wing of the Sudanese Socialist Union (SSU), the country's sole political organization.

Thus throughout Nimeiri's 16-year rule, all political forces, traditional or modern, left or right ended up backing the military at one point or another despite claims of commitment to liberty and multiparty democracy.

By 1985, Nimeiri's regime was showing all signs of demise; it collapsed as a result of a combination of a popular *intifada* and a military takeover that deposed Nimeiri on 6 April 1985. However, unlike the case two decades before, this time the economy was in bad shape, public services had almost collapsed, and the civil war, which had broken out again in 1983 was escalating in the south. Hence, with the regime losing its final credibility and ability to govern, it took only a series of ten continuous days of rioting, strikes and civil disobedience to bring it to its knees, especially after the SSU failed to mobilize its membership. This showed how the regime was vulnerable and lacked any popular backing.

Power was taken by the Transitional Military Council (TMC) in the early hours

of 6 April 1985 in partnership with a civilian cabinet composed of trades unions' representatives, with a limited target of preparing the country for free, general multiparty elections within one year. Ironically enough, Lt General Abd al-Rahman Suwar al-Dahab, Nimeiri's defence minister, became head of state and the prime minister was al-Gizouli Dafallah, Secretary-General of the Physicians Union. Both of them were more or less in support of *shar'ia* laws, the abrogation of which was seen as a prerequisite for a political settlement in the south. However, the government kept its original promise of conducting elections, paving the way for the third parliamentary experience with both *Umma* and DUP emerging as the leading parties in the new parliament.[10]

Between 1986 and 1989 five governments were formed to run the country. Despite the changes in their composition, they had one common factor: al–Sadiq al-Mahdi continued to serve in his post as prime minister despite bickering and internecine fights between the coalition parties.

The first two governments were composed basically of the *Umma* and DUP; the third – formed in 1988 – incorporated the National Islamic Front (NIF), which came in third place during the parliamentary elections of 1986, returning around 51 seats. Hitherto, the NIF had been the main parliamentary opposition to the coalition government, and in a way was setting the agenda of the latter. The fourth short-lived government was made up from the *Umma* and NIF coalition, and lost power in a couple of months under the pressure of the army and trade unions. The move paved the way for the fifth and last government (formed in March 1989), which included all political forces except the NIF as well as trade unions and a personality nominated by the army. The main aim of that government was to implement the peace agreement reached between the DUP and SPLA in October 1988.

However the political situation was not showing any sign of progress towards stability or peace. Five days before the NIF-led coup, the Council of Ministers met to listen to a report from Brigadier al-Hadi Bushra, Deputy Head of Sudan Security, on the country's situation. The report detailed lack of governance, political bickering and an atmosphere conducive to coup attempts that were fuelled by shallow and inaccurate press reports.[11] For those who were keen to read, the report was referring to writing on the wall. Indeed, as early as December 1988 rumours had started to filter through that a coup attempt had been discovered and was engineered by sympathizers of Nimeiri. A more serious one was discovered five months later.

In the three years of the third parliamentary experience the war continued to rage unabated and the regime managed to feed it with military hardware costing $450 million from various sources in addition to a running cost of more than $1 million daily, while peace did not receive the needed attention. Neither were the deteriorating economic situation and the chronic shortages in essential services adequately addressed by the successive governments. Worse, to appease its constituency, the regime imported private cars at a cost of $60 million, exempting them from excise duties and distributed them to army officers, parliament and trades unions members. No wonder that during this period internal debt increased from 5.5 billion Sudanese

pounds (£) to £20 billion and the national currency continued its decline against the US dollar, which by June 1989 fetched £18 against £4.5 three years earlier.[12]

The prime concern of the successive governments of al-Mahdi appeared to be the issue of the Islamic *shar'ia* laws (imposed by Nimeiri in 1983), and whether they should be maintained, repealed or amended. Nothing was achieved on that front either.[13]

Throughout the three parliamentary periods, the two 'traditionalist' or mainstream parties *Umma* and the DUP ruled the country, mostly in coalition governments. Though a number of factors might have contributed to the repeated collapse of the parliamentary regimes, the share of responsibility of the two parties was undoubtedly great as far as the failure of these regimes was concerned. Their political failure in running the country was only matched by their lack of vision and ideological insolvency.

Both parties succumbed to the blackmail of both left and right. After the 1964 October uprising that ousted the first military regime, the call of the day was socialism, since the left emerged as the most credible political force. Both parties adopted in one way or another left-wing slogans and programmes and went as far as nationalizing some private agricultural projects. Thus they were paving the way for the left-wing coup to come, only four years after a popular, unarmed revolt ousted a military regime.

The same scenario was repeated after the 1985 uprising, but this time it was the turn of the Islamists. Under pressure and blackmail from the NIF, both *Umma* and DUP ran the election on political programmes whose outline call was for more Islamization of state and society, which allowed the NIF to dictate the agenda for the political process during the short-lived third democratic experience and opened the way for the NIF-led military regime to take over.

However, despite their abysmal record in governing the country, both *Umma* and the DUP who ran the three parliamentary regimes, deserve a word of compliment as they had always conducted reasonably fair elections supervised by an independent commission, a practice almost completely absent in the region. Likewise, these eras witnessed more respect for freedom of the press, judiciary and trades unions as well as a better human rights record; with the exception of the war zone.

While traditional political forces were so weak in terms of ideology, organization and institutions and were dependent mainly on their secured sectarian base, political forces in the modern sector could not provide an alternative. Though they were influential and had played a leading role in ousting the two military regimes in 1964 and 1985 through strikes and political disobedience, the 'modern forces' were not able to translate that power into a sustained political influence and strike a balance with the traditional political forces.

This political ineptness of the modern forces could be attributed to several factors. For one there was the fact that sheer numbers were simply too small given the limited urbanization in the Sudan. Add to that the fact that these modern forces were organized mainly along trades unions and professional lines, which made it difficult to maximize their political influence. That explains their ability to stage

popular uprisings as in the cases of October 1964 and April 1985, but when elections came, the traditionalist forces won the day on both occasions.

At the institutional level, there was a deficiency in democracy, which had been ushered in in a hasty way right from the start. The British – wary of developments in Egypt and keen to preserve their military presence there – had made generous concessions on Sudan to Egypt that led to the self-rule agreement of 1953. However, contrary to the stipulation of the agreement the prime minister Ismail Azhari decided, in December 1955, to cut short all procedures: Sudanization, a plebiscite, and constitutional arrangements were either rushed or skipped and Sudan was declared an independent state in less than two weeks.

The same happened with the second parliamentary system as Abboud's regime collapsed following a couple of weeks of demonstrations, and democracy was back following minimum constitutional amendments. Two decades later Nimeiri's regime collapsed in ten days to be followed by yet a third weak parliamentary regime. In a nutshell, democracy was restored due to weakness of the military regimes, not strength of the democrats. That was clear during the third coup, where neither premier Sadiq al-Mahdi, nor other political forces and trades unions, which signed a charter to defend democracy in November 1985 (known as *mithaq al-difa' 'an al-dimoqratiyya* [Defence of Democracy Charter]) stood up to fight the new coup in 1989.[14]

Independent Sudan inherited a civil war and a weak ruling elite composed of an alliance between the traditional leaders who provided the needed grassroots, and intellectuals who supplied leadership for political and executive activity. It was more of a marriage of convenience, not based on a thorough and deep-rooted belief in liberalism and secularism, thus the opportunity remained open for both the left and the right to have their day to carry out their agenda for change.

The military in command

The ease with which civilian regimes were toppled indicated their legitimacy's decay and the fact that they had outlived their usefulness. Only five tanks put General Ibrahim Abboud in power. Thirty years later, the NIF was so confident it was able to stage a coup with a few tanks and other technical departments of the army like the medical and music corps. NIF leader Hasan al-Turabi even went on record to predict the coup five days before it actually took place.[15]

The first coup of General Abboud (1958–64) was in fact a hand-over from Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Abdullah Khalil. The second coup (1969–85) was motivated and engineered by an alliance of the broad left comprising the Arab nationalist-Nasserites and communists, while the third coup from 1989 until the present time was engineered by the NIF. In all the three cases, the instigators and prime movers of the coup were a marginalized or isolated political force. The looming or suspected alliance between the NUP and PDP in 1958 provided the motive for Khalil to seek help in a military takeover. The May coup of Nimeiri was, in effect, a retaliation from the left against the banning of the SCP and ousting of the elected communist members from the Constituent Assembly in 1965. The

Salvation-NIF regime was engineered as a reaction to their isolation and exclusion from government under pressure from the army and trades unions in early 1989.

Another factor that contributed to the military takeovers and the situation of instability was the weakness of the traditionalist forces, mainly the *Khatmiyya* and *Ansar* sects. The three coups that ended up with a new military rule took power by force from a coalition government run basically by the political wings of *Ansar* and *Khatmiyya* – the *Umma* and DUP – but they failed either to attend to the country's urgent issues and problems (development, national unity, etc.), or even to maintain power.

Coups could also be seen as a bid by the intelligentsia and modern forces to reshape the country away from sectarianism and tribalism or in response to specific ideological visions. Given their limited influence among the Sudanese population nationwide, the intelligentsia – from both right and left – came to regard the army as the most effective tool of change. Military coups were therefore resorted to by these forces as a shortcut for the implementation of their visions and programmes; namely restructuring of the state and society on a socialist or Islamist framework.

In general, the Sudanese army appeared to have a tradition of playing an important political role as a group of its officers usually harboured political allegiances of one sort or the other. Such allegiances could be detected as early as the Condominium period when some units revolted in support of the White Flag League and its Unity of the Nile Valley slogan, in what came to be known as the 1924 revolution.

As 1958 was closing, political manoeuvring reached a high level. Rumours were rampant that Egypt was pushing for a change either through a military coup or by getting both the NUP and PDP to unite again and oust the *Umma* party from power. These rumours had some credibility, as the leaders of the two parties Ismail al-Azhari and Sheikh Ali Abd al-Rahman were both visiting Cairo at the same time. Domestically a faction of the *Umma* was making contact with the NUP to form a new government, offering the premiership to al-Azhari at the expense of Khalil and the PDP.[16]

The military coup of 1958 was met with some relief among the public given the squabbles that had undermined the parliamentary regime. The defunct system was seen as unable to address issues of political stability, the deteriorating economic situation, or how to integrate the south into the national politics of the country. Moreover, the confusion was compounded by the foreign policy factor and how to relate to Egypt – given the two explosive issues of the Halayeb border dispute and the Nile waters agreement – in addition to the controversy over a proposed US aid package.[16]

Although Khalil, the Secretary General of the *Umma* party, instigated the coup, the *Khatmiyya* sect and its political wing the PDP emerged as the most stable supporters of the Abboud regime. Sayyid Ali al-Mirghani, the guardian of the *Khatmiyya*, was the first to issue a statement on the day of the coup welcoming it. Later on when politicians of the main groups sent their first memorandum to the military asking them to retreat back to the barracks, it was the PDP politicians

who issued a counter memo in support of the military. Later they participated in the elections to set up a representative body, the Central Council of 1963.

The ability of the regime to normalize relations with Egypt (after the Halayeb dispute of 1956–58) could be an explanation for the *Khatmiyya*'s supportive position. Throughout history, *Khatmiyya*'s relationship with Egypt was the cornerstone of its political movement. In addition, there was the removal from power of General Ahmed Abd al-Wahab, the number-two man in the military council, who was known for his pro *Ansar* sympathies.[18]

Though the new regime removed sectarian politics from the scene, put an end to political bickering, and pursued a policy of economic development, it nevertheless failed to address the real issues of nation building, as demonstrated by its handling of the southern question. Rather, the first military regime was quite conservative in its policies and outlook. Abboud did not have the kind of political ambition that would drive him to create a radical change.[19] Moreover, the army was a traditional force within a traditional setting. That was why when a struggle erupted within the army leadership with senior officers scrambling for positions, it was the two Sayyids who intervened to allow for a compromise among the military.

Second bid for change

On the contrary, the second coup was bent on radical socioeconomic change with a manifest 'socialist' orientation. On the eve of the coup, the leftist forces had been grouping around a manifesto of change set up by the communists, Nasserites and Arab nationalists at large. Their programme had a clear socialist tone, a target of dismantling the traditional framework of Sudanese politics and society, and against the proposed 'theocratic state' as manifested by the draft Islamic constitution. Babiker Awadallah, the former Chief Justice who was known for his Nasserite/Arab nationalist sympathies, was put forward as their candidate against both the DUP's Azhari and *Umma*'s Imam al-Hadi in the forthcoming presidential elections.

As a result of the May coup, the new power holders came into an open conflict with the traditional forces (sectarian and tribal) for the first time in the history of modern Sudan. Furthermore, for its supporters the change provided a chance to adequately address the major problems of Sudan, from adopting a constitution to putting an end to the civil war and embarking on economic development. With no traditional political backing that might hinder him, Nimeiri could have been Sudan's national figure given his two main achievements: the end of the civil war between the north and south in 1972 after 17 years, and the adoption of a permanent constitution. Both achievements enabled him to transcend the geographical, ethnic and sectarian divide, thus paving the way to usher the country into socioeconomic development that could start a nation-building process.

In a way, the civil war issue was ripe for a solution given unity of leadership in both north and south. On the rebel side Joseph Lagu became the undisputed leader of the Anya-Nya fighters in July 1970; a year later Nimeiri consolidated his position

after his survival of the communist inspired coup (July 1971) and took full control in the north. However, this very fact came to be the Achilles' heel of the whole achievement as Nimeiri, aided by Lagu, ended up undoing their success of putting an end to the war. Lagu, a descendant of a small southern tribe, needed a way to combat the hegemony of the Dinka, one of biggest tribes not only in Sudan, but in Africa as well. Nimeiri, whose own purpose was to divide and rule, decided to partition the south against the agreement's bylaws. Thus a new civil war erupted in 1983 in the south, and soon spread to the west and east, and has continued ever since.

At another level, Nimeiri's regime – like Abboud's before it – paid particular attention to the question of economic development. Nimeiri's plans were more ambitious, however, as demonstrated by the strategy to turn Sudan into breadbasket of the Arab world through a combination of its huge natural resources, western technology and Arab petrodollars. But a decade later the country that showed such high promise ended up as a classic example of mismanagement, with an economy based on humanitarian aid. When Nimeiri's regime collapsed in 1985, the Sudanese state was barely trying to get a clear perception of the problems confronting it, such as the civil war that had reignited again in 1983.

The civil war

Despite opting for unity in the famous Juba conference in 1947, the southerners hardly saw themselves part of the country's national politics. To their dismay, northern politicians never missed a chance to confirm their worries. The mutiny on the eve of independence showed the deep animosity; the north's reneging on its promise to consider the federation option for the south just added insult to injury.

The legacy of the slave trade of the nineteenth century and the involvement of some northern personalities like Zubair Pasha, cultivated the seeds of mistrust and acrimony between the south and north for decades to come. That legacy was aggravated by the southern policy adopted during the Condominium period, where interaction between the two parts of the country was curtailed, thus cementing the gulf of mistrust and sustaining the separate identities of the two regions. Yet, under the British, the south was gradually relieved from the prospects of slavery, and a narrow segment of its population were introduced to modern education (mostly through missionary schools). As a result, southern politicians came to trust the British administrators more than their northern counterparts, a development that would have implications in the future as far as the lack of a national consensus and the absence of a nationalist movement encompassing both north and south were concerned.

However, the Juba conference opened the way for the south to join in the constitutional developments. The establishment of the Legislative Assembly, which consisted of 93 members, only 13 of which represented the south, followed the conference. Likewise, when the Constitutional Amendments Commission (CAC) was set up in 1951 composed of 13 members; it included only one southerner, Buth Diu, who proposed the federal system to no avail.[20]

In January 1953, Egypt and the main northern political forces reached an agreement for self-rule, without representation from the south. When Sudanization was accomplished in 1955, the southerners got only eight positions out of 800 that were Sudanized. Federation was inserted in a motion to achieve a unanimous decision on the country's independence in December 1955, but there was every indication that the pledge was not taken seriously by the northern politicians. Indeed when a National Commission was set up by the parliament in September 1956 to draft a permanent constitution for the Sudan, the federal option was rejected from the outset.[21]

During Abboud's regime, the policy adopted was basically one of law and order and intensified Arabization and Islamization of the south. This intensification of Islamization and Arabization coupled with a heavy handed approach to security in the south led it to react and embrace armed struggle. The Anya Nya movement was formed in 1963 to lead the fight against the government, and in the end it was the south that proved to be fatal in the dismantling of the regime.

Hopes were raised high with the victory of the October popular uprising 1964. After all it was the worsening conditions in the south that pushed the Abboud regime to look into constitutional issues and opened the way for public debate. With the growing belief that it was basically a political problem, came the appointment of Sir al Khatim al-Khalifa, who had first-hand experience in the south, as prime minister of the caretaker government, and Clement Mboro as interior minister. For the first time a southerner was given an important portfolio, all of which strengthened the impression that the south was finally being entrusted to honest hands.

The caretaker government convened the Roundtable Conference in 1965 to look into southern Sudan's problem. Although the Conference did not achieve any significant success it set up a twelve-man committee composed of the major political forces from north and south as a follow-up body. The committee worked for a whole year and came up with the conclusion that forming a central unitary government did not serve the country's national interests. However, this process, which aimed at finding a political solution to the problems of the south, proved to be short lived and traditional/sectarian partisan politics were to dominate the scene.

The second parliamentary system was to make a false start as far as the south was concerned. One part of the south had to miss out on elections for security reasons, and the new government headed by Mohamed Ahmed Mahjub saw the southern problems through the security prism only, and gave southerners only two weeks to surrender or face the consequences. The army obeyed orders to the letter.

In June 1965 the Constituent Assembly passed unanimously a motion calling on the government to restore law and order. It was almost a declaration of war, not only on the armed groups but also on the whole south. That motion was supported by even right and left: Islamist leader Turabi and representatives of the communist party.[22]

Two incidents in Juba on 9 July 1965 and Wau two days later led to deaths of 473 southerners at the hands of the national army. The first incident was triggered

by a quarrel between a southerner and an army soldier; the second resulted from an attack on a marriage party by army officers. All these incidents helped consolidate the feeling that the army was behaving like an occupation force; it eventually led to a mass migration abroad and southerners joining Anya-Nya.[23]

Such a policy was not questioned at all by either public opinion in the north or the parliament, on the contrary parliament accused Mahjub of not doing enough to crush the mutiny, which tells a lot about the country's fragmentation. One reason was that the war seemed to be a far away thing happening in the bush and it took days for news to reach Khartoum. Moreover, while the rebels were resorting to hit and run tactics at that time, adequate resources and political will backed the government army.

With the rebellion on a wider scale, it become more organized, but opened the way at the same time for more divisions along tribal and personal lines. This resulted in the setting up of political bodies overlapping and competing with each other. For instance in August 1967 the Southern Sudan provincial government was formed and headed by Aggrey Jaden, while Emilio Taffeng acted as its military officer.

In less than two years the Nile provincial government headed by Gordon Mayen was established in March 1969. In July 1969 General Taffeng declared his opposition to the Nile provincial government and formed the Anyidi state government. Later in the year, Joseph Lagu, the young Anya-Nya commander of Euqatoria formed his own breakaway group – the Southern Sudanese Liberation Movement (SSLM) – and started to gain profile, benefiting from arms supplies by Israel.[24] Gradually all factions came to recognize Lagu as supreme commander and in January 1971 the SSLM emerged as the concentrated guerrilla force that combined political and military representation of the rebel south.[25]

That development coincided with the time when powers in the north were concentrated in the presidential system headed by Nimeiri. The Addis Ababa Accord was finalized in March 1972, giving the south autonomous powers to rule itself within a united Sudan. A high executive council was set up headed by Abel Alier, who led the government's delegation to the negotiations with the rebels. The accord was incorporated in the country's permanent constitution. Lagu was given the rank of a major general and reinstated back in the national army. As part of the agreement, some 300,000 southerners returned home from exile. The world community hailed the agreement that restored peace to the south, and a new era seemed to have started in Sudan.

Peace prevailed for a decade, but dissatisfaction with the agreement and the way it was being implemented expressed itself in many incidents when a combination of southern soldiers and officers of former Any-Nya mutinied in 1975, 1976 and early 1983. These isolated incidents were to culminate later in the mutiny that spread from Bor to Pibor, Ayod and Waat from May to July 1983 and ended up with the establishment of the SPLA/M. Tension also expressed itself through the intervention of Nimeiri to dissolve, unconstitutionally, elected southern governments in 1980, 1981 and 1983.

Interestingly enough, as early as January 1971, John Garang, who joined the Anya-Nya only six months earlier, heard of the negotiations that would lead to

the Addis Ababa Accord and wrote to Lagu suggesting that the timing was not conducive yet for the rebels to negotiate a deal.

Reasons that eventually led to the collapse of the agreement vary from lack of enough funding from central government to support development projects after achieving peace, to tribal rivalry that ended up as an open confrontation between the Dinka and other smaller Equatoria tribes. Then came the national reconciliation between Nimeiri and the traditional parties, which gave the regime a new political base and as such it became less dependent on the south for its survival.

However, the direct reason for the outbreak of the second mutiny was the decision to attack Battalion 105 stationed at Bor, which mutinied because of delayed salary payments and accusations of embezzlement of £107,000 of public funds at the battalion. The decision to attack the mutinous battalion was taken by the National Defence Council and it reflected four camps that prevailed on the political scene and wanted to get rid of the Addis Accord. The four groups included those who wanted to start their Islamization and Arabization programme from the newcomers of the old parties (after the reconciliation of 1977), the Equatoria representatives who saw a chance to teach the Dinka a lesson and cut them down to size, the military who wanted an opportunity to restore discipline and military profession standards to the absorbed southern troops in the national army, and above all Nimeiri himself, who wanted to prevail on the three groups by helping them get their way.[26]

The move to attack the battalion and redivide the south into three regions was the final step in breaking the Addis Accord and signalled the end of the decade-long peace between north and south. But Nimeiri could not have taken that step without some sort of a southern support. Joseph Lagu was there to provide needed southern backing under the pretext of fighting Dinka dominance. On the other hand redivision of the south was not questioned seriously by any of the regime's institutions, be it the SSU or the People's Assembly, and the measure proved fatal and provided a direct cause for reviving the civil war again.

The redivision issue, however, was the pretext, not the root cause of the revolt. From the outset, a new breed of southerners, who came of age and political maturity in the wake of the Addis Accord, had no time for yesterday's leaders as both Khartoum politics and traditional southern leadership disenchanted them. The south's growing disillusionment with the regime was manifested in popular and military revolts; the most serious of the latter being the mutiny of Battalion 105 in May 1983.[27]

A southern officer, Colonel John Garang, then head of the army research department, was sent from Khartoum to the region to investigate troubles in Battalion 105. Instead, Garang – who was reported to have had links with some of the disparate guerrilla groups in the south – chose to join the mutinous troops.[28] Thus the core of the new rebel movement, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) came into existence.

The SPLA was officially established on 31 July 1983, and announced the formation of its political wing – the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) – both under the leadership of Garang (henceforth this will be referred to as

SPLA/M). Unlike the previous Anya-Nya rebels, the new movement portrayed itself in its initial declarations as unitary, not secessionist, socialist, not communist and pragmatic, not dogmatic. The basic point that was to be emphasized later was that the movement was a nationalist one, wanting to tackle the problems of the whole country, not only those of the south.

The SPLA/M faced challenges from the old guard who wanted to pursue their former vision of a separate state, while Garang was calling for a new united Sudan. In less than a year and by February 1984, the SPLA managed to creep to world news headlines. By its attack on the Compagnie de Construction Internationale (CCI) base camp on Sobat River, working on Jongeli Canal, and the attack on Chevron's operational headquarters in the Bentiu area, leading to its closure, the SPLA effectively stopped operations in two major projects on which high hopes were put by the regime. The oil fields were to be operational by 1986 at a rate of 50,000 bpd, earning the country approximately $250 million a year.[29]

The mutiny this time was different from the first one in various ways. In the first place it was notable that most of the southern groups and tribes were represented in the SPLA (notwithstanding the dominance of the Nilotic tribes, particularly the Dinka), and in addition the movement attracted people from the Nuba Mountains and Ingessina. Furthermore, unlike Anya-Nya soldiers before, the SPLA's recruits were the product of a decade of peace and education, some were university graduates, while a few were PhD holders. As for armament, it made use of Nimeiri's animosity with both Libya and Ethiopia.

Furthermore, unlike the first war led by Anya-Nya, which was characterized by factionalism, the second war was mainly fought by the SPLA/M under the leadership of its sole leader Colonel Garang, who managed to mobilize backing from Libya and Ethiopia and eventually other African countries. The movement used effective media through radio transmission, even taking the war to the north through the occupation of Kurmuk and Gissan in 1987, then in 1989 and again in early 1997. It also managed to have a permanent presence in the Nuba Mountains and tried to take the war to Darfur in 1990.

Yet the most important aspect in the SPLA/M's experience was that it entered into serious negotiations, and occasionally concluded agreements, with the northern political forces. The first dialogue that took place with the National Alliance for National Salvation (NANS) – the body that led the 1985 uprising – concluded with the Koka Dam Declaration in March 1986. The SPLA/M then continued dialogue with all parties – *Umma*, NIF and later the DUP – which culminated in the peace agreement between Muhammad Osman al-Mirghani and John Garang in 1988 known as the Sudanese Peace Initiative.

Following the coup of 1989 the SPLA/M adopted a position of wait and see for two months, then carried out a policy of negotiating with the government of the day in Khartoum. In February 1990 the SPLA/M signed a cooperation agreement with the *Umma* party, and subsequently joined the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), an opposition umbrella, in March 1990, and attended the second NDA congress in London in February 1992.

Another characteristic of the SPLA was that it quickly accumulated significant military capability and achievements. It had portable SAM 7 missiles that enabled it between September 1983 and June 1988 to down more than 15 aircraft including a civilian one. And as early as March 1986 it started occupying cities and garrisons starting with Rumbek. By mid-1989, the movement managed to dislodge the government forces from two provincial government capital towns, 14 district towns, and over 19 village council towns. All in all it occupied around 80 per cent of the countryside of the southern region and some parts of southern Kordufan (Nuba Mountains), and Southern Blue Nile. In December 1990, the SPLA announced its control of the last government post between Sudan, Zaire and the Central Africa Republic, thus completing its full control of the whole of western Equatoria. Indeed, by then the rebel movement was in control of most of the south.

It took the new Salvation-NIF regime almost two years to make its push to drive the SPLA out of the string of garrisons it had occupied since 1986. After a long period of preparation getting arms from Iran and China (a deal originally brokered by the previous al-Mahdi regime) the government started its offensive against the SPLA. The latter, on the other hand, was weakened by the split of its Nasser group led by two prominent commanders Riek Machar and Lam Akol in August 1991 and the loss of the backing provided by Ethiopia under Mengistu, who fell from power during the same year.[30] In March 1992 the government army started its offensive at the beginning of the dry season by retaking Pochalla, on the eastern Sudan border with Ethiopia, which had been in SPLA hands for seven years. The army made use of tacit help provided by the new friendly regime in Addis Ababa, according to Turabi's admission to the BBC.

The attack on Pochalla was initiated by government troops numbering 50,000 in addition to the newly set up the Popular Defence Forces (PDF) totalling 85,000 with the help of the Anuwak tribe, who mostly live in Ethiopia. The PDF were believed to be influenced in their training and organization by Iran, whose President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani visited Sudan in December 1991. The attack was part of a comprehensive push coded the Summer of Crossing (*sayf al-'ubur*), that managed to retake 14 garrisons and towns that used to be occupied by the SPLA, including Torit and Kapoeta, the two main centres of activity for the SPLA.[31]

By 1994, the only significant presence of the SPLA was in the garrison of Nimule, but the regime failed in wiping out the SPLA or offering a political settlement, and thus to make use of its military successes in order to close the war chapter. Later the SPLA managed to strengthen its military presence with its northern and regional allies making a push in the east, taking Kurmuk and Gissan, as well as Yei in the south. In the following years, the SPLA made further gains, recapturing some of its previous positions and reestablishing control of most of rural southern Sudan.

As it became clear to the regime that the war was not going to settle the issue, it went back to ask for mediation of the Intergovernmental Agency for Drought and Development (IGAD), which comprises central and eastern African states. IGAD came up with a Declaration of Principles (DoP), which the regime had first

rejected in September 1994. Its State Minister for Foreign Affairs at the time, Dr Ghazi Salah El-Din Attabani, told the four African foreign ministers representing IGAD that his regime's mission was not only to spread Islam in Sudan, but throughout Africa. However, a year later the regime accepted the DoP as adopted by the IGAD group and engaged in fruitless negotiations with the SPLA.[32]

Due to the failure of IGAD in making any headway, both Libya and Egypt moved to intervene in the summer of 1999 tabling a joint initiative that called for a negotiated settlement between the NIF and NDA. All NDA forces including the SPLA signed it, but the joint initiative bypassed the right of self-determination for the south, which led to criticism by some southerners. In practical terms the initiative was bogged down, and the same happened with the talks to coordinate between the two initiatives.

Later came the Eritrean initiative, which called for direct dialogue between the Sudanese government and opposition and it managed in September 2000 to secure the first meeting between Bashir and Muhammad 'Osman al-Mirghani, head of the NDA. Nothing concrete came out of that meeting either.

Meanwhile, the SPLA survived military pressures by the government as well as the divisions within the movement in which the regime played a great role. In 1995 it managed with the NDA to agree on the Asmara Declarations that called for separation of state and religion, setting up of a transitional period and restructuring of the Sudanese state along more secular lines and adopting the military option to overthrow the regime in Khartoum. Gradually Garang became the military co-ordinator of the opposition forces and one of his deputies was appointed secretary general of the NDA. Following divisions and disagreements within the northern parties of the NDA, the SPLA/M emerged as the strongest force in opposition to the NIF-Salvation regime.

Nevertheless, as demonstrated by the various splits and breakaways, the SPLA/M had its share of problems. While some of these divisions were due to tribal animosities, or instigated by the government, others centred around policy disagreements and the 'autocratic' style of leadership of Colonel John Garang. Southerners at large were apparently growing weary that the war had been going on for too long on their land and without end in sight; that the south has been depopulated and its social fabric distorted with internal displacement and the flow of refugees abroad, and that the goal of a united Sudan seemed as elusive as ever.

Islam, constitution and politics

Two issues featured prominently in Sudanese contemporary politics: debate over the country's constitution and the relationship between Islam and politics. The Sudan became an independent state without a constitution and spent most of its subsequent history searching for one. The constitution, or lack of it, became a symbol summarizing the failure of the country's political elite. On the other hand the drive towards an Islamic constitution or state, which has dominated the political scene since the 1960s, led among other things to the creation of false priorities. For instance the legislative and executive bodies during the parliamentary

regime of 1985–89 had exhausted their energies on the issue of Islamic laws at the expense of tackling the expanding civil war. Likewise the 1989 coup was designed and carried out basically to abrogate any moves away from religious laws.

In search for a constitution

Though Sudan has been through three parliamentary regimes (1956–58; 1965–69; 1986–89), its legislative body was persistently called a constituent assembly throughout these three periods. Its main task was that of writing a permanent constitution for the country. Nothing was accomplished. Political bickering and lack of vision or will, dispute over the country's identity and the place of the south in the national politics, and the thorny issue of the state and religion were among the main stumbling blocks that delayed the constitution writing.

Writing a permanent constitution should be the last stage in a long process that ought to be based on national consensus. The inability of political forces in Sudan to come up with a permanent and stable constitution for the past half a century, shows clearly their inability to overcome national problems even in a free, open climate. And the two attempts to write a permanent constitution during the two totalitarian regimes Ja'afar Nimeiri (1969–85) and the current Salvation regime from 1989 until the present, were laid to rest the moment the regime collapsed in the first case, or there was a change in the political scene in the second.

The history of constitutional development in Sudan dates back to pre-independence days. The Constitutional Amendments Commission (CAC) operating under the auspices of the Legislative Assembly asked formally for a specific date for the country's self-rule. That commission was to be disbanded later for a host of reasons, but its deliberations were the base on which Justice R.C. Stanley-Baker drafted the self-rule statutes that ushered the country to independence in 1956.[33]

In addition to defining the structures and respective powers of the self-rule institutions, the draft proposed by Baker called for guarantees for the south accompanied by appointing a minister for southern affairs as a way to allay southerners' fears of the north's domination. When it became clear that independence would be announced shortly, amendments were hurriedly arranged, passing the powers of the Governor-General to a newly formed supreme council. The changes took their legal and constitutional shape when the parliament passed a three-part motion calling for a declaration of independence, a parliament commitment to give due consideration to the issue of federation for the south, and creation of the five-man supreme council to act as head of state in place of the Governor-General.

By 1 January 1956 Sudan became an independent unitary state with a vague promise to consider federation for the south. Meanwhile, the Self-Rule statutes – as amended on the eve of independence – became the transitional constitution of the Republic of the Sudan.

The political forces that were engrossed in the independence issue for more than a decade, found that independence was within reach and that they were not prepared for this change at either a political or a constitutional level. The idea was to establish a constituent assembly to draft the country's permanent constitution. That assembly

was never able to complete its job, despite the setting up of a national committee armed with politicians from across the board, as well as legal and constitutional advisors.

The six-year rule of Abboud's regime, though free from political wrangling, lacked the will and vision to embark on the constitution issue and resorted to rule by decree. In August 1959, however, the regime set up a Constitutional Development Commission headed by Chief Justice Mohamed Ahmed Abu Ranat, which recommended creation of representative bodies at local, provincial and national levels where a central council was to be set up. The central council, was meant to play the role of parliament, but was effectively without any authority. On the other hand and despite its heavy-handed approach towards the south, the regime eventually came to discover that it had to look into the causes of the southern problem. That was how it opened discussion on the southern question in 1964, a discussion that eventually led to questioning the regime's legitimacy itself and brought about its downfall. From then onwards the south became the graveyard of the shortsighted political systems in Sudan.

The popular uprising of October 1964 opened the door for seriously addressing the central issues facing the country since its independence, but the opportunity was wasted and soon the country reverted back to the self-same partisan politics of the 1950s that were characterized by divisions and lack of vision.

As there was no prior national consensus on the issue of the constitution, democracy was simply reduced to mere procedures of voting and free assembly, speech and press that did not carry any substantive content. Indeed, the exercise of these rights was a healthy experience (and one for which Sudan was unique in Africa in the 1960s), but they were meant to protect a system already built on a consensus, which was lacking in the Sudanese political process.

The constitutional process also suffered from the blatant disrespect shown by the ruling elite to the state institutions. For instance the new leaders exerted half-hearted and superficial efforts that served only their personal purposes and at the time aggravated the country's problems. Thus the second parliamentary system started with a constitutional amendment to make Ismail al-Azhari permanent president of the Supreme Council, and to assume quasi-executive powers (such as heading official delegations to international conferences) though he was supposed to be a figurehead in the parliamentary system.

Likewise, out of the same disrespect for institutions and desire to settle political scores, the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) was dissolved and its 11 members driven out of parliament. When the SCP challenged the ruling in the Supreme Court, the government of the day, headed by Sadiq al-Mahdi turned a deaf ear. The same Mahdi had this experience himself later, when his attempt to vote the Mahjub government out in 1968 was frustrated, and the Constituent Assembly dissolved. The only option left for him and his bloc was to resort to the same Supreme Court that he had disregarded before.

With regard to constitution writing, the same futile exercise of the 1950s was to be repeated after the 1964 popular uprising. The current tone this time was the Islamic constitution, which had a high profile and even reached the stage of a draft

with complete disregard for other political forces such as the left and, more important, a marginalized sector of the country like the non-Muslim southerners. Yet, although the major parties (both *Umma* factions and the DUP) had agreed on the draft Islamic constitution, they were not able to pass it through the Constituent Assembly, as it was dissolved due to political wrangling.

The second military regime performed better in constitutional matters. Serious attempts to establish a base for the legitimacy of Nimeiri's regime were sought after he managed a successful comeback following a short-lived coup in July 1971. A fresh start was made whereby the Revolutionary Command Council was dissolved and Nimeiri won a nation-wide plebiscite two months after the July coup to start his presidential system. Now firmly in power and with a free hand, Nimeiri and his aides focused their efforts on the issue of the south. The approach was to start where things stood and base efforts on the findings of the 12-man committee formed by the round-table conference convened to discuss the southern question in 1965, hence a framework for a solution granting autonomy to the south was found.

Accordingly, the Addis Ababa Accord which granted the south self-rule and gave consideration to the country's multi-faceted diversity was concluded in March 1972 after intensive negotiations. The agreement – known in legal terms as the Southern Provinces Self-government Act – was incorporated into the Sudan's 'permanent constitution', which was promulgated in May 1973. Solving the intricate southern question was the development that gave Sudan ten years of relative peace, paved the way for agreement on the constitution, and allowed it to make a serious turn to economic development.

The new constitution established a presidential secular and unitary republic with a 'socialist' orientation. Yet the major drawback of the 1973 constitution was that it legitimized a totalitarian one-party system and vested enormous powers in the hands of the President of the Republic. Furthermore, that constitution underwent two basic amendments that proved to be disastrous in the end. Both amendments were probably dictated by mere security concerns following a 1975 coup attempt. The first amendment gave the security forces a free hand to exercise 'preventive' arrest of opponents without resort to the judiciary, whereas the second empowered Nimeiri to issue any order that would have the force of law. With executive powers concentrated mainly in the hands of the president and a self-rule system in the south akin to parliamentary democracy, seeds of trouble were sown and were to flourish and explode less than a decade later.[34]

On the other hand, the regime's ruling party – the Sudan Socialist Union – became a rubber stamp and with its composition and structure, it acted as a route to the dominance of a bureaucratic elite, despite claiming to be the articulators of the interests of the people at large

The 1985 second popular uprising, which ousted Nimeiri after 16 years of absolute rule, terminated his 'permanent' constitution. As in previous experiences the transitional government opted for yet another interim constitution to govern Sudan until such time when the forthcoming Constituent Assembly could write a permanent constitution. No draft constitution was ever presented to the Constituent

Assembly, yet this time the main players thought to look for a more balanced approach to the issue of the constitution based on a national consensus. For the first time in Sudan's history, the whole political movement agreed on the need to settle the constitutional issues in a constitutional conference.

The idea of the constitutional conference that would take Sudan to the drawing board came from the southern-based rebel movement, the SPLA/M, and as early as 1983. It was an interesting development as initiatives to do with national politics usually came from northern politicians and movements. This time the initiative came from a southern-based movement, probably as a manifestation that it was not concerned with the south only, but was considering the national agenda. However, although the call was endorsed by effectively all the political forces in the country (with the exception of the NIF), chances were allowed to slip away – at least on three specific occasions – because of political bickering and short-sightedness of the main political forces.

The first chance followed the Koka Dam conference of March 1986, which gathered together all political forces in the north and the south except the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and NIF. The meeting ended with a declaration calling for convening a constitutional conference in the third week of June 1986, which was to be preceded by certain measures to prepare the climate (most significantly repealing the September laws, and abrogation of military pacts with foreign countries).

However, because the interim period was coming to a conclusion and there were fears of the possibility of a military come-back, it was decided to carry on with an election to determine the weight of various political forces. Elections came up with a new political reality whereby the second and third political blocs to emerge in the new constituent assembly were not signatory to Koka Dam, namely the DUP and NIF.

The second attempt came with the DUP initiative to conclude a peace agreement with the SPLA in November 1988, which called among other things for holding of a constitutional conference by 31 December 1988. The Prime Minister at the time Sadiq al-Mahdi, for his own political calculations chose not to go ahead with the deal and that opportunity was allowed to slip away as well.

It took a combination of military pressure from the SPLA on the war front and political pressure from the army and trades unions in the north to restructure a new broad-based government that finally committed itself to the peace initiative, entered into serious talks with SPLA and decided on 18 September 1989 as a date to convene the constitutional conference. As steps were accelerating towards that target, the NIF coup took place on 30 June 1989, and one of its direct aims was to abrogate the peace process and the idea of the constitutional conference. The new regime had its own agenda and, confidently, thought it had the solution to all Sudan's problems.

In addition to political instability and the constant shift between military and civilian politics, writing a constitution had to deal with the thorny issue of the state and religion. For more than three decades the issue of an Islamic constitution has dominated the political scene in one way or another. It was highlighted immediately

after independence when the Islamist groups campaigned for an Islamic constitution, then during the period 1965–69, when a draft Islamic constitution was debated by the Constituent Assembly.

Following, his declaration of *shari'a* laws in 1983, President Nimeiri tabled a motion for a constitutional amendment to the People's Assembly (parliament). However, the assembly almost rejected the constitutional amendments that were designed to rewrite the constitution along Islamic lines as it involved amending 123 clauses of the constitution's 220 items. Among other things, the changes put non-Muslims as second-class citizens with no hope whatsoever of even considering running for the country's high posts.

The amendments aroused the southern members in the assembly, who managed to get others on their side to enable them to raise a group of 98 members calling for delay in discussing the proposed amendments. That motion, which was opposed by only 12 Islamist members, in effect blocked the way for those amendments. It was an interesting development as it happened in a totalitarian regime, where the assembly was supposed to be controlled by the sole party and, despite the prevailing blackmail atmosphere, the government failed to have its day.

The one conclusion to draw out of all this is that a stable constitution needs more than mere parliamentary majority or a totalitarian regime claiming to overcome party divisions.

State and religion

The relationship between Islam and the state has been a source of intensive debate in relation to the constitutional form of the state, its legal system, and the general cultural and sociopolitical orientation of the country. It is also an issue that cuts through the debate over the country's identity: Arabic-Islamic, Afro-Arab, African or uniquely Sudanese.[35]

At the political level, the mainstream northern-based parties – *Umma* and DUP – were based on sectarian loyalties, and thereby regarded as having an Islamic orientation in general terms. Yet these parties had neither led an Islamic jihad against the British-dominated imperial state, nor sought an alternative Islamic state to it after independence. Rather they settled for loose and virtually secular party structures that united sectarian and tribal affiliations in the rural areas with modern forms of organizations that existed among business and intelligentsia groups in urban areas. By and large the sectarian parties maintained the secular state machinery established by the Condominium regime.

The political force that espoused and actively campaigned for Islamization of state and politics was the Islamist movement. This movement, which appeared in the early 1950s as the Muslim Brotherhood (subsequently reorganized and renamed the Islamic Charter Front (ICF) in the 1960s and the National Islamic Front (NIF) in the 1980s), championed the call for the adoption of an Islamic constitution in the 1960s and campaigned for Islamization of the laws in the 1970s and 1980s.

Agitation for Islamization of the state was contained from independence in 1956 to the end of General Abboud's military regime. In fact the issue was first raised

during the 1956–58 post-independence period, but was not picked up by the main parties. But from the 1960s onwards, the country was at a crossroads and political forces tried their best to push through their divergent agendas and ideologies. The era therefore witnessed the resurgence of the Islamic tide that expressed itself in the campaign to write the country's first constitution along Islamic lines. In this connection the ICF emerged as the main agitator, and the issue of an Islamic constitution topped the agenda of political debate in the country.

Ideological considerations notwithstanding, the ultimate motive to get religion into the scene was a political one and a sheer quest for power. The banning of the communist party in 1965 for fear of its mounting influence, following the October uprising, that threatened radicalization of politics provided one motive behind writing a constitution which would categorically illegalize all atheist and communist organizations. Another political motive was the race in the 1960s to win the expected presidential election along the lines of an Islamic platform, hence an Islamic constitution, a move that was regarded as necessary to placate the overwhelmingly sectarian constituencies of the *Umma* and the DUP, particularly in view of the intensive campaign for Islamization from the ICF.

In fact that drive towards an Islamic constitution was directly or indirectly responsible for the staging of a leftist coup in 1969, which declared that one of its prime targets was to abolish the 'yellow paper' in reference to the draft constitution of 1968 that sought to establish an 'Islamic Republic'. The second consequence was that the Islamist movement under its different names became an influential player in the Sudanese political scene. The issue was sidelined following the coup of 1969 led by Nimeiri, but Nimeiri himself came out in the second half of his 16-year rule to adopt a gradual Islamization process that culminated with the imposition of the *shar'ia* laws in September 1983.

In September 1983, Nimeiri suddenly announced a presidential decree enforcing of what came to be known as 'September' or '*shari'a* laws'. The decree stipulated the establishment of a new penal code for the Sudan that included some of the Islamic criminal penalties known as *hudud*.[36] The new penal code, which replaced the 1974 code, was accompanied and/or followed by new laws of criminal and civil procedures and the sources of the Judicial Judgement Act. All these laws were meant to position the country on the path towards Islamization. About six months later, Nimeiri declared a state of emergency and ordered the establishment of special courts for the dispensing of 'speedy justice'. Under the new measures several *shari'a* inspired punishments were carried out, such as flogging, amputation for theft, crucifixion and one case of execution for apostasy (the execution of the Islamic reformist leader Mahmoud Muhammad Taha, in January 1985).

As has been argued by many observers, Nimeiri's motives behind the declaration of *shari'a* laws were mainly political.[37] By the early 1980s the regime's failures in both political and economic fields had generated widening dissent and weakened Nimeiri's grip on power. Nimeiri's Islamization experiment was apparently deployed to shore up his legitimacy. In less than a year after the declaration of the September laws, Nimeiri proclaimed himself *Imam* of the Sudanese people and received an oath of allegiance from his associates and assistants.[38]

In political terms, the *shar'ia* experiment brought Islam to the centre of the Sudanese political stage more than ever before. That was why the proponents of Islamization of Sudanese laws and politics viewed the experiment as an important achievement. Yet the September laws created new complexities and raised new questions. In the first place the laws aggravated the second civil war in the south and dashed any hopes of a quick fix to the 1983 mutiny. The latent religious factor in the north–south disparity became an expressed one. At the legal level, the experiment raised the issues of human rights violations and administration of justice under religiously inspired laws.

Despite Nimeiri's departure in 1985, the *shar'ia*, or September laws became the most problematic issue in reaching a consensus on an alternative political system. In particular these laws became the stumbling block in the way of reaching a peaceful settlement to the second civil war. At the heart of the controversy was the insistence of the SPLA/M (the rebel movement that leads the current civil war) supported by secular groups in the north, that the September laws should be repealed as a prerequisite for a negotiated settlement; and the NIF's campaign that *shari'a* laws should never be repealed.

When the NIF joined the government in 1988, it advanced the issue of *shari'a* as its main justification for becoming part of the ruling coalition. The NIF leader, Hassan al-Turabi who became the Attorney General and Minister of Justice of the new government, converted a draft prepared by his party into the government Criminal Bill, 1988 to replace Nimeiri's penal code of September, 1983. Turabi's bill provided for all the *hudud* offences and penalties including that of apostasy, and the stoning of a married adulterer, in addition to other religious inspired penalties such as *qasas* (retribution) and *diyya* (blood money). The new bill, however, purported to exempt the southern region from the application of *hudud* penalties.[39] The bill was discussed by the Constituent Assembly, but was not adopted by the latter; political developments forced a shift in priorities and a change in composition of government.

The NIF's accession to power through a military coup in 1989 was in a way a reflection of the dispute over the *shari'a* as the majority of political forces seemed to have agreed at least to freeze the *shari'a*-September laws until a national constitutional conference was held in order to discuss all issues pertaining to a future political system for the Sudan, and to make peace a priority. Such were the agenda of the last government in the parliamentary regime, which was ousted by the NIF coup.

Major developments took place during the Salvation-NIF rule, when the new regime built its legitimacy solely on the issue of *shari'a* and Islamization of state and society. In March 1991 the Salvation-NIF regime decreed the implementation of a new penal code, based on the Criminal Bill prepared by al-Turabi, leader of the NIF, while he was attorney general in 1988.[40] Other Islamization measures included various attempts at indoctrination of the public by the state organs through the media, educational and cultural institutions (reorganization of curricular systems at all levels and introduction of religious (Islamic) sciences in all specializations, numerous religious programmes on TV and Radio, etc.). Furthermore,

although there was no official decree imposing *hijab* on women, the government and its associates used various measures of intimidation and coercion to impose modest dress on women and girls (mostly head-cover and long dresses) particularly in the workplace and educational institutions. Moreover, the country witnessed an upsurge in the construction of mosques and greater emphasis on congregational prayer particularly in workplaces and other public places. Moreover, it declared in 1992 a *jihad* against the SPLA, thus projecting the war against rebel citizens a religious war even if they were Muslims, like those fighting in Nuba Mountains.

This Islamization drive, be it in legal or societal arenas, was not just implementation of an ideological programme, but also a legitimization discourse. The NIF regarded all attacks on it from domestic opposition or the outside world as being solely motivated by their hate for the Islamic model being built in Sudan, not because of the regime's military nature and its human rights abuses. A favourite theme of the regime's propaganda organs was the categorization of all criticisms directed against the regime and its polices as an attack on Islam, and Sudan's Islamic orientation.

In the eyes of its opponents, particularly in the south, the 'Salvation' regime the NIF established as result of its coup became the apex crystallizing the trend to preserve the hegemony of the Arab Islamic culture in a diversified society. In addition, the issue of Islamization and declaration of *jihad* led to agitation in the south and the flare-up of the mutiny, which began to be projected as a struggle against subjugation by the Arabized and Muslim north against the Christian/animist south.

Salvation-NIF: The last chapter?

The NIF coup came with a revolutionary agenda to change the set-up of Sudan and write the last chapter in its history. It was the fifth attempt by a faction of modern forces or intelligentsia to effect change, though with an Islamic orientation this time.

The Islamic movement started in universities and high schools as early as the 1940s under the influence of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and as a reaction to the leftist and communist trends at the time. The movement's influence remained confined to the student body, and it was only during the October 1964 uprising that it started to gain some prominence with the emergence of its long-time leader Hassan al-Turabi as one of the popular figures of the revolution. He was rewarded for this by gaining the highest number of votes in the 15 constituencies allocated to graduates.

Among other things, that victory seemed to have paved his way to be the undisputed leader of the movement for the coming 40 years. Turabi was able to transform the movement from a mere student and lobby group into a political force to reckon with. Ironically enough, it was Turabi who proposed as early as 1962 that the movement be a lobby group only and not a party.[41] However, as a political force active in the modern sector, it came to the rescue of the two sects *Khatmiyya*

and *Ansar*, who were under pressure from a strengthened left after the October uprising. With their religious background and influence it was natural for them to support, at least on paper, the call for an Islamic constitution and ally themselves with the ICF led by al-Turabi. During that period al-turabi and his movement were the driving force behind the push to dissolve the Communist Party in 1965.

During the early years of Nimeiri's rule, the Islamist movement adopted a hostile stand against it owing to the leftist tendency of the latter, and joined the *Umma* and DUP to form the National Front (NF) opposition coalition. The experience of armed opposition within the NF allowed the Islamists to train some of their cadres in weapons and military arts, and to cultivate close relations with neighbouring countries such as Libya. On the other hand, with restriction on political activity outside government control, the Islamist movement concentrated its efforts on the student body (that normally enjoys a margin of freedom and pluralist politics), which became its stronghold by the mid-1070s.

After the national reconciliation between Nimeiri and the National Front opposition in 1977, al-Turabi masterminded a long term and comprehensive strategy that sought to transform the Islamist movement into a political party capable of assuming power in its own right. As such it had to stay away from sectarian parties and build its own independent mechanism and structure in order to inherit these parties with their Islamic constituencies.

Nimeiri's reconciliation with the northern parties was looked on with suspicion by the southern politicians, who saw Nimeiri strengthening his own power base at their expense. The redivision and Islamization supported their worst fears, and thereafter the role of the south as the main supporter for the regime diminished and was substituted by the Islamists, who saw the whole affair as a chance to carry out their strategy.

In practical terms the strategy entailed that the movement was to form a strategic alliance with the defunct Nimeiri regime to make use of every margin to build its membership, and its economic and media organizations. It succeeded in controlling the student movement more or less since the mid-1970s, made use of Gulf petrodollars to set up a number of Islamic economic institutions that became mainly active in trade and as avenues for channelling expatriates' remittances and control of the quasi-economy of the black market.[42]

Though the movement experienced a minor split by a group that maintained the original name of the Muslim Brotherhood, Turabi and his followers continued to be the only northern political force to support Nimeiri even after the failure of the reconciliation. They tolerated the regime's corruption, its secular stint and its closeness to the United States. They even turned a blind eye to its role in transferring the *Falasha* Jews to Israel (1982–85). The aim was to keep making use of the margin made available to them either to take over the regime or be a political force to reckon with, now that they had consolidated their membership, economic and media institutions.

Nimeiri's decision in 1983 to apply *shar'ia*, in which Turabi was no party, came as a blessing to them. For one thing, it provided them with the excuse to claim that their alliance with a corrupt regime had resulted in pushing it towards Islamization.

Moreover, the declaration, which alienated the southerners almost completely, made them the only political force backing the regime.[43]

The excessiveness that characterized the application of the *shar'ia* and the resurgence of the revolt in southern Sudan in 1983 led the US to reconsider its support for Nimeiri. For their good luck, only two weeks before his overthrow in 1985, Nimeiri ordered the leadership of the Islamist movement to be put in prison, pending his return from a US visit. That incident allowed the movement to come back into the political arena making use of its good organization, media empire and economic institutions at the time other parties were suffering from long 16 years in limbo. Under a new name, the NIF, the Islamists managed to capture 51 seats, which put them in third place in the parliament. The NIF bloc became the leading opposition force and at one point it joined the parliamentary government alongside *Umma* and the DUP.

Abrogating of the September 1983 *shar'ia* laws was seen as a prerequisite for a solid foundation for the new and third parliamentary experience, since it would be a necessary step to restore peace to the south. The NIF opposed such step, accusing *Umma* and the DUP of betraying and abandoning their Islamic constituencies and programmes. By its fierce defence of the *shar'ia* laws, it was giving political and ideological justification to its eight-year alliance with a corrupt and isolated regime. Moreover, with its good organization, economic and media powers, it exercised an influence that far exceeded its actual size. In short, the NIF dictated the political agenda of the country, pushing the political forces to concentrate only on one topic: abrogating or amending Islamic laws, thus consigning the important issue of peace and war to the back burner.

The military and economic situation continued to deteriorate, putting more pressure on the political forces to look at the war issue. Thus came the peace initiative reached between al-Mirghani, leader of the DUP and Garang of the SPLA/M in November 1988; subsequently adopted by al-Mahdi's government after some procrastination and heavy pressure from the military and trades unions. Reaching peace was seen by the NIF as a dangerous option as it could lead to its political marginalization, and could also end up curtailing its economic influence as a number of its banking institutions were accused of malpractice and were subjected to investigation.

Following an in-depth evaluation of the whole situation, the NIF decided to take its biggest gamble and stage a coup, abort the peace process and, more importantly, carry out its own agenda for change. Despite the hint of optimism that peace was within reach following the peace agreement between al-Mirghani and Garang, the lack of governance, and slow-moving peace process led al-Mahdi's government to have a very low popularity rating at home and abroad.

The NIF on the other hand was putting the final touches to its attempt to grasp power, reaping 40 years of incessant effort to control the country. The later years of Nimeiri saw them running the black market and controlling a quasi-economy. By then more than 300,000 Sudanese expatriates were working in the Gulf and were estimated to be earning more than $5 billion that were channelled via the black market controlled by the NIF. A new economy with a size that was ten times

the value of what the country earned from cotton, its main cash crop, and almost three-quarters of the $7.5 billion GDP did not appear in any official books and the government had no control over it.[44]

The NIF was part of the rising political Islam movement, but unlike similar groups in the Middle East and North Africa it broke new grounds, making inroads in society and its modern forces at the same time as it was maintaining its Islamic credentials and functioning in a relatively democratic environment. The NIF political and ideological reforms and rich experience included bringing in women to be part of public life and not confined to homes only, developing various social and economic institutions, and unlike similar groups, it had the chance to work under its independent flag, joining the government or staying in opposition. Moreover, the NIF managed to distance itself from extreme Islamist groups such as *Takfir and Hijra* groups, and reconciled itself comparatively well with Sudanese society and other political forces in the country including non-Muslim groups (such as sectors of the southern political elite).

In addition to its economic and financial muscles, the NIF was penetrating the army, the favourable vehicle for change in the Middle East and North African countries. The Islamists' moves in that arena started to be formalized as early as 1983, making use of the *shar'ia* experiment. They introduced special training sessions at the African Islamic Centre in Khartoum, where selected officers undergo training and indoctrination, then through a network sent to the Gulf to cash some money out of their secondment and arrange for *Umra* (smaller pilgrimage) and pilgrimage. Back home, another network was facilitating obtaining households for army officers.[45]

The NIF went a step further and started to plant its own committed officers in the army. Worth mentioning here are two incidents of employing and reinstating back two NIF members in the army: Major Ibrahim Shamsuddin, who ironically enough was dismissed following the discovery of a leftist coup attempt in 1983, and Lt Doctor al-Tayeb Ibrahim Mohamed Khair, who was permitted to join the medical corps despite a recommendation from security against him. Both men came to play important roles in the Salvation regime. The man behind both moves to reinstate them was Major General Taj al-Din Abdullah Fadl, deputy chairman of the TMC after the April uprising, and who on leaving that job became the honorary head of *Shabab al-Bina*, an NIF youth organization. The TMC president, Lt General Suwar al-Dahab, became chairman of the Islamic Call Organization, which became the secret centre from which to conduct the coup and its aftermath.[46]

Even Omar al-Bashir, current president and leader of the coup, who was suspected by the military intelligence was saved from being sent into retirement by the good offices of Ahmed Sa'ad Omar, state minister at the palace, who was supposedly a DUP member, but had strong connections with the NIF.

More important the NIF managed in February 1989 to recruit to its service Lt al-Sayed al-Husseini Abdel Karim, the office director of the Commander in Chief of the army, Lt General Fathi Ahmed Ali. The general was quoted as saying that al-Husseini received £3 million for his services and was to be appointed minister

and governor during the Salvation regime.[47] Al-Husseini's mission included misinforming the C-in-C while keeping the NIF posted on what was going on, such as suppressing an urgent report from intelligence about activity of NIF in the army, which quoted by name 12 officers including Bashir. The NIF also managed to plant three of its sympathetic officers , Kamal Ali Mukhtar, Hassan Osman Dahawi and Abdel Razaq al-Fadli in the counter-espionage department.

The coup in the end was conducted mainly through giving the impression that the army command had taken over. In effect the technical corps, where NIF had a strong presence, played an important role and were supported by the NIF militia. According to General Fathi Ahmad Ali, his home in the army's headquarters was raided by five officers helped by 30 to 45 members of NIF militia.[48]

As pointed out earlier the NIF coup was the third of its kind in Sudan's modern history. The NIF felt that the coup was its last chance to do something or risk political marginalization, so it took a calculated risk to stage the takeover, utilizing eight years of its association with Nimeiri that gave it the chance to consolidate its institutions, and capitalize on the atmosphere of freedom and political mobilization that prevailed during the parliamentary episode.

Though confident that the regime was so weak that people might welcome change given the lack of state governance, the NIF took precautions: its security apparatus was to undertake assassination operations to create a state of anarchy to help take power if the organized, orderly coup failed. It also decided to send its leader al-Turabi to Kobar prison with other politicians as an alibi that he had nothing to do with the coup if it was to fail. The camouflage went as far as avoid appointing obvious NIF figures in the new government. Even the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) was composed mostly of non-NIF figures, and nine of its 15 members 'heard' in the first announcement that they had staged a coup!

The first task before the new regime was how to consolidate its grip on power, establish law and order, and above all achieve regional and international recognition. Banking on deterioration of the previous regime's relations with Egypt, it approached Cairo for help. Cairo agreed to facilitate in 'marketing' the new regime regionally and internationally. It approached leaders of the G-7, who were meeting at the time in Paris, for that purpose. Moreover, the Bush administration was persuaded to waiver a law that penalized coups against democratically elected government.[49]

Internally its tool was to resort to sheer repression and violence that was unprecedented in the history of Sudan, dealing ruthlessly with any form of opposition, whether civilian or military. The idea was to send a message that the new regime meant business.

The opportunity came with the strike of physicians, which was seen as heralding a general strike to topple the regime. Sensing the danger, the NIF mobilized its forces, recalled sympathizers from abroad and sent adversaries to prison. Dr Mamoun Mohamed Hussein, the secretary-general of the physicians federation was sentenced to death, while Dr Ali Fadl, a member of the federation, was tortured until he died. Dr Majzoub al-Khalifa, a leading NIF figure who later became a governor and a minister, masterminded the operation to abort the strike.[50]

To show its toughness, the regime also executed three people for illegally trading in foreign currency: Majdi Mahjoub Mohamed Ahmed was sentenced to death in a trial that lasted only 30 minutes where his lawyer was not allowed even to appear, and was hanged in December 1989. Similarly, Jerjis al-Gous and Arkengelo Ayiga Daru were executed in February and April 1990, respectively. Yet the most notorious invention was the introduction of the 'ghost houses' – secret detention houses designed to break resistance through torture.

Initially and from the start, the new regime set up parallel organizations such as the Popular Defence Forces, along Iranian lines, security and police organizations and even a shadow government. And more importantly, a shadowy body known as the 40-man council was running the whole show behind the scenes.[51]

This was followed by almost blanket purges in the army, security and civil service. Career diplomats were replaced by political ideologues. As it has been reported, since 1989 a total of 11,000 army personnel were removed, including 1600 officers.[52] More detailed figures say that between 3,000 and 4,000 officers, 500 NCOs and 11,000 rank and file soldiers were dismissed.[53] The same thing happened with the civil service. Relying on the power of the second constitutional order the regime entrusted Lt Colonel al-Tayeb Ibrahim Mohamed Khair, then cabinet affairs minister, to handle that. In slightly more than four years it laid off 73,640 people from various state organs and departments, or more than double those laid off since 1904 that had totalled 32,419.

The second challenge was how to face up to the series of coups culminating in the 1990 coup that the regime managed to overcome. In just two hours it executed 28 officers between 23 and 24 April 1990.[54] The 28 officers who ranked between major general and captain were summarily tried, with no defence of any kind. In fact three of them, Major General Osman Idris al-Balul, Major General Khaled al-Zain, and Staff Colonel Mohamed Ahmed Qassim were actually in detention before the coup attempt. The officers were buried in mass graves, and their families were not allowed to retrieve their bodies.

Posts and positions of those laid off were filled by NIF members who could carry out its policies in addition to controlling the wealth by driving out other businessmen. The vehicle used was welfare and philanthropic non-profit Islamic organizations that were given tax exemptions to import goods and then sell them commercially in the market, undermining conventional businessmen and driving them out. According to Mubarak al-Mahdi, at the time Secretary-General of NDA, a total of 120 Islamic welfare organizations used their funds to bribe NIF members, and the exemptions they gained amounted to one-third of the budget.[55]

The first year in power saw real consolidation of the Islamist grip, and by 1991 the regime felt strong enough to admit its connection with the NIF.[56] This paved the way for the second stage that was to turn Sudan into an Islamist Cuba. Here also the chance came with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. The position taken by Turabi was based on the calculation that with the rising Islamic tide, it was better to take the side of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, who would provide the way for Islamic agitators to take over in some Arab countries.

The first indication came when a Saudi pilot defected flying his airplane to Khartoum during the international alliance built up to face up to Saddam, then the Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden moved to Sudan, setting up a construction company as well as training camps for his Arab Afghan followers. By 1991 the regime removed all entry visa restrictions on Muslims entering Sudan. That measure attracted all radical groups, from *Hamas, Jihad*, the Egyptian *al-Jama'ah al-Islamiya* as well as Libyan Islamic militants, to shadowy groups like *Abu Nidal*. All these steps culminated in the setting up of the Popular Arab and Islamic Congress (PAIC), an umbrella organization bringing together all Arab and Islamist groups, which was headed by Turabi.

By December 1991 the US administration felt so worried that it dispatched one of its senior diplomats, Robert Houdeck, to Khartoum to meet both al-Turabi and Bashir and advise them against opening their doors to such groups, calling for the Sudan government to be held responsible for any terrorist action taken against US interests that could be traced back to Khartoum.[57]

Days later, Iran's President Ali Akbar Hashimi Rafsnjani visited Sudan. It was reported that Sudan agreed to allow Tehran to use its territories as a base to launch its Islamic revolutionary fervour in return for a yearly supply of cheap oil worth $300 million and old Soviet military hardware valued at $30 million.[58]

In August 1993 the US put Sudan on the list of countries exercising state terrorism, with the administration alleging Sudanese involvement in the plot to bomb the World Trade Center the same year. It was the first time that 'terrorist' acts had been carried out on the US mainland.

Sudan's relations with its neighbours continued to deteriorate as Eritrea broke off diplomatic ties in 1994, to be followed by Uganda the next year. The attack on the life of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak in 1995 led Ethiopia and Egypt to curtail Sudan's diplomatic presence and to take it to the UN Security Council.

The attempt on Mubarak's life was seen as the peak of the Islamist Cuba phase. The attempt was believed to have been coordinated to co-incide with a popular uprising in Egypt, thus intended to topple the most influential regime in the region to pave the way for an Islamist change.[59]

In the following year both Ethiopia and Egypt were pushed to take Sudan to be sanctioned by the UN Security Council in January 1996. The regime, which had received successive condemnations from the UN, world bodies and human rights organizations as early as February 1991 for its abuses, became a hotbed of radicalism and ended up an isolated black sheep in both Arab and African regions. In December 1992 a total of 102 states out of UN's 179 members of the General Assembly condemned Sudan's human rights record. Only six countries voted for Sudan and the list included Libya, Iraq, Syria, Iran, Burma and Cuba. Needless to say they were in the same boat. Because of its abysmal human rights record, the UN Human Rights Commission appointed Casper Biro as a special human rights rapporteur as early as 1993, to investigate human rights violations in the country.

Re-establish the state in Sudan again?

The Salvation-NIF regime came up with an idea of rebuilding the state again, with the centre of power being the party, not an individual. After suppressing the opposition and controlling the state organs the NIF moved to effect change its way.

A ten-year comprehensive strategy to remodel the whole country and its society was worked out. A centrepiece to effect change in accordance with the regime's plan was the creation of the Ministry of Social Planning, which was established first in 1993 and was entrusted to Ali Osman Muhammad Taha, deputy NIF leader, the main civilian force behind the coup. The size of the new ministry, its responsibilities and the man put in charge of it indicate intentions to break new grounds. It was an enlarged ministry including five junior portfolios covering areas of social welfare, youth, sports, religious endowments, *zakat*, and so on, as if it were a mini-cabinet.

The ministry was intended to effect the total change perceived by the regime and thus it was literally a mini-government, handling many activities, and it was the sole reference for social work in Sudan, or a way to bypass inherited systems be they sectarian or tribal. It spoke of highlighting religious values with clear reference to Islam only, not other religions whether they were Christian or African traditional beliefs. The ministry's plan for 1992–2002 was split into two phases: the first from 1992 to 1994 was designed to build and set up institutions of the federal system and streamline legal and application issues; the second from 1995 to 1999 aimed at redistribution of power and wealth.

At the macro level, the regime's ambitious agenda induced it to adopt grand plans to effect social and political change according to its view. As early as 1993, the regime issued what was called the comprehensive Islamic Call, with the objective of Islamic indoctrination in accordance with NIF perceptions. The scheme sought to impose Islam on non-Muslims and wage *jihad* against those opposing the call be they Muslims or non-Muslims on the one hand, while pursuing a socioeconomic and political programme favouring Muslims in the south and NIF members and sympathizers in the north.

After years of implementing the new plan, the 1999 Sudanese Strategic Report, published by the official Centre for Strategic Studies, found that the ministry had adopted targets that lacked specifics and could not be measured or shown how they would be achieved.[60] There was a lot of rhetoric and no clear goals to be implemented. It also lacked being comprehensive and avoided serious issues like the aftermath of the civil war and its implications for the south and north, and the implications of oil discovery and export for the socioeconomic set up. It is yet another proof of the difficulty of putting a multi-faceted diversified society into one format.

However, while the regime's attempt to effect change along totalitarian lines seemed to have failed, a number of institutions and policies created during the past decade will have their impact on the country's future regardless of what happens to the regime. High on the list is the implementation of federalism, which was raised first by southern politicians on the eve of independence as a way to guarantee the country's unity and peaceful coexistence. The Salvation regime went ahead to

implement federalism in 1992, basically as a security safeguard and a way to claim it had given southerners what they had been calling for for more than four decades. With the implementation of federalism, the regime created for each region its own government and, more important, its military power that would act as an alternative centre even if Khartoum fell to the opposition. At one point the government boasted that it could raise one million armed people.

On the face of it the new federal system succeeded in bringing a measure of power-sharing by creating 26 states, each with its own parliament, governor and government, in addition to tens of provinces and municipalities, but in effect it remained superficial in view of the political hegemony by the ruling NIF over the federal and state structures. Moreover, sharing of wealth and resources proved to be difficult as the system continued to depend on the centre to help the states with the needed resources to carry out their duties; it also became reliant on taxation that became a heavy burden on the population. Nevertheless, federalism has been and continues to be a persistent demand by the political and educated elites in most of the regions that are considered marginalized by the centre, namely the south, west and east. Now that federalism has been instituted – albeit inadequately – reverting to a unitary state looks almost impossible.

Another development was the massive expansion in higher education by the government and at the private sector level. Over 20 new universities were created and spread all over the country with the declared objectives of absorbing more students in higher education, and spreading Arabization throughout the country (especially the south) through the introduction of Arabic as the sole medium of instruction. Though the move was seen as yet another attempt to control the educational system and provide job opportunities for the regime's supporters, the numbers of university students increased from 25,750 in 1990/91 to more than 200,000 in 1999, in addition to 30,000 absorbed in private higher education institutions. Moreover, states were required to allocate 30 per cent of their university seats to students from the same state.

However, the most striking development was the regime's approval to give the southerners the right of self-determination. As part of its effort to corner and dislodge the main rebel movement, the SPLA, the regime opted in 1993 to give a breakaway group its approval for the right of self-determination. The move, which was a bombshell in the Sudanese political arena, had its impact in forcing the SPLA mainstream to include it in its options for a settlement. The principle of self-determination found its way into the resolutions of the opposition NDA of 1995, as well as the Djibouti declaration between the regime and *Umma* party in 1999.

For its part the regime signed the Khartoum Peace Agreement with four small southern rebel groups in April 1997 that included a four-year interim period after which southerners would decide through a referendum between unity and secession. So far the agreement has remained mere paper with those signatories either deserting the government ranks, like Riek Machar who accused the government of lack of seriousness, or revolting against it, like the veteran warlord Karubino Kawanyn Bol who was eventually killed by government forces in 1999.

Yet despite the failures of the Khartoum Agreement, the right of self-determination for the south seems to continue dominating political life and no political force in government or opposition, northern or southern will be able to retract on it.

At another level, and despite its full control of power, the Salvation regime decided in 1998 to issue a permanent constitution and established a 'national' committee for that purpose. Regardless of the debates of those involved and the absence of other political forces, the regime adopted its own version of the constitution, which was remarkable for two points: despite its declaration that *shar'ia* rule was governing the country, the new constitution was silent on the religion of the state and it put Islam as a source for legislation on a par with consensus and tradition.[61] It also made citizenship the base for national rights and responsibilities regardless of religion or race. Also, the constitution, which was passed in a plebiscite and came in effect on 1 July 1998, called for political association instead of a clear-cut multiparty system. Even some Islamist intellectuals sympathetic to the Salvation regime, like the Egyptian writer Fahmy Howeidi, criticized the move.[62]

Ironically enough the experiment was to prove yet again to be premature and that the constitution needed some sort of a consensus to flourish. Only 18 months after coming into effect, the constitution faced its biggest challenge as the result of a palace struggle between President Bashir and the parliament speaker and 'Godfather' of the regime, al-Turabi. The tip of the iceberg was a constitutional amendment proposed to reduce the powers of the president by electing state governors directly and creating a prime minister's post. If passed, amendments would have made Bashir a figurehead without executive powers. The president reacted by dissolving the parliament in December 1999 and later ousted Turabi as the secretary-general of the ruling National Congress Party in May 2000, forcing him to establish his own party, the National Popular Congress.

In fact, the same amendments that al-Turabi and Bashir were fighting over had originally been proposed by the national constitutional committee, which al-Turabi in particular, then speaker of the National Assembly, ignored.[63]

National Democratic Alliance (NDA)

To oppose the NIF regime, the political movement in Sudan resorted to an old tradition of building alliances. History has shown that the effective tool that had been tested before to challenge and uproot military regimes in Sudan was the civil disobedience and political strike organized by trade unions and parties, having first succeeded in toppling Abboud's regime in 1964.

The same scenario was repeated to oust Nimeiri two decades later. However, it usually took a while before all parties would agree to form such a front. Thus the Communist Party first floated the idea of a general strike in 1961 to fight Abboud, but it took three years for such a concept to be fully and finally agreed on. When a charter was signed it took only a matter of days to topple the regime. The same happened with Nimeiri, as the idea of a popular uprising was raised in 1974 to

counter the regime's tactics of getting an infusion of new blood through temporary alliances with one political group or party. It took almost a decade before all agreed to join forces and challenge the military regime as one front, and the charter was finally signed in the early morning of April 1985; just hours before the army announced that it had taken over. The important factor in all these cases was that there was remarkable political movement in the street in the form of trades unions and political parties, which pulled political forces behind it.

Opposition to the third military regime started early, especially as it became clear that the NIF was behind the coup and that high on its agenda was aborting the peace process that took four valuable years to put on track. On 21 October 1989 all the main political forces, trades unions and parties agreed at a meeting in the Kobar central prison in Khartoum north, where all leaders of the main political parties were held, to sign the first draft establishing the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). In the following year the SPLA/M joined the NDA after its views had been accommodated. The SPLA/M joined the London February 1992 accord of the NDA, which referred to using military means to combat the regime as well as fighting campaigns to give the civil war a religious dimension, in a clear reference to the growing attempts by the regime to call for *jihad*.

Interesting enough to note, in that meeting the NDA issued recommendations in the economic field calling for market economy policies that coincided with the liberalization measures declared by the government on the same day, thus both the regime and opposition agreed on how to handle the economy, but they remained ardent adversaries on political and ideological grounds.

However, as is usually the case with diverse, various groups unified by their hatred for a regime, the NDA had a long way to go to unify its vision and means so as to be a credible force to challenge the regime. Nevertheless, the NDA received two boosts as Egypt recognized it following the attempt on the life of President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa in 1995, in addition to the meeting held between the US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and NDA leaders in Kampala in 1997, which indicated US tacit support for the opposition as such. By then the Clinton administration was openly supporting Uganda, Ethiopia and Eritrea against Sudanese threats.

The major threshold in the NDA's movement was its 1995 conference in Asmara, where it took clear decisions on issues such as separating state from religion, with citizenship to be the base for rights and duties, and resorting to military means to change the regime and restructure the NDA by creating a leadership council helped by a secretariat-general. The first of these included leaders or senior figures of political parties headed by Mohamed Osman al-Mirghani of the DUP, while Mubarak al-Mahdi of the *Umma* became secretary-general.

All groups were committed to the use of military force, but it was clear that the only force that counted militarily was the SPLA, given at least its long history in the field. Others started efforts to set up their own armies, but eventually the Legitimate Military Leadership, the DUP and Communist Party dropped the idea, leaving the military presence to the SPLA, estimated to have 20,000–30,000 troops, the Sudan Allied Forces (SAF) 500, the *Umma* 500, Beja Congress 500 and the

New Sudan Brigade 2,000.[64] However, even with this modest presence the need arose for coordination, then setting up joint command, which was entrusted to Garang as a step towards creating a unified military command.

The NDA forces made their first military thrust in early 1997, cutting through the east in two areas: the Kurmuk-Gissan area and Menza bordering Ethiopia. With the regime's inability to dislodge the NDA, the chances were there to cut the Port Sudan–Khartoum highway or to threaten the Roseris dam that provides the capital with a sizeable amount of its electricity supply. In early 2000, the NDA managed to enlarge its military presence in the east by occupying Hmashkoureib, a village renowned for traditional religious education, but the government troops succeeded in retaking it few months later.

Thenceforth, no significant military advances were made by the NDA forces in the eastern or any other front across the country. The main theatre of military confrontation remained the south, the war in which of course preceded the NDA.

The military impotence of the NDA was compounded by its ineptness at the organizational level, as it failed to hold its second general congress for six years, although it was supposed to be held every six months. With the military operations bogged down and ineffective political activity inside the country, the NDA started to be a source of frustration even for its supporters.

In these circumstances, the *Umma* party, whose leader Sadiq al-Mahdi fled Sudan in late 1996, began to express publicly its displeasure with the ineffectiveness of the NDA. The party then started to call for more room for a political solution to Sudan's problems; in addition to calling for a restructuring of the set-up of the NDA. Building on the Egyptian–Libyan initiative, which called for a political settlement of Sudan's problems, the *Umma* party went ahead and signed an agreement between the head of the party al-Sadiq al-Mahdi and the Sudanese president Umar al-Bashir, in Djibouti in November 1999. The deal led eventually to the party freezing its membership in the NDA abroad in March 2000, while maintaining it in the NDA within Sudan. Eventually, and following the NDA second congress in September 2000, the *Umma* left the NDA completely, calling for a new political alliance. The party's leadership then returned to Sudan, including al-Mahdi himself who went back seven months later, ending four years in exile and his party's opposition from abroad.

As for the NDA, or those forces which remained within the Alliance, its second congress did not elaborate much on the military situation. Instead the meeting gave priority to the political solution. That was how Eritrea succeeded in organizing the first ever meeting between Umar al-Bashir and Muhammad Osman al-Mirghani, the DUP leader and chairman of the NDA, in Asmara in late September 2000.

For all practical purposes the military option seems to have been scrapped for the NDA except for the SPLA, which had been engaged with successive Sudanese governments since 1983. With the widening margin for political movement inside the country, and the regime's improved relations with neighbouring countries, questions arose among observers and the Sudanese public as to what strategic options were left for the NDA, and whether its presence abroad was still useful. Indeed there was a question as to what was left of the NDA itself.

3 Foreign relations

Complex geopolitics and domestic instability

Three factors seem to have influenced Sudan's foreign relations: its geopolitical position, its cultural/ethnic composition and identity, and the choices of its political elite. Throughout Sudan's modern history, these factors played important roles in shaping events and developments in the country.

Extending over nearly one million square miles and being the biggest country in Africa in terms of geography, Sudan borders eight countries (clockwise from the north: Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Congo, Central African Republic, Chad and Libya). At least Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya and to some extent Uganda and Chad have used their relations with Sudan to prop up regimes or destabilize them through political parties or population movement. To add to its strategic importance, Eritrea gained its independence from Ethiopia in 1993, with help from Sudan, to bring the country's direct neighbours to nine and the possibility of influencing and being influenced by this new neighbour through the movement of population who were escaping famine and civil strife on both sides of the border.

Sudan also has 309-mile border along the Red Sea, through which passes around 10 per cent of world trade. Across the Red Sea is Saudi Arabia, the world largest oil producer, which sits on one quarter of the world's proven oil reserves. Given the volatility of the region and its strategic importance, the security of the Persian Gulf became tied to Red Sea security especially after oil started to flow through the Red Sea to the European markets.

Another factor that came into play in its foreign relations was the country's cultural and ethnic background. Sudan extends from the desert in the north to the swampy equator in the south, and has its eye fixed on the Middle East while its foot stands on Africa, which led to a split, sometimes heightened, between those who claim to be from Arab stock and those of more African lineage. The way the country defines itself, whether it is Arab or African or Afro-Arab, has political, cultural and diplomatic implications. While it has been attracted to the Middle East with the cultural and political leanings of its ruling elite, those in the south feel they are more marginalized and that their aspirations are not taken into consideration at national level. This identity issue came to grip Sudan's foreign policy with the flare up of the rebellion in southern Sudan, which continued from 1955 until today, with only a brief ten-year period of fragile peace between 1972 and 1983.[1]

The third factor that came into play as far as foreign relations were concerned was the fact that the choices and policy decisions made by the Sudanese political leaders in this field were usually driven by ideological motivation, historical alliances or power considerations. Occasionally, these policies came in response to domestic priorities and pressures, such as economic aid, oil or arms supply, and the demands of the constituencies of the power holders.

Foreign relations in history

Originally, Sudan came onto the world stage because of its strategic position. The country's present borders were initially a product of the invasion by Muhammad Ali Pasha, the viceroy of Egypt, in 1821 who harboured an empire-building dream. Later, the rivalry of European powers to secure areas of influence came into play. Great Britain, more concerned with its domination of Egypt, became nervous when the French made advances in the heart of Africa approaching Sudan. The showdown took place in what came to be known in history as the Fashoda incident in 1899, which was resolved in favour of Britain.

Owing to the unique status of Sudan as an Anglo-Egyptian colony the Governors-General during the Condominium period (1898–1956), were asked to report to the foreign office, not to the department in charge of colonies like others. The arrangement is a further testimony to the fact that Sudan was looked at from the prism of foreign powers' struggle. The Condominium agreement itself, which left vague the question of sovereignty over Sudan, became a source of recurrent dispute between Britain and Egypt throughout the period in question

At another level, the strategic importance of Sudan in relation to Egypt attracted the attention of other players who emerged on the world and regional stages after the Second World War. The United States of America was more concerned that competition between Britain and Egypt might thwart its plans for new defence arrangements in the region. Washington was more concerned with the bigger picture from its own perspective and did not want the ongoing quarrel between the Condominium powers on the question of Sudan to abort its efforts. It pushed London to compromise with Cairo on the issue of Sudan, a move that paved the way to the Self rule Agreement of 1953 that eventually led to the country's independence in 1956.[2] Likewise Israel tried during the brief tenure of its Prime Minister Moshe Sharet (1954–55) to establish contacts with the *Umma* party to cultivate Sudan's unique geographical position and influence Egypt.[3] Later when Sudan became embroiled in the Arab–Israeli conflict, Israel found it expedient to supply arms to southern rebels.[4]

The independent Sudan tried hard to adopt a non-aligned foreign policy, in order to be on better terms with Arab and African countries. As such it attended the 1955 Bandung non-Aligned conference, joined the United Nations in 1956 and the Arab League the same year, and was a founding member of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. But in reality and owing to the sectarian, personal and partisan prejudices, foreign policy was conducted towards the Middle East as a sphere of potential action, with less involvement in African problems of its

neighbours like Ethiopia, Chad and other Nile basin countries. This happened despite the fact that Sudan was a founding member of the OAU.

During the post-independence period, British and Egyptian influence continued through their relationship with the *Ansar* and *Khatmiyya* sects and their political wings, the *Umma* and Unionist parties respectively. While the *Umma* party was more in favour of Sudan throwing in its lot with Britain and the West in general, the NUP advocated a policy of close ties with Egypt.

The first crisis in the foreign relations of the independent Sudan involved no other country than Egypt, which a year earlier had been instrumental in pushing the British away from Sudan and had been regarded in high esteem following the Suez crisis of 1956. The problem, which involved a border dispute over the small village of Halayeb in the far north-eastern Sudan beyond 22 parallel, showed how the government of the day performed its foreign policy and how Sudan's borders with other countries could become a source of tension.

The crisis erupted following the stationing of an Egyptian police force in Halayeb. Egypt was conducting a plebiscite on union with Syria and the presidency of Jamal Abdel Nasser as head of the United Arab Republic and wanted inhabitants of Halayeb to participate. Sudan rejected the move, showed willingness to defend its border and lodged a protest with the UN Security Council. Interestingly enough opposition parties the National Unionist Party (NUP) and Communist Party (SCP) both supported the government stand, which had been ironically undermined by interior minister Sheikh Ali Abdel Rahman, head of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), who had close ties with Cairo.

The crisis was temporarily resolved because Nasser ordered stabilization of the situation by calling off his troops, but it remained a source of tension to erupt again more than 40 years later, when relations deteriorated between Khartoum and Cairo after an Islamist regime took power and became at loggerheads with Egypt. In both cases Halayeb was used as a rallying point for the government of the day to win popular support. Relations with Egypt were, and continue to be a key foreign policy issue with ramifications for domestic politics.

As happened with the Halayeb crisis, political parties in the ruling coalition found themselves divided on another issue, related in a way to Egypt, namely the issue of US aid. Most members of the government of Abdullah Khalil were keen to accept US aid after the US Vice President Richard Nixon visited Sudan in 1957 to encourage countries to accept the Eisenhower Plan. Once again, however, Sheikh Ali Abdel Rahman opposed the plan, mirroring Egypt's position, while some in his party like Mirghani Hamza were in favour.

A third issue of dispute between Sudan and Egypt centred on the Nile waters. Sudanese politicians wanted to renegotiate the 1929 water agreement (then due for renewal), which they believed did not give the country enough water. Sensing Egypt's need to forge ahead with its plans to construct the High Dam, negotiations bogged down as a result of what Egypt saw as exaggerated demands for compensation and water share. The years 1957/58 were quite tense as far as this issue was concerned. Once more Mirghani Hamza appeared as the dominant hard-line figure against Egypt's demands, while at the time his party, the PDP, was more

accommodating. The problem had to await the military coup of Lt General Ibrahim Abbud to be settled finally in the 1959 Nile Water agreement. The new regime regarded the agreement as a way to remove tension in its foreign relations, despite the high political price it paid domestically for that agreement.

In general the Abboud regime managed to secure a sort of balanced foreign policy geared basically to helping economic development. It was the regime that signed and accepted US aid, settled the issue of the Nile waters with Egypt, recognized China and received some help from the Soviet Union. Demonstrating its improved foreign relations the Sudan at the time was able to host such prominent world leaders as Chou En-Lai of China, Jamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt and Leonid Breznev of the Soviet Union, in addition to Haile Selassie of Ethiopia and Marshal Joseph Tito of Yugoslavia.

The second parliamentary regime (1965–69) was weak in its foreign ventures, as diplomatic relations became an arena for partisan politics. Part of the problem was that the parties which dominated the successive coalition governments – the NUP and *Umma* – did not always see eye to eye as far as foreign policy priorities were concerned. Another part was the absence of a clear division of roles within the state organs. For example, the president of the Supreme Council, or head of state, supposedly a ceremonial post, started to take an active role in carrying out executive duties without being accountable to parliament.

However, the exception was the convening in Khartoum of the Arab summit in August 1967 following the Six Day War between the Arabs and Israel. Because it kept distance from competing different camps, Sudan was seen as a suitable place to host the summit. The meeting confirmed a tough Arab stance against Israel: no recognition, no negotiation and no peace with Israel. On the other hand the summit managed to restore relations between the radical and conservative Arab regimes, to settle the Yemen crisis, which was the flashpoint between Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and to decide on a fixed financial support for the countries in direct conflict with Israel.

The second military regime of Ja'far Nimeiri (1969–85) seemed to have accorded considerable attention to foreign relations in a number of ways. By and large, three internal developments had their impact on foreign policy during Nimeiri's era: the breakaway from the Communist Party in 1971, the settlement of the southern conflict in the following year, adoption of close ties with Egypt and the Gulf Arab states, and a closer relationship with the West, and the US in particular.

It was Nimeiri's regime that gave the country's foreign policy its African orientation. Following the successful conclusion of the first civil war in 1972, and building on Sudan's high standing as a country able to solve its domestic problems, it was deemed useful to give more attention to its African neighbours by creating joint ministerial committees and delineating borders, a trend that was crowned by Sudan hosting the OAU summit in 1978 and assuming the organization's rotating chairmanship.

Another foreign policy dimension during Nimeiri's regime was its highlighting of economic development. After restoring peace to the south, the country embarked

on an ambitious development plan, calling for marrying together Sudan's natural resources, Arab money and western technology. This development drive led the regime to knock on the doors of faraway China, building on the heritage left by Abbud. China contributed in a number of development projects in Sudan, and in addition it provided the regime with the pretext to continue labelling itself socialist despite its crackdown on communists following the abortive coup of 1971 that implicated the SCP. By 1975, Nimeiri's regime had borrowed some $300 million, 42 per cent of it from Arab countries and the rest from western, eastern and world institutions.

However, a presidential system that concentrated all powers in the hands of one person, and the inability of institutions (political, legislative and executive) to stand on their own feet and play a significant role in running the country, led eventually to the emergence of a more autocratic regime and a one man show domestically and in foreign relations. Eventually the regime's policy became centred on the goal of maintaining Nimeiri in power, particularly during his last years; his craft of diplomacy became the art of dependency. In the face of mounting security concerns and threats from Ethiopia and Libya (both countries harboured Sudanese armed opposition groups on their territories), Nimeiri's regime became more reliant on support from the outside world, particularly the USA.

Sudan's orientation at the time coincided with US strategic considerations in the region. In the early 1980s, during the Reagan administration and at the height of the Cold War, Sudan was seen as a strategic ally of the US to the extent that it became the top recipient of US aid in Africa south of the Sahara. Civil aid continued to climb, reaching $400 million, plus $350 million in military aid by 1985, when Nimeiri fell. At that time Sudan was seen as bulwark against Soviet clients, and a good supporter of Egypt and its new found peace with Israel. But Nimeiri's strong ties with the US and Egypt, and its growing anti-Soviet stance led to further mistrust by its neighbours, both Arabs and non-Arabs, notably Libya and Ethiopia. The outbreak of civil war again in southern Sudan in 1983 added more complications in Sudan's foreign relations. The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) managed to win the support of Nimeiri's enemies, namely Ethiopia and Libya, who found in the new rebels an effective way to destabilize the regime in Sudan.

However, Nimeiri's last days in power caused much embarrassment for his allies. The imposition of Islamic *shar'ia* law meant two things: first, it was a deadly blow to the concept of unity in diversity which had restored peace to Sudan; as a result civil war was bound to escalate. Second, and more importantly, Sudan's human rights record started to deteriorate, which made Washington's effort to support the regime more difficult. After all, the regime was depending solely on the State Department for its survival politically and financially, yet by 1985 the regime had become a clear liability to the US.

Against this background of increasing isolation of Nimeiri's regime, the IMF imposed on Sudan a package of austerity measures in order to stabilize its economy, a move that was repeatedly delayed as a result of continuous US support for the Sudanese government. It was this final round of austerity measures that brought the Sudanese people out on the streets in April 1985, a move that led many

observers to question the US handling of Nimeiri and whether it was a miscalculation, or a deliberate move to topple the regime.

With the fall of Nimeiri in 1985, and the reduction of tension in the Cold War, the country's strategic importance declined. Nevertheless, the US was quick to establish a rapport with the new transitional government after 1985 and consequently with Sadiq al-Mahdi, who became as dependent on US food aid as the country had been under Nimeiri.

Though the post-Nimeiri governments tried to adopt a more balanced foreign policy, the failure to settle the issue of the *shar'ia* law, continuation of the civil war which resulted in waves of refugees pouring into neighbouring countries, deteriorating economic conditions, and a resurgence of partisan squabbles, all had a negative impact on the country's foreign relations. Moreover, due to famine and the increasing role of international NGOs and foreign agencies and the growing numbers of refugees in and out of Sudan, foreign players influenced the country's affairs in a way that may not have been seen before.

However, with the fall of Nimeiri's regime, and the growing signs of a new era on détente, Sudan's strategic significance was in decline. This new reality was felt by Nimeiri's successors mainly in the area of defence and security. With the collapse of Nimeiri the country's two close allies, the United States and Egypt, were no longer there to provide help.[5]

The transitional government led by General Abdel Rahman Suwar El-Dahab was quick to discover that its call for a non-aligned foreign policy was not going to help it much, though it enjoyed a brief honeymoon. The US provided a $40 million loan, continued its humanitarian aid and cancelled the proposed military manoeuvres with Sudan. Saudi Arabia for its part provided 730,000 barrels of oil for each of the next three months and lifted its restriction on development project funding.

The new regime felt the pressure of the growing need for arms, oil and hard currency to enable it to continue its fight against the rebels. Attempts to paint John Garang, the rebel leader, as a Soviet stooge targeting Arabism and Islam relations was not successful. But a significant change appeared when Libyan leader Colonel Mu'amar Gaddafi became the first foreign leader to visit Sudan, where he announced stopping military aid to the southern rebel SPLA, criticized multiparty democracy and threatened that Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak would meet the fate of Nimeiri. The only pragmatic option left for Suwar El-Dahab's government was to head for closer links with Libya. In July 1985 a military pact was signed by the defence minister General Osman Abdullah that committed Libya to train personnel and provide transport, air and naval facilities to Sudan. In return Gaddafi wanted open hostility towards Egypt and later to use Sudanese soil as a launch pad against Chad.[6]

Al-Mahdi's government, which inherited this situation, had in fact opted for stronger ties with the Libyan regime given the long stay of Sadiq and his followers in Libya during their opposition years. On the other hand, with growing regional and international backing for the SPLA, the Sudanese army felt it was becoming exposed. A blow came when the SPLA took Kurmuk, a northern city bordering

Ethiopia, in 1987. The government and people in the North felt the war was no longer being waged in the far away south and that the north itself was being threatened. Mobilization campaigns were waged and Iraq entered the scene as an arms supplier to Sudan.

The Iraqi move had its implications as it sent arms, personnel and instructors whose hidden agenda was also to look for potential recruits to the *Ba'ath* party from among the Sudanese officers.[7]

The situation was complicated more by partisan politics and the connection of some parties with certain countries that dated back to their opposition days. While the *Umma* party maintained close relations with Libya, the DUP continued to cultivate its long-standing relationship with Egypt. Because of those relationships, Sudan suffered from spillover of the Libyan–Chadian conflict. Likewise, an Egyptian–Libyan fight for influence found its way into the domestic arena.

Al-Mahdi maintained a cold relationship with Egypt that ended up as open hostility in his last days in power. He started by raising the issue that Egypt should extradite Nimeiri to be tried in Sudan, and though he made many foreign trips abroad, he scoffed at visiting Cairo. Later on he accused Egypt of using Nimeiri to destabilize his regime. Finally and after nine months in power, al-Mahdi visited Cairo, using the occasion to scrap the integration charter which had organized bilateral relations between the two countries and replacing it with a 'Brotherhood Charter' that did not carry much substance.

Relations with the US continued to deteriorate, reflecting on one hand the drop in strategic importance of the country and on the other the general decrease in US aid to Africa. Sudan's share of military and economic aid fell from close to $500 million in 1985 to $125 million in 1986 and merely $70 million in 1987.

This period also witnessed the worst performance of partisan politics in foreign affairs. To settle the quarrel between parties, the DUP representative and Chairman of State Council Ahmad al-Mirghani was entrusted with the task of representing the country at Arab summits, while al-Mahdi took it upon himself to attend OAU meetings.

Al-Mahdi's Islamic orientation led him to flirt with Iran at the time it was engaged in a bloody war with Iraq, thus resulting in cold shoulders from Iraq and the Gulf states against him. At one point it took a trip by DUP leader Mohamed Osman al-Mirghani, who did not have any official capacity, to restore relations to some kind of normalcy.

In sum, the third parliamentary period witnessed an aimless foreign policy that led in the end to the anger of Egypt, the Gulf States and the United States, in addition to Ethiopia, which continued to support the SPLA despite the collapse of Nimeiri's regime. Accordingly, al-Mahdi found himself relying more and more on Libya, which by February 1988 was providing more than half of the military aid received by Khartoum.[8]

Meanwhile, the economic situation continued to worsen and by June 1989, foreign debt exceeded $14 billion and the last budget to be released by the government on the eve of its overthrow was anticipating $3 billion deficit with no foreign help on the horizon.

NIF-Salvation: Ideology and pragmatism

The experience of the third military regime in the area of foreign relations showed how that sphere could be affected by the behaviour of the government of the day, how ideology could supersede and sometimes replace the country's direct interest and how after a heavy price being paid, ideology could give way to pragmatism.

When the NIF took power in the 1989 coup, Sudan's foreign relations from the previous parliamentary regime had become so bad that the new leaders were quickly recognized by Egypt, Arab and the African states. Most important the Bush administration, at the request of Egypt, persuaded its western allies to recognize the new regime in Sudan, and in a significant step it delayed for six months implementing a US law that called for the severing of economic aid to a military regime that had ousted an elected government.[9] The irony was that both Egyptian and US interests were to suffer dearly at the hands of the regime they had helped in the beginning, at least to get recognition at regional and international levels.

A different wind started to blow when Egypt discovered that it had inadvertently helped a radical Islamist group to ascend to power. Likewise the US became worried when, following the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Sudan emerged against the international coalition, not only siding with Iraq but also helping to mobilize public opinion against the presence of foreign troops in the holy lands of Saudi Arabia through its links with the other Islamist groups in the region.

Sudan was not fervently pro the *Ba'athist* regime in Iraq, but was partially repaying back Iraq's help in the military field to fight its war in the south. On the other hand it was hoping that Iraq might create new factors that the rest of the world led by the US would be forced to deal with in order to guard western interests, mainly in oil, or that the hurricane which had hit the Arab world would result in a change of guard in governments in the region as had the loss of Palestine more than four decades earlier. If that scenario were to happen, it would have opened the way for a new Arab order and those most likely to benefit from the change were the Islamist movements, given their organization, rising popularity and emergence as the main opposition force in the Arab world.

With such a stand, the regime out of purely ideological calculations was sacrificing the interests of Sudan in terms of its long history of economic aid from the Gulf Arab states and more importantly was putting at risk the interests of hundreds of thousands of Sudanese working as expatriates in the GCC states. It was the first time in the history of Sudan that Sudanese communities abroad were pushed to denounce publicly their country's foreign policy.[10]

The regime was soon to find itself in splendid isolation. It had to turn to Libya and Iran for help in providing arms and oil. Earlier Sudan had signed an integration charter with Libya in March 1990; Idris Debe, leader of a rebel faction in Chad and a Libyan ally launched his march against Hussein Habre from Darfur and took over Chad during the same year.

On the other hand, and in tune with its plans as an Islamic state, the regime opened the way for militant Islam waging a holy war against regimes in the region, mainly in Egypt and Algeria. Thus representatives of organizations such as *Hamas*,

Hizbullah and even the shadowy Abu Nidal group, found for themselves a haven in Sudan. The US became worried about this turn of events in Sudan as it opened its doors to Muslims and Arabs from all over the world, and became a haven for opposition radical groups that were regarded as 'terrorists' by the US government. As such Sudan became branded by the latter as a hotbed of radical Islam and terrorism.

The symbol of all that became the Popular Arab and Islamic Congress (PAIC), set up as an umbrella group to coordinate regional movements of Islamist factions and help bring about changes of regimes following the success in Ethiopia and Eritrea against Mengistu. The PAIC had an ambitious plan to replace the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Congress, with a more active, popular body headed by Hassan Turabi, the main ideological force behind the regime, and included radical Islamic figures and Arab Nationalists (like George Habash and Naef Hawatmah, the two radical Palestinian leaders). The PAIC fell in the centre of areas that Sudan needed to re-orient in order to dismiss the accusation by the US administration that it was harbouring terrorists. According to a *Washington Post* story, a CIA document was handed to Major General (rtd) al-Fatih Erwa, state minister at the defence ministry in March 1996 that listed six items for the Sudan government to act on. They included, 're-orient the PAIC away from its present role (as) a forum of meeting of various Islamic extremist groups engaged in terrorism'.[11]

In 1993 the US added Sudan to its list of countries supporting terrorism. The US move followed a declaration by the State Department that it had evidence implicating a Sudanese diplomat working at the UN for playing a role in the plot to bomb the World Trade Center and other targets in New York in August 1993.

Meanwhile diplomatic relations were at best cool with most Arab and African countries. Kuwait closed its embassy in Khartoum, and Saudi Arabia refused, in effect, to receive any new ambassador for three years. In Africa the scene was no different and both Eritrea and Uganda severed their relations with Sudan, accusing it of meddling in their domestic affairs. In effect the regime was not only isolated, but it was in fact under attack diplomatically and militarily through an alliance that included Egypt, Uganda, Ethiopia and Eritrea with US support.

At the time, Sudan was also taken to task on its human rights record as the UN Commission on Human Rights appointed a special rapporteur for Sudan, Casper Biro, as early as 1992; subsequently Sudan received repeated condemnations from the world body on grounds of its poor human rights record.

Sudan therefore became a pariah state both regionally and internationally, cultivating tense relations with all regional and international powers with interests in the country. The peak moment in Sudan's foreign relations was the attempt on the life of Hosni Mubarak who was on his way to attend the OAU summit in Addis Ababa in June 1995. The Sudanese regime was suspected of being behind the plot; Egypt and Ethiopia lodged a complaint to the UN Security Council, which imposed diplomatic penalties under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter that called for denying Sudanese officials entry visas, not holding regional or international conferences

in Sudan and reducing Sudanese diplomatic presence in member countries. The resolution was passed by 13 votes, while both Russia and China abstained.

The stage seemed set for the US and its regional allies in North and East Africa to declare open war on Sudan. Thus the US decided in 1996 to help the trio of Uganda, Eritrea and Ethiopia against threats from Sudan. It provided the three countries with $20 million worth of military equipment that included radios, uniforms and tents. It was believed that most of this equipment would end up in the hands of SPLA.[12] Furthermore, in a symbolic move the serving US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright met leaders of the NDA in Kampala in December 1997 as a way of expressing moral support and calling for a change of regime in Sudan through elections, negotiations or military means. Nothing however, came out of that meeting, though it was considered a tacit recognition of the NDA. The government used the meeting to drum up domestic support, demonize the NDA and crack down on internal opposition.

A year later, Washington concluded that the Saudi dissident Osama Bin Laden, who had lived in Sudan for five years from 1991 to 1996, had masterminded the bomb attacks against its two embassies in Nairobi and Dar Es-Salam in August 1998. In retaliation the US administration ordered a cruise missile attack against a pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum, that allegedly belonged to Bin Laden and was manufacturing chemicals. The attack destroyed the plant, simultaneously with another hit against Bin Laden in Afghanistan. Though a lot of question marks were raised about the validity and viability of the attack, it showed how US–Sudanese relations had deteriorated in one decade from complete friendship and dependence to open hostility.

By this time the civil war had intensified with the inclusion of the NDA as a military force that had been attracting regional powers. It peaked at the beginning of 1997, when NDA forces waged an assault from the eastern front with the aim of toppling the regime. The intensification of the civil war led on the other hand to strengthening of the foreign element in Sudanese politics.

Civil war and foreign relations

Barely two months after taking power the new NIF regime started talks with the SPLA through Ethiopian mediation in August 1989 in Addis Ababa, but there was no breakthrough because the two sides diverged on every issue. The government went back home to convene the National Dialogue Conference in the absence of the SPLA and other political parties to build its vision for peace as a result of an internal dialogue, but having such a conference without the other political forces made it a futile exercise.

Four months later, the government of Sudan accepted a mediation effort from former US president Jimmy Carter, who brokered a meeting between the two sides in Nairobi in December 1989. The talks did not make any headway as they collapsed on the insistence of Khartoum on the issue of *shar'ia*. The two attempts clarified the positions of the two parties and showed how widely they were separated.

In March 1990, the head of the regime Omar al-Bashir called on the US to intervene. The reading of the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs at the time, Herman Cohen, was that the government was in retreat, the SPLA on the march everywhere and what was needed was a face-saving measure to extricate the government from the military quagmire. Somehow, his intelligence indicated that the NIF government would not mind if the South seceded.

Accordingly he devised a plan whereby government troops pulled north of 11 parallel with a commitment from the SPLA not to enter Juba, the capital of the south, and withdraw some distance from besieged cities and garrisons in the south. These measures were to be followed by an internationally supervised cease-fire and a national constitutional conference. The plan, however, failed to win the blessing of the government. Five months later, Iraq invaded Kuwait; the US rushed to help and formed an international coalition. Sudan emerged on the wrong side, supporting Saddam Hussein, and the US dropped its peace efforts.

Two major developments were to follow. The first was the recognition by the Sudan government of the right for self-determination for the south. The idea appeared in a secret meeting between Ali al-Hajj, the government representative, and Lam Akol, who became a leading figure in what subsequently became known as the SPLA-Nasir faction, that was held in Frankfurt, Germany in January 1992.[13] Thenceforth the principle of self-determination became a constant theme in Sudanese politics and mediations. The other development was the bid by Sudan to engage the OAU in a search for peace, inviting Nigerian President Ibrahim Babingida to play a role. He called on warring factions to meet in the Nigerian capital Abuja in May 1992.

At the time the SPLA was weakened by splits and the military drive by the government was at a high level. The issue of separation of state from religion proved to be a sticking point as the government of Sudan would not compromise on it, which showed how the new regime was committed to its theocratic goals at the expense of reaching a settlement to the civil war. However, one result was that before the end of the first round of talks in Abuja, the two rebel groups unified their positions, both calling for the right of self-determination for the south; both factions also agreed to adopt a common approach to interim arrangements.

Yet the government – having an upper hand in the military field – was not ready to budge and allow for some confidence building measures like a cease-fire to create a better negotiating atmosphere. Talks broke down despite agreement on generalities that Sudan is a multi-faceted country in every aspect, that the conflict had to be solved through peaceful means and to work towards interim arrangements.

It took a foreign intervention from the Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni in February 1993 to arrange a meeting between Ali al-Hajj, a leading NIF figure, and Garang to agree to resume Abuja talks.

The Abuja talks, which came to be known as Abuja II, resumed from 26 April to 17 May. The positions of the two parties were still miles apart. By then the government was thinking of a final military victory and that its efforts for peace from within could be fruitful, an impression supported by the increased defections from Garang's camp. As for the SPLA leaders, they thought it better to bear

the brunt, rather than repeat the error of the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972 when they signed up for a bad peace. Like the first round, Abuja II failed to make any progress.

Following the collapse of Abuja II, the notable effort in search for peace in Sudan was that of the Intergovernmental Authority for Desertification and Development (IGAD), which came to dominate the horizon for years to come. The IGAD was originally established in1985 by six countries: Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda and Djibouti. The main aim for the group was to coordinate its activities to counter the drought and desertification that had hit the region since the late 1970s.

After the independence of Eritrea in 1993, it joined IGAD as a seventh member and with that and restoring stability to Uganda, the presidents of IGAD decided to change its name to Intergovernmental Authority for Development, as development alone involves dealing with both issues of the environment and utilizing natural resources. More importantly they also decided to deal with political problems since there was no way of tackling development issues in the absence of political stability.

In a meeting of IGAD September 1993, Sudan requested the group to intervene and help in searching for a peace settlement to its civil war. At the time the Sudan government thought it had two friendly regimes in Ethiopia and Eritrea; Kenya, which held the presidency of IGAD, could be neutralized and Uganda overcome.

A four-member committee headed by the Kenyan president Daniel Arop Moi and composed of the presidents of Ethiopia, Uganda and Eritrea started to look into the Sudan problem. All were regarded as friends of the regime at the time and together they took in more than 500,000 refugees from Sudan. As such they had an interest in restoring peace to the country. The IGAD committee talked to both sides in the conflict, decided on the nature of the problem and then issued what came to be known as a Declaration of Principles (DoP).

The recommendations pointed out that the first preference was for a united Sudan. And to achieve that in view of the continuing civil war, Sudan had to be a secular, democratic country respecting different cultures and religions. In the absence of that, the south should be given the right of self-determination.

The DoP was breaking new ground in many ways. For the first time, mediators in the Sudan conflict went beyond arranging just a meeting for the two parties to sit at the negotiating table. They went as far as to suggest discussing substantive issues and making proposals. These proposals included for the first time in the history of initiatives taken by African states the right of self-determination, a taboo before as OAU member countries agreed to respect inherited colonial borders. The first rebellion in Sudan of 1955 to 1972 had made little headway with its call for secession. The change in the world scene after the end of the Cold War, the prominence of the principle of the right of self-determination, and the emergence of Eritrea may also have played a role in such a shift. It became a precedent for whoever wanted to deal with the Sudan conflict to come up with ideas addressing the core issues.

The regime, however, officially refused the DoP in September 1994, declaring that its mission was to spread Islam throughout the whole of Africa, not only in southern Sudan. Such a statement was made in a meeting attended by Dr Ghazi Salah El-Din Attabani, then State Minister for Foreign Affairs, to the foreign ministers of the four countries.[14]

It took the regime three more years to accept the DoP. By then it had become clear that all attempts to solve the problem by military means had failed and with the growing isolation, it needed to buy time. Thus Khartoum signed what it called the 'Peace from Within' initiative with six dissident groups as a way to put pressure on the SPLA. The document spoke of the right of self-determination for the south to be exercised after an interim period of four years. After that the IGAD was engrossed in a series of negotiations between the government and the SPLA, trying to broker peace.

The IGAD effort was so futile that it produced nothing in years of negotiations. More important, it led among other things to divisions within the NDA. By the very nature of its composition, the IGAD framework restricted negotiations to the government and SPLA, so as a result it was seen as dealing with the southern issue only. The northern parties in the NDA tried their best to be incorporated, but to no avail. For its part the NDA – though seeking the removal of the regime – endorsed in its Asmara Declaration of June 1995, more or less the IGAD principles.

Notwithstanding this failure, one of the IGAD countries, Djibouti, which was hosting an IGAD meeting, played a role in bringing the *Umma* party and the government together to sign the Homeland Declaration (*Nida' al-Watan*) in November 1999 that eventually led to *Umma* returning to Sudan to work from within and breaking away from the NDA.

At another level, with the growing feeling that the IGAD was no longer a suitable forum to solve Sudan's problems and the need felt by northern parties to include the Arabs in the mediation efforts, an invitation by Libya in the summer of 1999 for all NDA factions later developed into a joint Libyan–Egyptian Joint Initiative (LEJI). That initiative was formally tabled before the NDA, and included the SPLA, the government and the *Umma* party, which had suspended its membership of the NDA in March 2000.

The LEJI nine-point plan was finally delivered to all factions in June 2001, two years after its official launch. It called for a unitary Sudan, with recognition of its ethnic, cultural and religious diversity, and a peaceful transfer of power, but the main missing factor was the right of the south for self-determination and a clear-cut separation between state and religion. Some even questioned the initiators' credentials as far as commitment to democracy and human rights was concerned.

The SPLA expressed reservations about these omissions and against having more than one platform. It saw the new peace initiative as allowing the government to 'shop around' between different initiatives without committing itself to any. Yet despite their reservations both the NDA and the government found it difficult to reject the LEJI given their reliance on both countries for some support. This case was yet another example of foreign influence on Sudanese politics.

This brief survey of peace efforts shows clearly how the war issue has affected the country's foreign relations, inviting mediations that were aborted by intransigence of domestic players, who held the view that they could settle the score in their favour.

As early as 1996 it became clear that such policy of Islamism International was costing the regime dearly. Under combined pressures, the government started to change, it rescinded free visa access to foreigners, expelled Bin Laden and started a slow and long process of normalizing relation with its Arab and African neighbours as well as the European countries.

In four years it seemed to have made headway in that endeavour, restoring relations with Kuwait, Ethiopia, Eritrea and to some extent Uganda. Even Egypt and Ethiopia, who were instrumental in taking Sudan to be sanctioned by the UN, wrote to the Security Council in 2000 calling for the lifting of those sanctions. A more concrete manifestation of the change could be seen in Arab funds from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Abu Dhabi committing $780 million to the Merowe dam, 350 miles north of Khartoum, one of the major infrastructure projects that was hoped would make a breakthrough in power generation. However, the only country that seemed to be unimpressed with these changes was the US Clinton administration.

A combination of the ability to survive outside pressure and sidelining Turabi in a power struggle, led the regime to open a new chapter. The peak of this tide came when the UN Security Council decided on 28 September 2001 to lift the sanctions imposed on Sudan in January 1996, following its accusation that it harboured three of those accused of plotting against Egyptian President Mubarak. The way the new resolution was arrived at shows how Sudan's foreign relations had improved.

The draft resolution was sponsored by eight developing countries including Tunisia, which in the early years of the Salvation regime had accused the latter of harbouring Tunisian Islamist dissidents and their leader Rashid al-Ghanoushi, who was given a Sudanese diplomatic passport. The Security Council received a messages from South Africa on behalf of the Non-Aligned group, from Algeria on behalf of the Arab group, and from Gabon on behalf of the African group supporting lifting sanctions. More important it received letters from the two most concerned parties – Egypt, whose president's life came under attack and Ethiopia, on whose land the attack took place. The two countries wrote to the council as early as June 2000 requesting lifting of sanctions.

Sudan had already signed 12 treaties that dealt with terrorism. The decision was passed 14–0 because the US decided to abstain (not veto), thought to be for reasons to do with the fact that Sudan was still on its list of countries that support terrorism. The UN decision was originally scheduled to take to place on 13 September, according to Jean-David Levitt, French Ambassador to the UN, who took the council's presidency for September 2001.[15] However the 11 September attacks, which shocked Washington and the whole world, led eventually to delays in discussing the issue.

The attacks were a chance to improve the Sudanese–US dialogue that had started at the security level some 15 months earlier. American officials were apparently

impressed by the cooperation they received from Sudan. And from Secretary of State Colin Powell down, there was praise all round for Sudan's cooperation to fight terrorism. Given its old association with Bin Laden and its harbouring of a number of Arab Afghans, Sudan seemed to have a lot to offer the Americans, who were eager and quite weak in the area of human intelligence.

According to press reports, 11 September was a landmark in cooperation, 'before 11 September, we may have given them a C+ in counter terrorism, but now they are close to getting an A', a US official following negotiations was quoted as saying.[16] Other reports related that Sudan handed over files, photos, databases, and so on to the United States.

In fact Sudan's willingness to cooperate dates from years back, when the then director of Sudan external intelligence Qutbi al-Mahdi approached the FBI through an intermediary offering to hand over one of the suspects in the blast that rocked the two US embassies in Nairobi and Dar Es Salam, but the anti-Sudan team then at the State Department, led by Albright and Susan Rice, head of the African desk, blocked the move and refused to permit the FBI team to travel to Sudan.

It was not the first incident where the Clinton administration rebuffed efforts to mend relations between the two countries. According to the *Washington Post*, the Clinton administration failed to grasp an offer to have Bin Laden handed over as early as 1996.[17] Citing mistrust, lack of an American indictment against Bin Laden at the time and the refusal of the Saudis to take him back, Sudan had no option but to allow Bin Laden to go to Afghanistan. The *Post* quoted a former CIA official as saying that if the offer had been taken up, the 11 September attacks on New York and Washington could have been avoided.

The aftermath of the attacks saw the first meeting at the political level between Sudan and the US. Sudan's foreign minister Mustafa Osman Isma'il went to London towards the end of September, heading a security team to meet with Walter Kansteiner, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. The significance of the move is that it opened a direct channel of contacts between Khartoum and Washington. For quite some time, Sudan had depended on Egypt and Saudi Arabia to provide a window on its relations with the United States.

It was the first meeting of a political nature between the Bush administration and Sudan and probably the first in three years since bilateral relations had reached their lowest ebb in 1998 and the attack on *Al-Shifa* pharmaceutical plant on the assumption of its association with Bin Laden. The relative thaw in relations was attributed partly to the change of guard in Washington, as the new Republican administration did not harbour the same scepticism and disgust for the regime in Sudan.

Lifting UN sanctions – with US tacit approval – was merely symbolic as the US unilateral economic sanctions, imposed since 1997, were still in place, in addition to the listing of Sudan as a terrorist state. Rather the resolution may be viewed as a change in attitude, which was reflected in the request of the administration for Congress to postpone discussing the Sudan Peace Act. Originally passed in the House of Representatives in June 2001 by a huge majority of 422–2, the Act provided for imposing restrictions on foreign companies doing business in

Sudan to tap the US capital market in addition to approving $10 million aid to the NDA.[18]

Congress was working on a more watered down version, that did not include the clause on foreign companies. However, both houses passed the act in October 2002, and it was immediately signed by President George Bush. This gave the administration a period of six months before reporting back to Congress to tell it whether the government or the SPLA was not negotiating in good faith. Accordingly a set of punishments would ensue.

In early September 2001, the US administration appointed a new presidential envoy, former Senator John Danforth, to help restore peace in the country. It was not the first time the US had appointed envoys. The Clinton administration had two envoys: the diplomat Melissa Wells and former Senator Harry Johnston. The first resigned her job for health reasons, while the second arrived during the last days of the administration, which did not allow him time to make any headway. However, up to then the situation was not ready to warrant presidential intervention as neither party was prepared to make tough choices, besides which the Clinton administration was adopting a negative attitude in its outlook to the regime in Sudan, a situation that curtailed its ability to engage positively to make progress.

Danforth managed to make a breakthrough by getting both the government and the SPLA to sign the Nuba Mountains ceasefire agreement, which paved the way for a stronger American mediating role in pushing the IGAD with the help of Britain and Norway.

In July 2002 at Machakos, Kenya, the two sides signed a framework agreement on two divisive issues of the relationship between state and religion and the right to self-determination. It was the first ever comprehensive agreement between the two sides with international backing, and raised hopes of a quick end to Africa's longest running civil war.

In April 2003, President Bush notified the Congress that the two sides were negotiating in good faith and that it was for the United States to continue its involvement not only to conclude a deal, but more importantly to guarantee its implementation. Extra American pressure was expected to be brought to bear on both parties in order to achieve that end.

The ability of the Salvation regime to restore its diplomatic presence in the Arab world and Africa came at the expense of the NDA. The outbreak of the Ethiopian–Eritrean war in the summer of 1998 led to a squeeze on the NDA and realignment of alliances in the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia started looking for new friends and Sudan was providing an outlet for the new landlocked country (following the independence of Eritrea all the Red Sea outlets became Eritrean territory).

Part of the change in Sudan's image and its standing in the world stage was a result of its new-found oil wealth. Sudan joined the club of oil exporters in the summer of 1999. That helped on one hand to overcome its needs for oil products that had affected its foreign relations, and more important and for the first time in its history, Sudan started to acquire a significance of its own and not just due to its strategic location. With plans to export oil to Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda, its

regional politics were poised for a change. Condoning this shift, Sudan was invited to attend the OPEC ordinary meeting as an observer in September 2001.

The Salvation-NIF regime, which started as a radical Islamic group, out of place with others in the region, went a long way and paid a heavy price for experimenting with its own brand of fundamentalism. Ultimately real politics prevailed.

The Salvation-NIF era saw also a new development that may have its impact in Sudan's future relations in the region, namely the Nile waters. Sharing the Nile waters continued to be a sensitive issue for historical and political reasons as both Sudan and Egypt depend on its water for their well-being, and this has long been a source of tension in Sudan–Egyptian relations with reflection on the domestic arena. It was among the factors that led to the first coup of 1958. However, Egypt and Sudan concluded their 1959 agreement in the absence of other countries, a factor which made it a constant source of tension in relations with other Nile Basin countries, especially Ethiopia.

The following years saw small steps and continuous negotiations between the ten countries through which the Nile and its tributaries pass from the heart of Africa to the Mediterranean. In July 2001 they came to agree on what is called Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), with the aim of sharing the benefits of the Nile and enhancing the level of political and technical cooperation. The NBI included Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda and Congo, with Eritrean membership pending. They agreed to launch seven feasibility studies backed by a $140 million grant and develop a parallel legal framework to manage shared water, that will eventually end up with loans worth $3 billion to finance several projects backed by international bodies like the World Bank.

An estimated 1,600 billion cubic metres of water is believed to fall in the Nile's catchment area every year. Yet with Egypt's quota being 55 billion cubic metres and Sudan's 18.5 billion, some 95 per cent of the water is not utilized. Ethiopia seems the first target for damming and irrigation works given its mountainous terrain. Such projects could initially cost up to $800 million, improve water management, increase its availability and reduce silting problems in Sudan and Egypt.

This brief survey of Sudan's foreign relations shows clearly that the country's geographical position has affected its foreign relations as well as its domestic policy. A non-aligned stand serves the country's interest given its nine neighbours and border problems. However, the worsening economic situation, flare-up of civil war and continued need for oil, arms and hard currency, pushed successive governments of the day to adopt certain foreign policy practices many of which did not necessarily serve the overall national interest of Sudan.

Experience has shown that in most cases, foreign policy was not conducted for the sake of the Sudanese people, except for brief periods. It either followed partisan, sectarian trends during parliamentary periods, or swung between ideological and somewhat pragmatic (1969–72 and 1989–present) or Cold War alliances (1978–85). Unless a solution is found to issues pertaining to the establishment of a viable political system in the country that guarantees a peaceful transfer of power, foreign relations will continue to be a factor in the domestic political struggle.

4 The economy

The modern history of the Sudan has been shaped by economic developments as well as by politics. From the outset, economic developments of an international dimension seemed to be moving events in Sudan. The country's present area and borders were a direct result of Turko-Egyptian rule of 1821–85. Mohamed Ali Pasha, the builder of modern Egypt, was keen to have a strong army and good finances to support his ambitious empire-building designs, which was why he looked south to Sudan to collect slaves, enlist them as soldiers and excavate for gold to bolster his coffers.

During the Condominium period 1898–1956, the colonial administration sought to rehabilitate the oldest surviving son of the Mahdi, Abdel Rahman. While recognizing Sayyid Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi as the leader of the *Ansar*, the colonial administration gave him the chance to prosper as part of its effort to engage him in business and steer away from politics. The young Mahdi was given contract work for the government and became a recipient of its subsidies. As early as 1908 he had been granted land on Aba Island on the White Nile, which was further increased by grants over the following years. By 1936 he was earning an annual income of somewhere between £15,000 and £40,000 and employing a force of 4,500 on the island.[1] That wealth was the base for the new *Mahdism*, which allowed it to become a political force to reckon with and has had an impact on Sudan's modern history up to now.

Following the self-rule period 1954–56, those calling for union with Egypt led by Ismail al-Azhari won elections against those calling for the independence of Sudan led by the Mahdi, yet the unionists opted in the end to vote for independence. The shift was attributed mainly to economic reasons as the emerging business and middle class, became afraid of the heavy-handed competition of their Egyptian counterpart in case of unity between the two countries.

Moreover, Sudan's longest serving ruler, Ja'far Nimeiri, who governed the country almost single handed between 1969 and 1985, was finally ousted following his implementation of an austerity programme that led to an increase in prices of basic needs like foodstuff and fuel. The move proved to be catastrophic as it became the direct cause for revolt that eventually toppled his regime.

Despite economic hardships, the regime led by Lt General Omar al-Bashir managed to survive domestic and international isolation and is likely to continue

governing the country in the foreseeable future given its implementation of tough economic liberalization measures, which won it the praise of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and its ability to join the club of oil exporting countries. The former measure relieved the state from the burden of being the main provider of goods and services; the latter provided the country's balance of payments with its first surplus in over two decades and enhanced its creditworthiness.

Salient features of the economy

Agriculture

People are involved mainly in agricultural activity, which was and continues to be the backbone of Sudan's economy. It is the most important economic sector in terms of contribution to both GDP and employment. In 1998 agriculture including livestock and forestry directly accounted for 39.3 per cent of GDP, followed by trade, transport and communication at 27.3 per cent, other services 15.2 per cent, industry and mining 9.2 per cent and construction 8.1 per cent. The sector also provides about 80 per cent of the country's exports and, according to IMF estimates, jobs for about two-thirds of the working population.

However, all in all, the services sector used to provide the bulk of GDP, but since 1981/82 when it peaked at a 57 per cent share, it has continued to decline to around 49 per cent currently and employing 12 per cent of the labor force. Compared with the needs of the country, the quantity and quality of services are not sufficient.

Public spending has remained constant and the freezing of budget as part of the stabilization programme since the late 1970s has resulted in deteriorating working conditions. By 1986, real salaries were 70 per cent lower than in 1976. For these reasons the civil service became apathetic with low motivation, slowdown and absenteeism, which in itself was an added reason for the decline in the services sector.

Sudan has an estimated 200 million feddans of arable land, of which only around 12 per cent are being utilized and only 2 per cent are being irrigated through regular means making use of the Nile and its tributaries. However, the low utilization is attributed to poor productivity and accumulated problems of finance and water availability.

The bulk of the Sudan's land and agricultural activity, however, depend on rainfall. The fact that two thirds of the country's land is desert, semi-desert or swamp has determined the type of agricultural development that is viable.

Administrators and planners have to strike a balance between water, sun and soil to feed the population. Because of this limitation there is mainly one harvest a year as crops must ripen before dehydration sets in. Areas receiving between 400 and 1000 mm annually are classified as low rainfall savannah, which covers most of central Sudan, and these are regarded as having potential for agricultural expansion.

Four sub-agricultural sectors can be identified in Sudan, namely modern irrigated large-scale schemes that include projects like Gezira, Rahad, and Khasm al-Girba;

mechanized rain-fed projects; traditional rain-fed schemes; and animal breeding and livestock.

Traditional rain-fed agriculture provides food requirements for the population as some 75 per cent of the country is engaged in some sort of traditional subsistence farming, this being mainly in central, western and to some extent southern Sudan, where rainfall ranges between 400 and 800 mm annually.

The labour-intensive traditional agricultural sector has a social importance beyond its contribution to production. Small-scale farming is important in the north; and in the south subsistence farming is the only form of agriculture practised at present. However, due to increased pressure of the human and animal populations, coupled with reduced rain volumes since the early 1980s, output started to decline, causing famine such as in the 1983/4 and 1991/2.

The mechanized rain-fed sector is concentrated in the Blue Nile area in towns like Damazin and Gedaref. Activity in this sector dates back to 1944, driven by private enterprises up to the mid-1960s when the total area amounted to 1.8 million feddans. A horizontal expansion ensued mainly in the following decade with the push of the government. The total area in this sector under cultivation amounted to 5.2 million feddans by 1977. Less than two decades later it was estimated that a total of 11.2 m feddans were being farmed under mechanized rain-fed schemes. The expansion led to a food surplus that enabled the export of *durrah* (millet) to Saudi Arabia, but created at the same time environmental problems that reduced soil fertility and increased the prospects of desertification, which was to start happening in the mid-1980s and early 1990s.

In southern Sudan the greater rainfall allows for two planting seasons, the first in April with a harvest in July and the second in July and August with a harvest from November onwards.

Supply of water to the irrigated sector was governed by the Nile Water agreements between Sudan and Egypt. The last of these agreements was concluded in 1959, which granted Sudan 18.5 billion cubic metres of water annually. At present Sudan uses about 14 billion cubic meters of its allocation. The crops grown in the country's main agricultural projects are cotton, sorghum, sugar, wheat, groundnuts and oilseeds.

The Gezira scheme is the country's largest irrigated project and the most important historically and economically, dating back to 1925. It covers an area of 2.1 million feddans (880,000 hectares) between the Blue Nile and White Nile and is regarded as the world's largest irrigated agricultural scheme under single management. More than 100,000 tenant farmers and their families operate the scheme in partnership with the government and Sudan Gezira Board, which provides administration, credit and marketing services. Relations between tenants and management have been difficult as the latter try to circumvent regulations in order to increase their individual returns. Also the government has neglected the upkeep of the scheme, resulting in losses and the build-up of silt in irrigation canals, besides the heavy indebtedness. All of this coupled with a diversification attempt led to a sizeable drop in cotton output.

The second important irrigated scheme is the 300,000-feddan Rahad scheme,

which was inaugurated in 1977 at a cost of $346 million. Rahad receives water from the Roseris dam, and produces an assortment of cotton, groundnuts, fruit and vegetables. Plans call for raising the height of the dam, which would increase water available for irrigation. Then there is the 400,000-feddan New Halfa scheme, which is occupied by the Nubians who were relocated from Halfa to allow Egypt to establish the High Dam. The project receives water from Khashm Al-Girba reservior on the Atbara river, near Kassala.

As an agricultural country, Sudan produces and exports an assortment of products. High on the list used to be cotton, which was traditionally the single most important export crop for the country. Sudan has been the world's largest producer of long stable cotton and a major contributor to the medium stable. But cotton's contribution has decreased remarkably in recent years. In the 1970s, it accounted for an average of 53 per cent of export revenue, but by 1995 this had dropped to 22 per cent. In 1996/7 exports of sesame generated more revenue for Sudan, and in 1999 cotton's share of export revenue dropped below 7.6 per cent, netting only $58 million. This was attributed mainly to a change in strategy as the government pushed for a policy of self-sufficiency in wheat, in addition to production problems.

However, for the 1999/2000 season there were growing signs that cotton is recovering. With some 500,000 feddans being planted, there was a significant rise over planted areas in the previous season; coupled with increased yield per feddan, this was estimated to bring in a remarkable revenue exceeding $100 million. Wheat, which has been grown over the years for political reasons, saw its output peak at 642,000 tonnes in 1997, all used for local consumption.

Sorghum is used for local consumption, but also occupied an important place in exports, and over 90 per cent of the crop is rain-fed. However, with the repetition of droughts, poor marketing and instability in neighboring markets, exports fell and sometimes ceased completely.

Sesame continues to account for some 15 per cent of export revenue, netting $110 million in 1999, which enabled it to retain its position ahead of cotton. Gum Arabic is Sudan's other famous export, used in soft drinks and other products, but its output has continued to decline over the past few years and the country now faces competition from Chad, Senegal and Mali. It netted only some $28 million in 1999.

In addition to agricultural products, Sudan has a growing wealth of diversified livestock. Numbers continued to increase significantly from 20.5 million head of cattle in 1987 for instance to 33.1 million a decade later. The same applies to sheep and goats whose numbers jumped from 19 million and 14 million respectively to 39.8 million and 36 million head for each. In recent years livestock moved to occupy an advanced place in the export portfolios, netting $120 million, or 20.1 per cent of total export revenue in 1998, up from $70 million more than a decade earlier. Thus it came ahead of the four main agricultural products: cotton, sesame, groundnuts and gum Arabic.

However from 1999 onwards, oil entered the scene to change the composition of the country's exports, contributing 22.8 per cent in export revenue, followed

by sesame at 14.5 per cent. In due course, the share of oil in exports is expected to jump to 62.8 per cent with sesame declining to 7.3 per cent.[2]

Despite encouragement from the IMF, serious production problems created by poor management and the deterioration of infrastructure, and debt levels that are crippling tenants, large projects continue to persist. As such the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimated that 1999/2000 cereal output would be 40 per cent below the previous year. In December 2000, a joint FAO and World Food Program (WFP) study found that food shortages were emerging because of late rains and extended dry spells. The aggregate 2000 cereal output – estimated to be 3.6 million tonnes – was about 14 per cent above the previous year and 18 per cent below the average of the previous five years. With local production and pledges of donors, a gap of 138,000 tonnes remained unfilled, affecting some 900,000 people.

Industry

Though industry occupies an important place in the country's economic activity, its contribution to GDP is less than 10 per cent. It suffers from a number of problems, including a chronic shortage of trained labour and raw materials, and lack of the foreign exchange needed for the import of essential intermediate inputs and spare parts. These problems have contributed to low capacity utilization: for example the industry ministry estimated that in 1997 average capacity utilization of textiles companies was just 10 per cent. This idle capacity is a cause for concern, not least because Sudan is spending scarce foreign currency to import goods that it can produce itself (see Table 4.1).

The manufacturing sector has continued to grow in importance with the increased investment in building the oil industry's infrastructure. It grew at an annual rate of 13 per cent boosting its share of GDP from 11 per cent in 1992 to 18 per cent in 1998. As a result of economic performance, per capita income continues to be low although it grew from $233 in 1995 to $278 in 1999 and was

Table 4.1 Utilization capacity in Sudan's industries, 1997

Industry	*1997*	*Average: 1993–97*	*Industrial capacity utilization 1997 (%)*
Sugar (000 tonnes)	500	453	74
Textiles (m. yards)	36	37	10
Cement (000 tonnes)	288	260	88
Flour (000 tonnes)	324	351	21
Vegetable oils (000 tonnes)	90	92	19
Cigarettes (tonnes)	1138	1421	28
Shoes (m. pairs)	24	9.1	31
Tyres (000 units)	60	138	N.A.
Soft drinks (m. dozens)	23	28	50

Source: IMF, Sudan – Recent Economic Development, Statistical Annex[3]

estimated to jump to $357 in the following year, with this improvement attributed mainly to increased oil exports.

Other sectors

As for other sectors of the economy, construction showed an erratic tendency during the 1990s. After expanding by some 18 per cent in 1994/5, it contracted by about 2 per cent the following year, then showed only 0.4 per cent growth in 1997, and its contribution to the GDP averaged at around 5 per cent.

Commerce is the oldest business activity in Sudan. It is widely spread given the sheer size of the country. Moreover, it has been an attraction to a number of foreigners, who came to Sudan, resided there and engaged in its commerce business, making use of the country's strategic location and natural resources. To cultivate this lucrative business, various governments monopolized the export and import of a number of products such as sugar, petroleum products, sesame, cotton, and so on.

However, since these products are mainly agricultural raw materials, they are subject to fluctuation and price decline in world markets. As such Sudan has recorded a deficit since 1978, which reflects its dependence on imports, and the fact that its exports are mainly agricultural and suffer from the continuous erosion of value and fluctuation of weather that has resulted in low crop production. That is why export earnings ranged between $213 million in 1992 and $620 million in 1996. The overall balance, which had been in the red grew from $227 million in 1993 to $663 million in 1995, then to $1.3 billion in 1998, only to be reduced to $893 million in 1999, then rose to a surplus of $249 million in 2000, thanks to the start of oil exports. And in 2001 it was announced that Sudan was not going to resort to deficit finance, for the first time in more than two decades.

The other sector that has shown remarkable developments is transport and telecommunications. There were only 390 km of asphalt roads when Ja'far Nimeiri took over power in a military coup in 1969. By 1983 the cumulative length of paved roads had risen to 2000 km, the most important of which is the all-weather 1,186 km road from Port Sudan to Khartoum. By the mid-1990s there were 3,160 km of mostly secondary roads. Sudan rail continued to suffer with its narrow gauge single track rail and its operations dropped from 5,503 km to 4,725 km.

But the big improvement appeared in the telecommunications sector. With only 66,000 lines, more than two-thirds of them around Khartoum, the government decided to privatize this sector in 1994, creating Sudatel, in which it has a 65 per cent share. A five-year expansion plan involved spending $620 million to raise lines to 1.3 million by 2003, in addition to developing GSM and mobile services. French and South Korean companies joined in to develop these services, while telecommunications companies from the United Arab Emirates and Qatar became main shareholders.

Economic management or lack of it

Sudan is known for its political instability and shifts between a brief parliamentary rule to be followed by a longer military dictatorship.This political instability has been aggravated by a similar one on the economic side, though Sudan has known economic planning since the colonial days. As early as 1940s, the first five-year development plan was drawn up for the years 1946–51, to be followed by another one for 1951–56. Though they concentrated on infrastructure, they lacked a joint target or sectoral orientation.[4]

In spite of its great potential, Sudan is among the least developed countries, with a low per capita income. The country is at a crossroads between decline and recovery. Development policies adopted over 25 years have not served the country well, a situation that was made worse by the general decline in trade of raw and agricultural materials, and increases in oil prices. Recurrent drought and desertification took their toll on the nation and inequalities between regions became severe. After a period of stagnation in 1960–70 and a respectable growth rate of 6.3 per cent during 1972–80, real GDP declined by 15 per cent between 1981/82 and 1985/86.[5]

The first comprehensive post-independence economic plan was the Ten-Year Development Plan of 1961/2–1970/1 during the first military regime of General Ibrahim Abboud. It was followed by the Five-Year Development Plan of 1970/1–1975/6 during the second military regime of Nimeiri. This was drawn up mainly with the help of the Soviet Union, but as a result of changes in the political climate following the communist-inspired coup in 1971, it was re-adjusted a year later to be followed by a new Six-Year Plan for 1977/8–1982/3. Because of continued economic problems, that plan was replaced with a series of three-year rehabilitation and consolidation programmes based on agreements with IMF until the current regime took over in 1989.

The present National Salvation regime has developed its programme through various media. It held a National Congress for Economic Salvation in 1989, which was followed by a 3-year Programme for Economic Salvation in 1990–93. That programme in itself was part of the Comprehensive National Strategy of 1989–2002. As far as economy was concerned, that strategy was to be carried out in a series of 3-year programmes covering periods 1993–95, 1996–98 and 1999–2002.

The independent Sudan inherited from the Condominium administration had a minimal level of infrastructure, a high illiteracy rate that exceeded 80 per cent and an agricultural economy that was geared towards the supply of raw materials like cotton, sesame, gum Arabic and groundnuts as its main export commodities to the world markets.

Little seems to have changed over four and a half decades after independence. The country still reels heavily under economic problems, coupled with inadequate infrastructure, illiteracy and a near breakdown of the agricultural sector, although it took significant strides in liberalizing the economy and succeeding in exporting oil. As a result the mix of export commodities shows a new listing, with oil now netting the highest export earnings.

Though the colonial administration was concerned mainly with the strategic position of Sudan as a safeguard to protect Egypt from other foreign powers, it still managed to push for expansion of some agricultural projects and the export of camels to help secure a steady budget surplus.

Coupled with the agreed annual subsidy from Egypt and the ability to get into money market borrowing with the help of the British government, Sudan managed to embark on a number of infrastructure projects. It established Port Sudan as sea port, expanded the railway network, and started irrigated farming in Tokar and the Gezira schemes, marking the beginning of supplying British factories with raw cotton. By 1924 the Sudan economy began to have a stable source of hard currency-earning commodity and at the same time it became totally integrated into the world economy. For the first time in its history, Sudan saw economic prosperity when it achieved a trade surplus in 1929 due to cotton cultivation.[6]

Neither the two years of self-rule 1954–56, nor the two years of national government in independent Sudan of 1956–58 witnessed a significant economic breakthrough. Work continued along the same lines as those set forth by the British administrators.

The advent of the first military regime (of General Ibrahim Abboud 1958–64) made a difference as far as the economy was concerned. One of the first moves to be undertaken by the new regime was to accept US aid, which was the subject of heated inter-party dispute. Eventually the regime embarked on a number of projects like the extension of the Gezira scheme, expansion of the railway network, start of the Khartoum–Medani asphalt road, and development of some industrial plants that were spread around various parts of the country. This development drive was made possible with the help of foreign aid, as the country reaped its good relations with various world capitals.

When the regime of General Abboud was toppled in 1964 following a popular uprising, both the transitional period as well as the second parliamentary regime that lasted up to May 1969 were characterized by short-lived, weak coalition governments that had, in effect, very little time or political will for sustained economic planning and execution. The eroding legitimacy and governance of the parliamentary regime opened the way for the second military regime led by Ja'far Nimeiri, 1969–85.

Nimeiri who inherited a weak economy, fragile infrastructure and export of raw materials, started ambitiously with a Five-Year Development Plan that was intended to start a breakaway from the old system. The salient feature of this period, which coincided with the regime's leftist phase, was the nationalization and confiscation of some economic entities in 1970, the first anniversary of Nimeiri coming to power. The move did not only deter foreign and private sector investment, which was supposed to play a big role in the development, but it led to over-stretching the state machinery and its administrative abilities. With a share of more than 50 per cent of the country's GDP, the public sector started to play a dominant role in the economy.

When Nimeiri changed horses after his brief leftist phase (1969–71) he opted for a more liberalized economic outlook. The move was dictated partly by his

crackdown on the communists, who provided the first support for the new regime, following their inspired coup against him. The signal for change came in August 1972 when Nimeiri ordered the return of 30 companies that had been confiscated or nationalized in 1970 to their former owners. Also a new investment and promotion act was promulgated with the aim of encouraging private and foreign investments in the same year.[7]

However, two main factors helped in creating a climate conducive to economic development in the country. The peaceful settlement of the 17-year civil war with the south in 1972 sent a positive message that the country was getting its priorities right at last, as it was almost impossible for a country engaged in a civil war to pursue economic development at the same time. Donors, be they countries or organizations like the World Bank, hurried to the help of the regime in areas of aid to its returnees after years of civil strife and establishing the infrastructure for development projects.

This political achievement coincided with the increase in oil prices. The quadrupling of the price of oil in 1973/74 provided the Gulf Arab producers with petrodollars that they could not absorb. With a moderate regime in Sudan across the Red Sea, and ability to restore peace to the country, Sudan seemed to be a good case for development given its huge potential in human and natural resources.

An attractive motto was soon coined, calling for marrying Sudan resources with Arab money and western technology to provide the region with its food needs. Sudan quickly became called the 'Bread Basket of the Arab world'.

Accordingly, the five-year plan, associated with the leftist beginnings of the regime, was revised. Emphasis was shifted to agriculture as the backbone of the economy and to transportation, which constituted the major bottleneck before any development. A master plan financed by the Kuwaiti-based Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) was drawn up with the help of some Sudanese experts. The plan envisaged spending $6 billion over a period of 25 years and was segmented into a number of phases, with phase one to run in 1976–85 with over 100 projects in agriculture, livestock and related industries at a cost of $2–3 billion. That period should have laid the ground and basic infrastructure necessary for the take-off.

Two main projects tell about the new drive. The first was the Rahad agricultural scheme, which was conceived years ago as the best way to make use of the Roseris dam. The project spread over three provinces, with plans to accommodate 14,000 families and provide employment opportunities for some 90,000 workers. An initial area of 300,000 feddans was to be brought into cultivation of cotton and groundnuts. The project included also digging a 50-mile long canal linking Rahad and the Blue Nile. The project was financed by the International Development Agency (IDA), the Kuwaiti Fund, the Saudi Fund and the Sudan and US governments.

The second project with an international dimension, which was seen as a test case of putting the motto of marrying the country's natural resources with Arab money and western technology into practice, was the Kenana Sugar project. It was first conceived as a way to cut sugar imports and to bolster the country's foreign reserves through export at the same time. Plans were originally drawn up to build

the biggest sugar plantation under one roof and one management, and to be irrigated by a complex canal system. The project was to include 300,000 tons of refinery expandable to one million. On the funding side, Arab financial and development institutions like the Saudi Fund, the Kuwaiti Fund and the Arab Investment Co were involved, as well as Lohrno, the Japanese and of course the Sudan government. All in all, the area under crops increased by 3.5 million acres during the period of Nimeiri's regime, while industrial value added rose from £67 million sterling to £143 million sterling by 1975.

On the transport side, Nimeiri, who inherited only 330 km of asphalt roads, embarked on an ambitious road-building master plan, that included segments from Medani to Sinnar and Kosti, then the Port Sudan–Khartoum road through Kassala as well as the Khartoum–Port Sudan pipeline to carry oil products, to help relieve the railway and save up to 30 per cent of its capacity that was used to transport oil products. The area of telecommunication had its share as an earth satellite station was built as well as introducing a microwave network system in 1974.

To finance this development drive, the regime borrowed during the period up to 1975 some $300 million, 42 per cent of which came from Arab countries and the rest from western and eastern countries. However, short-term borrowing accumulated only $75 million from Kuwaiti Foreign Trading and Investment Co, Bank of America and the Arab French Banking Union (UBAF).

In recognition of its new found role as a breadbasket for the Arab world and a gateway to Africa two institutions were established in Khartoum: the Arab Authority for Agricultural Development and BADEA, the first to deal with developing the agricultural sector in Sudan, and the second to provide soft loans to Africa.

Despite its false start, Nimeiri's regime was the first that governed Sudan and had the opportunity and potential to make a real breakthrough in the economic as well as the political field; achieve stability in both, tap the country's huge natural resources and provide a different kind of national leadership, away from sectarian politics that had been dominating the political scene in modern Sudan.

However, the regime failed in its bid to turn the country into a breadbasket and Sudan was seen as a good example of the failure of inter-Arab projects, 'as it turned out to be afflicted by [the] problems of the other recipient countries'.[8] As such it was able during the first half of the regime of 1969–77 to open the door for a new force, a growing class of entrepreneurs and professionals who were making use of public corporations and the state's commitment to rapid development, and an inflow of capital and foreign aid. That in itself constituted the first great challenge to the traditional capitalists who had been in control of modern Sudanese politics and businesses.

Pressures and development

Despite the good start in the development process – achieving a degree of political stability, international aid and expertise that was deemed necessary to make the needed take-off – the economic development drive that had started during the

first half of the Nimeiri regime eventually become bogged down for a host of reasons.

From the start, economic planning in Sudan failed because the size, distribution and characteristics of the population and its dynamics had been largely ignored by the planners. This missing link contributed to the ongoing crisis facing the country as far as securing food supplies for the population and improving economic conditions were concerned. Added to this, economic-related activities like distribution and administration posed a serious problem in a sparsely populated country like Sudan. The wave of nationalization in the early 1970s, helped to over-stretch the administrative capabilities of an already inefficient civil service, and as a result a number of projects were ill-conceived, and poorly planned and executed. This meant that, instead of them contributing to the national revenue, they exhausted some of the meager resources to help them cope with some of their financial burden.

More importantly, the weak infrastructure contributed to hampering the drive. Improving the infrastructure was not given the necessary due diligence and priority to ease the looming bottlenecks. For example, the inadequate transport system was over-burdened by the sheer volume of equipment for new projects. It became common practice that such equipment was left to rust in Port Sudan, the country's only sea port, because of the inability to move them to the site at the appropriate time. Delays and congestion at Port Sudan became the norm and led to considerable increases in cost, pushing contractors to renegotiate their contracts to accommodate delays and rising costs caused by inflation.

It became a vicious circle: delays resulted in missed deadlines, leading to rising costs and to renegotiation to cover soaring inflation. Furthermore, after 1967 following the Six-Day Arab–Israeli war and the closure of Suez Canal, Port Sudan became the farthest point as ships coming from Europe, then Sudan's main trading partner, had to go through Cape Town. The situation was compounded following the October 1973 war between the Arabs and Israel, which led to a rise in the price of fuel as a result of the oil embargo imposed by the oil producing countries, and thus to soaring transport costs.

In addition to the rising cost of fuel and inflation, a new factor was added by the changing situation across the Red Sea, where the Gulf states embarked on ambitious development programmes that needed more skilled labourers. These attracted huge numbers of Sudanese professionals, who were bilingual and stood a good chance of competing in the new labour market. Eventually sizeable numbers of highly qualified professionals in all walks of life migrated to the oil-rich Gulf states, which at the time were badly in need of qualified personnel to carry out planning and development projects. This led to an increased trend of out-migration that has continued unabated, for economic and political reasons as well as because of social changes and deterioration.

No concrete figures were available regarding the numbers of Sudanese expatriates who migrated abroad. For instance at its peak, migration of Sudanese abroad reached close to one million according to International Labour Organization (ILO) calculations in the mid-1980s.[9] On the other hand a conservative estimate based

on some official findings in 1988 found that the oil producing countries alone were hosting some 350,000 Sudanese with the bulk of them in Saudi Arabia (210,000), followed by Libya (53,000) and the United Arab Emirates (18,200), with the remaining countries accounting for the balance. A breakdown showed that of those working abroad 21 per cent were highly qualified staff, 16 per cent clerks and support staff, 14 per cent administrators, 13 per cent professionals and the rest skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers. The loss of their skills and that contribution to society were among the factors hampering development

The survey found out those migrants earned some $6.15 billion annually and they transferred up to $3.5 billion of this back home. However, means of transfer varied because of rigid regulations, the emerging black market and persistent inflation. The survey found that only 5.3 per cent was transferred through Sudanese banks, 8.4 per cent through foreign banks, 41.2 per cent by hand, 31.3 per cent through relatives, 13.1 per cent through agents, and other means accounted for the remaining 0.7 per cent.[10] However, the overall number of Sudanese abroad, including their families, was estimated to be around 2 million by early 1989; it was believed to have increased three or four times during the next ten years, especially with the polarization that occurred after the current regime took over in June 1989.

Official figures show the rising trend, though they do not reflect the overall picture. The numbers who migrated through official channels in 1990 were reported to be 7,612, and that figure dropped to only 699 in the following year after Sudan took a sympathetic stand towards Iraq. It started to pick up as of 1996 to peak at 66,061 by 1998. The rising trend despite low incomes showed clearly that the country was driving people abroad, and that the Gulf states were the prime host countries. In Egypt alone close to three million Sudanese were believed to have lived at one point before moving with others to new homes in Europe, the United States, Canada, and as far as Australia and New Zealand.

As such it is estimated that the volume of Sudanese fiscal resources abroad ranged between $15 billion and $20 billion. No official or concrete figures were available, but such a figure could be reached when various indicators were taken together, including things like the volume of houses and apartments bought by Sudanese in Egypt, the United Kingdom and the USA; money spent on educating children in foreign countries; tourism; and medical treatment. Yet despite this big volume, policies under various regimes failed to attract more than $200 million back home through official channels.

Lack of incentives, unfavourable exchange rates and weak confidence in the economy and government policies were all to blame. However, in recent years volume of remittances have shown a remarkable increase from $436.4 million in 1998 to $639.8 million in 1999. The increase is attributed to the growth in numbers of those migrating and the declining disparity between official and black market rates.[11] Moreover, migration acted in itself as a new source of pressure. It contributed to inflation through the high level of spending of those expatriates. Their money was chasing the limited services and commodities that were available in the domestic market. Moreover, their hard currency found its way into the

unofficial black market, thus putting additional pressure on the national currency, which helped in deepening distortions in the economy.

All these factors helped in creating a strong stream of consumerism. It was estimated that in 1978/79 out of a total import bill of $1.13 billion, some $300 million represented luxury goods that belonged to the expatriates. And that in itself put yet another pressure on the already inadequate rail system, as those expatriates wanted to transfer their newly bought cars, equipment and furniture from abroad.

The new inflow of hard currency through unofficial channels and the signs of political instability that started to grow from the mid-1970s onwards led to the expansion of a marked migration of capital within Sudan as capitalists started to move from the countryside and rural areas to invest in big cities. With the economic crisis deepening, capital flight from the country itself followed. The remittances system provided the hard currency required to finance the export of about $10 billion in capital flight, which, when combined with accumulated savings abroad, more than out-weighted the national debt. Sudan was actually becoming a creditor country.[12]

At the same time the black market was mushrooming. Sudan became the biggest recipient of American aid in sub-Saharan Africa, and most of that aid went to subsidize wheat sales in the politically important sensitive urban centres at the expense of productive rural areas. Coupled with the inflow of petrodollars, capital started to migrate to big cities, and Khartoum in particular, thus robbing the countryside of credit and business. Eventually production abilities in rural areas were highly curtailed, pushing the country to live on the brink of recurring famine. Human migration followed the capital, with the attraction of new activity, a real estate boom and lucrative consumer goods. By then expatriates and foreign aid became the main source of government finances.

Although the readily available petrodollars were supposed to help turn Sudan into the breadbasket of the Arab world, a lack of succinct and professional central authority in the country to control such a trend led to a borrowing spree that created a state of confusion, which in itself ended up with multiplicity and accumulation of unnecessary debt. The confusion was such that in 1980 the Ministry of Finance and Bank of Sudan contracted Morgan Grenfell of Britain to trace and list all the country's debt.

However, one of the main factors that led to the collapse of development was corruption. The May regime was after all a totalitarian, one-man show that hardly had any institutions that could stand on their own. Nimeiri made use of genuine and attempted coups against his rule in 1975 and 1976 to consolidate his grip on power in a personal way, which helped strengthen the one-man rule and opened the way for corruption. In fact the genesis of corruption goes back to the early days of his rule. A salient example was the $200m loan guarantee Saudi Arabia decided to give to Sudan in 1974 as a way of bolstering the country's foreign reserves.

News of the new loan guarantee was conveyed to Adnan Khashoggi, the Saudi wheeler and dealer, through his contact Baha El-Din M. Idris, a close aide to Nimeiri at the time and minister of special affairs at the presidential palace. Khashoggi was quick to grasp the opportunity. He came up with the idea that if he

was allowed to manage the loan he would be able to use it and raise some $1 billion in fresh loans.

Using the go ahead provided by Nimeiri, he went on and negotiated with no less than 31 European banks, concluding deals characterized by their high fluctuating interest rate. In one year it reached 16 per cent and the loan was to be repaid in seven years with a three-year grace period. The deal, which included total repayment in ten years only, had a repayment charge on any undisbursed amounts. On the top of that a 2 per cent commission was to be received by Khashoggi, which amounted to $4 million. By contrast all advances and funding facilities provided by Saudi Arabia around that time and particularly between 1971 and 1973 were very soft loans with 2 per cent service charge payable in 15 years.

News of the terms of the deal were soon to circulate in financial markets and among institutions that dealt with Sudan. Simply put they made a negative impact. Terms that included erratic interest rates and short-term repayment, with middlemen vying for commission were hardly seen as a suitable way to finance development.

Insistence on going ahead with the deal infuriated both the Saudis and the World Bank, who thought of sending a clear message indicating their displeasure. Robert McNamara, the then President of the World Bank told Foreign Minister of Sudan Mansour Khalid in the spring of 1974 that the way Sudan handled the Saudi loan showed one of two things: either mismanagement or squandering of funds and then suspected corruption. For both possible reasons Sudan disqualified itself from drawing on soft loans from IDA funds. Though both the Saudis and the World Bank proposed that they would help Sudan get better terms if given the chance, Nimeiri declined the offer.[13]

As a result of all this, pressure started to mount on foreign reserves to pay for imports and to service the debts, and that pushed the government to draw on the foreign aid it received. Feeling the creeping hand of the government to use aid for what it was not intended, donors started after 1976 to tie their aid to specific projects and not to give it for budget support. The move, as expected, put more pressure on reserves. As project implementation slowed down for a host of reasons, the aid and foreign reserves situation continued to worsen as time went by.

During the peak of the borrowing spree that was supposed to bring in new investments to fund the development drive of 1974–77, Sudan took on fresh loans worth $2.4 billion to add to its debt. That pushed the country's debt service from $55 million in 1973 to $300 million in 1978, and most of it on hard terms. All but $790 million had to be paid back within 15 years, which reflected the weak control of the Bank of Sudan and the finance ministry on the economy.

Development plans were favouring a high import content, which led the government to contract all possible loans. In the absence of enough soft borrowing, import needs were generally financed by short-term borrowing with maturity ranging between 1 and 10 years. The proportion of these loans in overall borrowing amounted to more than 70 per cent by 1980.[14] An accumulation of economic problems pushed the country in the end to fall behind with repayments, and inflation continue to soar, compounded by eroding rail capacity to carry more goods. To

handle the debt problem, the authorities concentrated on rescheduling, relying on further borrowing to meet rescheduling targets, without considering alternative options like generating new income to pay partly for foreign debt and partly for domestic investment.

Available data show that Sudan's development prospects were seriously limited by insufficient investment. Gross domestic investment measured in constant 1980/81 prices peaked in 1975/76 at £1,050 million and declined in subsequent years to a level of £675 million in 1983/84. As a percentage of GDP it declined from 22 per cent in 1975/76 to 9 per cent in 1988/89. This was due to collapse of public and private savings and growing dependence on net inflows of foreign capital. During the period 1970–73, private savings financed some 65 per cent of gross investment, public savings 19 per cent and net external inflows about 16 per cent. From 1978 to 1983, private savings decreased substantially and public accounts became negative. During this period, 83 per cent of gross investments were financed by external inflows. Private savings financed only 22 per cent and the public sector actually disinvested 5 per cent of gross investment.

Eventually, the development drive came to a halt and the country went to the IMF seeking help and advice. By the beginning of 1985, the year that was supposed to have seen completion of the first phase of the AFESD plan to turn the country into the breadbasket of the Arab world, Sudan's imports of food were, in fact, rising. Famine was striking southern and western parts of the country and rising debt reached $7 billion. Then the regime stood exposed and vulnerable as it lost its credibility with both its own people and international donors.

The build up started back in 1978, when both Iraq and Kuwait cut off their oil supplies to Sudan asking for immediate payment of their longstanding bills. The move proved to be a critical one as the same year also saw Saudi Arabia deciding that any advances to help support Sudan's balance of payment would be made on the basis of Sudan's ability to present a certificate of good health from the IMF. That was the last step to push the government to appeal to the IMF, which forced it to agree on a series of economic austerity measures that included devaluing the currency by 20 per cent and cutting government spending.

Despite that, Nimeiri was kept afloat during 1978–84 by the hidden forces of foreign powers and the black market that were controlling the country. It also explained why Nimeiri appeared oblivious to any domestic political accountability by the end of his rule. For although the government was almost bankrupt, the country was awash with hard currency. The Sudanese expatriates working abroad were earning about three-quarters of the country's GDP. The inflow of their remittances, mostly through unofficial channels, did not appear in official statistics and was ten times greater than the next highest source of foreign exchange, cotton exports.

During this period, seeds of change to come were sown. As the secular, traditional and sectarian capitalists divested, the Islamic banks and Islamist businessmen were investing, making use of their tax privileges, tax exemption, access to hard currency and political connections as the Muslim Brothers were, by then, the main political force behind the regime. For instance, the Faisal Islamic Bank (FIB) was the first

to enjoy spectacular growth because of these incentives. Capitalized at £6 million, it was established in 1977 and from the start was exempted from capital taxes and those levied on profits. It was also exempted from monetary laws regulating banking activities, the public service and the Auditor General's supervision. The idea was to provide as much incentive and encouragement as possible to an Islamic banking experiment that was breaking new grounds.

It was no surprise that the FIB managed in its first year of operation to achieve a 10 per cent return on its capital. During the following years profits skyrocketed to 384 per cent of the capital in 1983. Following the 1985 *intifada*, or uprising against Nimeiri, criminal investigations were initiated into the activities of the FIB, which used to buy grain before crop cultivation, then store it to speculate on it and gain huge profits. Investigations dragged on until 1988, when the National Islamic Front (NIF) joined the government and one of the first acts taken by the NIF leader Hassan Turabi, who became the Attorney General in the new coalition, was to drop the case against the FIB.

The May regime started its drive in the early 1970s, with Sudan's balance of payments roughly in the black, government savings equivalent to about 2 per cent of GDP, gross national savings equivalent to over 11 per cent of GDP and inflation under control, but it ended up with $7 billion of debt.

At the same time the one-man regime created an environment conducive to corruption, mismanagement, consumerism, debt and eventually armed resurrection that developed into a full-scale civil war. From then on, it was a continuous drain on the country's political, social and economic resources. While the economic crisis continued to deepen, Nimeiri still had two other financial strings to pull. One was Arab investments in the breadbasket plan, which is the reason why he did not want to declare famine in 1984. A second was the Falashas, who were being clandestinely moved from Ethiopia to Israel via Sudan. Over $300 million was spent on the operation by US government and Jewish charities, with an undisclosed amount being paid directly to Nimeiri and his cronies.[15]

Mismanagement and corruption continued to raise questions as to whether making reforms and achieving development goals were at all a possibility. The final blow to the development efforts came in 1983 with the resurgence of armed revolt in the south, led this time by the SPLA. A successful raid on a Chevron camp in southern Sudan led to stopping of the company's activities in the region and an overall reduction of its operation that eventually led to its standstill and then it pulled out totally from Sudan. Another blow hit the Jongeli canal. The growing armed resistance in the south and the austerity measures imposed by the IMF had sparked popular resistance that ended up in the 1985 *intifada*, which led to the overthrow of Nimeiri regime.

The legacy of the Nimeiri years had a lasting impact on the country's economy. Adoption of Sudan's open door policy from 1972 onwards for foreign investors did not lead to enhanced development, but helped accelerating consumerism, created a new class of profiteers and expanded corruption. Such a transformation brought changes in income distribution in Sudan. The country had virtually become divided into two classes: the affluent who had access to remitted hard currency,

and the rest. For the former it became possible to achieve economic domination of Sudan while ignoring the vast majority of people, notably those far away in the regions. The urbanization of economic power also underpinned continuity of mass migration to Khartoum and the ability of the urban economy to sustain millions of displaced people and the efforts of the subsequent governments to maintain the social and ethnic purity of the main towns by removing migrants to the margins.

Despite the austerity programmes applied at the request of the IMF, a combination of drought, an influx of refugees from Chad and Ethiopia, and high international interest rates complicated the already tense political situation domestically that led eventually to the fall of Nimeiri in April 1985. However, the civilian government that followed was concerned with the mounting debt, which led to subsequent breakdown of negotiations and in February 1986 the IMF announced that Sudan was no longer eligible to receive its loans. From then on the government resorted to crisis management rather than economic planning.

By the end of 1987, the World Bank and European Economic Commission estimated that Sudan's debt amounted to $9 billion, thus exceeding its entire GDP, and exports met only less than 30 per cent of its debt obligation. The 1988/9 Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) report on Sudan concluded that, 'until a proportion of the debts are written off and the crippling debt burden is reduced, further economic deterioration and political instability are inevitable'.

In eight years from 1980 to1988, external debt quadrupled to reach $12 billion. Sudan's failure to reschedule again and pay the IMF, whose arrears stood at $1 billion, had hindered any settlement with other creditors. The debt and its servicing, which had reached an unprecedented level, was having a destabilizing effect on the country's economy, and led the elected government of Sadiq al-Mahdi in 1987 to decide to limit debt repayment to 25 per cent of anticipated export earnings. The country's foreign reserves that stood at $67.4 million at the end of 1979, dwindled to $12.2 million in 1985, then recovered to $58.5 million in 1986 before falling again to $12.1 million in December 1988.

As the country entered the last decade of the twentieth century, its economic growth over the previous two decades could easily be described as erratic. Between 1983/85, real GDP fell significantly as the government focused increasingly on the civil war, and managed the economy poorly. In 1988/89 the economy, in fact, contracted.

By then the civil war had become a major factor in the country's economic problems. It was costing close to $2 million a day, and with meagre resources successive governments resorted to deficit finance to fund the war and other spending, thus fuelling inflation at the same time as foreign aid was diminishing to a standstill because donors put peace as a prerequisite to extend their aid. The civil war continued to engross the decision makers and the performance of the economy. An IMF report in 1997 described the government's fiscal performance between 1993 and 1996 as weak. Expenditure in most years was twice as high as revenue. Central bank borrowing was used to finance government deficits. The IMF estimated that budget deficits, including interest arrears, reached as high as 18.7 per cent of GDP in 1992/93, compared with 10 per cent a decade earlier.

The government consistently ran budget deficits in the 1990s, since it depended mainly on agriculture, which was vulnerable to climatic conditions and fluctuations of world food prices. As a result, exports did not keep up with an expanding import gap. However, one of the main side effects of the government efforts to bring the budget deficit under control was a dramatic reduction in the proportion of government spending that was allocated to capital projects, thus bringing spending on development almost to a standstill.

An overview shows that all development plans, regardless of their methodology, concentrated on irrigated and mechanized agriculture and large-scale industry at the expense of the traditional sector. This led to dislocation of the rural population as life became difficult and accelerated urban migration. At the same time, the performance of the modern agricultural sector was disappointing, so failing to compensate for the declining production in the rural economy.

Famine and consequences

A severe drought hit most of the Sudanese regions, particularly the western regions, in 1984, leading to the worst famine in the contemporary history of Sudan. The problem was aggravated further by the refusal of Nimeiri's regime to publicly acknowledge the crisis, seek international help, or undertake emergency measures to combat the situation. When the *intifada* succeeded in removing Nimeiri from power in 1985, it was faced with the immediate task of tackling the famine issue. The first step taken by the new regime was to declare the famine, it then handed the job to technical organizations, thus de-politicizing the issue. The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC), a technical governmental department, was established to coordinate relief activities and one of its functions was to run a Famine Early Warning System (FEWS), with international donors' support. Its task was to gather information on rainfall, crops, market prices and so on. The international agencies were also given unprecedented autonomy to handle famine and humanitarian problems.

Sudan has a long history of famine that dates back to the 1920s, when the British introduced measures to relieve areas hit by drought. Part of the reason was that the British wanted to be seen doing similar to if not better than the Egyptians in dealing with the needs of the Sudanese people. In three occasions in 1930/32 and 1941/42 and 1948, these measures were deployed to relieve victims. However, the trend was left dormant after independence.[16]

In post-independent Sudan and up to 1970, food security depended on the combination of a professional civil service that worked in line with the native and local administrations. Such an arrangement provided a degree of accountability and some representation of the people in the countryside on the one hand, and enabled administrators at the local level to make use of their system as an early warning mechanism that disseminated information and gave authorities the leeway needed to prepare for food shortages or impending crises.

However, by 1971, Nimeiri's regime had abolished the native administration system, thus robbing the state of a wide-spread set up, with a degree of

representation to its constituencies and accountability, but without having an equal or better system to replace it. Another implication of that measure was the conspicuous urban bias of the administrative system that evolved at both local and central levels. Meanwhile the civil service also suffered dearly during Nimeiri's years owing to political intervention, inattention to standards and professionalism, and the spread of corruption. Another blow to the state machinery came as a result of the out-migration of qualified civil servants and professionals. All of these considerations hampered the ability of the Sudanese state to adequately address the famine crisis.

These change were coupled with other developments that paved the way for famine and the inability of the state to deal with it. The early 1970s saw an expansion of irrigated schemes and then more demand for seasonal workers, and in addition to expansion in rail and road networks, little attention was paid to famine regulations. During this period Sudan saw a massive expansion in mechanized farming from 1.8 million feddans in 1968 to 5.2 million feddans by 1977, especially in eastern and central Sudan. Preparing for mechanized farming required removing plant and vegetation cover.

Moreover, animal numbers witnessed remarkable growth. Between 1969 and 1977 cattle, sheep and goats increased steadily, with concentration in the eastern parts of the country; overgrazing limited growth in the west. A 1983 Sudan Year Book found 19 million cattle, 18 million sheep, 11 million goats and two million camels, with a development potential and source of income that was widely neglected.[17] However, by 1994 the numbers had increased to 29 million cattle, 37.1 million sheep, 33.3 million goats and 2.9 million camels, according to a FAO estimates.[18]

To feed this wealth of livestock, pastures in Sudan were estimated to have a total area of 279 million feddans, able to produce 77 tonnes of fodder that could support 22 animal units. However, the growing number of animals led to overgrazing, and coupled with the expansion of mechanized farming at the expense of pastures, the situation started to deteriorate steadily after 1973.[19] In addition, the early 1970s witnessed the influx of refugees from neighboring Ethiopia and Eritrea in mass numbers following the escalation of civil war and famine.

With the Sudanese state unable to manage, or even cope with the famine crisis, the burden of handling aid for the needy was effectively handed over to foreign aid agencies. In fact from the 1970s relief non-governmental organizations (NGOs) began to accumulate more influence on the world stage as a result of their handling of crises from Bangladesh to Ethiopia, to the Sahel countries. That factor had political and social ramifications. With their strong presence they undermined the principle of local accountability and as economic hardship gripped the country and inadequate salaries were paid late, it was left to NGOs to provide logistics and support even to government officials, who turned a blind eye to the NGOs' activities.

During the last days of Nimeiri's regime, Sudan was carved up between various international NGOs, each of which was contracted to monitor food distribution in a different region. For instance Darfur was awarded to Save the Children Fund

(UK), Kordofan to CARE, the Central Region to World Vision and the Red Sea Hills to Oxfam. Transport contracts were given to Sudan railways and private hauliers, while distribution itself was left to local government officials. With the new mandate, the international NGOs' role was strengthened. Their staff could travel anywhere without permits, and they could make food allocations on their own criteria without reference to government at all. This hand-over helped the new government as it removed famine responsibility from its shoulders to place it on the NGOs'.

The economic effects of food aid were more significant, as it acted as an income transfer to its recipients. It also enabled farmers to spend more time preparing their own farms to avoid having to sell livestock and other assets and to conserve more seed.

Moreover, one of the implications of the relief programme was that for the first time in Sudan, a mechanism controlled by foreigners was set up that could distribute to almost every village in the country. There had never been before a patronage structure that could reach so far. The NIF recognized the chances provided by such system and made use of it politically for its own means later on. Islamic humanitarian agencies and the NIF were later to create a comparable nationwide network that became an integral part of the project to create an Islamic state.[20]

Again in 1988/89 a new coalition for relief in the south emerged, associated this time with the peace process set in motion by the DUP–SPLA peace initiative of November 1988. It was led by politicians, indigenous NGOs and few international bodies, although they were less confident and assertive than three years ago. The Netherlands, which emerged as the main donor, insisted on Sudan ending the war as a prerequisite to providing aid.

At the time though Sadiq al-Mahd, the prime minister, remained the main political figure dominating the local scene, but his legitimacy seemed to be terribly damaged abroad because of what was seen as his indecisiveness to end the civil war, or take the necessary measures to reform the economy though he was heading a coalition with a comfortable majority. Hints of a military coup were rife and were receiving US tacit support, as the US saw it may be impossible to end the war and maintain democracy at the same time.[21] International pressure helped by domestic pressure (army memorandum to the government in February 1989) managed to set up a new government, which was formed on 25 March 1989. Before that a conference was convened in Khartoum 8/9 March, where the United Nations agreed to an ambitious relief programme, Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS).

OLS came into being and coincided with the collapse of the Cold War. It was the first ever official programme in which the government conceded the right of relief to foreign agencies to operate in rebel-held areas. The operation broke new ground by pioneering the concept of negotiated access, which set a precedent that was followed elsewhere.

OLS was not rapidly subjected to the deregularization that occurred elsewhere in the humanitarian business. OLS and NGOs had to compete for humanitarian funds from western governments and work within the general context of contemporary

humanitarianism. Over a ten-year period more than $1 billion was spent on humanitarian aid in Sudan.

However, both the Sudan government and the SPLA exacted another price for permitting the programme continuity by manipulating it to serve their interests and divert resources to feed their soldiers. With the passage of time, OLS became closely integrated into the conflict itself and very much affected by the political climate. When the context changed with the NIF seizure of power, OLS took a different approach; it became integrated with the political dynamics of war, not peace.

The famine of 1990/91 in northern Sudan was an event of great political importance as well as human tragedy. The new regime found itself in an untenable position, denouncing the west, yet relying on it to avert the famine. The new regime now with a solid grip on power, was able to make use of the aid and its mechanisms to ensure that its favoured constituencies escaped the impact of the famine, while disfavoured groups bore the brunt.

Though the symptoms of crisis were there, especially in Darfur, where grain prices started to rise coupled with the collapse of livestock prices, both government and donors were gambling that an adequate harvest in 1990 would be enough to avert disaster. In August the famine widened from Kordofan and Darfur to the central region and Khartoum. The vulnerability of these regions was the outcome of demographic disruptions of the 1980s, which had brought very large numbers of migrants to the areas. A food security study in 1988 showed that the highest concentration of food insecure people (1.32 million) were in and around Khartoum, with very high numbers in Gezira.

The crisis could have been avoided if a well-managed food policy was adopted and grain was available in the market, but the government had exported the reserves. After the 1984 famine, stringent controls on food exports were introduced, regulated by the Agricultural Bank of Sudan (ABS). In March 1990, the Salvation regime reversed this policy. The ABS had export contracts for 200,000 tons of grain, but was deferring fulfilling these until after the harvest, in case food was needed as reserve. The caution was abandoned and the reserve was exported under the auspices of Faisal Islamic Bank and Baraka Islamic Bank. A total of about 500,000 tons were sold to the EEC and Saudi Arabia for animal feed. By October the main government silo contained only 9,500 tons, most of it unfit for human consumption.

The Salvation-NIF: three significant developments

The Salvation-NIF regime came to power with ambitious plans. In the economic field, it had a strategy that called for attaining self-sufficiency and transforming Sudan into a regional power within ten years, which meant higher investment, and growth of GDP in excess of what is usual in developing countries.

The regime spent the first two years testing and using a policy of trial and error before embarking on liberalized, market-oriented policies. At first it adopted a tough policy of restricting dealing in hard currency and going as far as taking the

unprecedented step of executing three persons for illegally dealing in the currency black market. Then it started floating the national currency gradually and lifting the subsidy on petrol, bread and sugar, which became the only source of government income since production and foreign trade were severely curtailed.

Though policies kept changing from time to time, lacking stability even for one fiscal year, eventually the government initiated a comprehensive liberalization programme. The finance minister at the time, Abdel Rahim Hamdi, announced the policy in February 1992.[22] It could be said that Sudan's liberalization programme was probably the only one in the world that applied the toughest part of the IMF prescription, without having a deal in place with the Fund and without incurring a popular reaction as usually happens. The regime's heavy hand on opposition could explain part of the reason for this, but starting a reform programme without a cushion of hard reserves to help smooth its application was a conspicuous feature of the Sudanese liberalization programme.

The strategy shows the dichotomy between the regime's anti-western rhetoric and IMF policies, and the effective implementation of those policies for the sake of the new class that started to mushroom after the open door policy of the early 1970s.

By and large, three important developments emerged during the Salvation-NIF period, which were bound to have significant implications for the country's economic scene for some time to come. These were: relationship with the IMF, privatization policy and production and export of oil.

Relations with the IMF

The Sudan's relations with the IMF date back to 1977/78 when the debt problem worsened. A succession of stabilization programmes followed, but all failed to halt Sudan's accelerating inflation, mounting indebtedness and economic disequilibrium. Failure could be attributed to both inappropriate design of economic policies and the failure of the government to adhere to them, compounded by western donors, notably the US, which continued to provide money regardless, for reasons to do with Cold War policies.

The June 1978 crisis ushered the country into a new era with hope of consolidation, rehabilitation and rescheduling of debt. A year later, Sudan signed a three-year accord with the IMF under which it obtained access to $260 million in payment in return for a series of economic measures that included a 20 per cent currency devaluation, cutting public spending and the government deficit, and bread and sugar subsidies and encouraging exports. One of the positive side effects of these measures was that it brought some order as far as borrowing was concerned.

The new revised three-year programme was to run through 1977/78–1982/83 and was to officially replace the six-year development plan. Its main features included completing projects that had already been started, rehabilitation of existing assets like agricultural schemes and improvement on energy and roads. From there on the economic policy was based on rolling on those three-year programmes.

By March 1980, the World Bank agreed to a $65 million loan, supplemented by $11 million from the EEC to provide an injection of foreign exchange for some of these projects, spare parts, and so on. Half of the amount went to the Gezira scheme and part to Rahad with the understanding that this aid was based on making changes in the way the two leading schemes were run. The World Bank loan followed an assessment by the organization that Sudan's economy needed tough measures to raise its exports in real terms to bridge the growing trade balance deficit gap. To keep afloat, Sudan would need $800 million a year of foreign aid, of which one-third had to be quick disbursement, not tied to projects.

On the other hand the continued economic crisis and cuts in public spending helped in eroding the morale of government officials and accelerating mass migration that further weakened an already weak state machinery. However, at the time Nimeiri was exploiting to the maximum the strategic position of the country at the height of the Cold War. Sudan became the largest recipient of US aid in sub-Saharan Africa including both financial aid, development assistance and a large programme of food aid, most of which was wheat, which was used to subsidize the potentially troublesome urban market at the expense of rural producers.

Official debt was rescheduled no less than eight times. A routine became established by which the IMF recommended a package of economic reforms, the Sudan government agreed in principle, the IMF duly issued its seal of approval, and the Paris Club met and released much needed funds. That was made possible by the willingness of donors, especially the United States, to shore up the regime for political reasons.

By 1983 Sudan was living from hand to mouth. In July 1984 alarm bells rang as Sudan started to default on its debt to the IMF itself. Given the strategic consideration Washington applied to the regime, at one point the US State Department took the unprecedented step of providing a commercial bridging loan, repaid the IMF and was then reimbursed by the Sudan later. When Congress discovered the trick it prohibited it.[23]

However, by the end of the year, no room was left to manoeuvre. Both the IMF and the US State Department insisted on austerity measures that Nimeiri could not survive.

In February 1986, Sudan was declared ineligible for fresh IMF lending on account of its arrears to the fund. The move was received with dismay by the democratic forces in Sudan as the country had just overthrown a military dictatorship that was kept afloat tacitly with the help of the IMF, the Paris Club and above all Washington. The IMF arrears at the time stood at $220 million.

Such a move should have spelt the end to any further IMF negotiations, debt rescheduling agreements or Paris Club aid. In fact it did not; international aid continued to the tune of $900 million a year, while Sudan was actually paying only 5–20 per cent of its $1 billion service due each year. All that was conducted under the so-called shadow agreement, which allowed foreign investors, aid agencies, and regional and world organizations to do business with Sudan.

The three-year period 1986/89 was an exceptional time as it showed clearly that the IMF needed Sudan almost as much as Sudan needed the IMF. Most important,

the IMF needed to avert a formal default with all the international ramifications for more seriously indebted countries. It also hoped to bring Sudan back from the brink of economic disaster; and if possible to have some of its money back. That was how the game of keeping Sudan solvent needed greater ingenuity on both sides.

That status quo was indirectly financing war and famine. In the fiscal year 1987/88 for instance, the government estimated its spending on security to be about $449 million and on armed forces $230 million. Annual budget deficit amounted to about $600 million and balance of payments deficit to $800 million. Official development assistance was about $950 million each year during 1986/88. It was not difficult to come to the conclusion that foreign assistance was both financing the war and fiscal policies that were leading Sudan ever-deeper into economic crisis.[24]

The tense relations between Sudan and the IMF continued with the current regime taking over in 1989. Successive rounds of talks and team visits failed to make a breakthrough. Though the regime embarked in 1992 on a major liberalization and privatization programme, it still failed to win the heart of the IMF and other organizations. By then the regime was seen to be solidly in the anti-West camp. In 1993 the IMF decided to suspend the voting rights of Sudan. The step, although only symbolic as these rights represented less than 1 per cent of the fund's votes, was significant considering that in the same year the US State Department announced its decision to add Sudan to the list of countries supporting state terrorism.

However, as Sudan came within a whisker of becoming the first country to be expelled by the global lender, it managed to reach a turning point. In March 1997 Sudan reached an agreement with the IMF to pay $4.5 million every month and implement changes in economic management. The government itself undertook a pledge to reduce inflation to 65 per cent by the end of 1997, unify exchange rates and reduce its borrowing from the central bank. After that the IMF subsequently expressed satisfaction with the government's progress and following a review in April 1998 it postponed for one year the hearing on Sudan's expulsion.

Sudan will require a rescheduling and forgiveness package if it is to meet its debt obligations. However, given the political climate such a deal seems difficult to achieve, though it managed to restore its relations with some regional institutions as early as 1997, when it received total disbursements amounting to just under $17 million from the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Islamic Development Bank and the OPEC Fund, all regional or Third World organizations.

The first step in the complete reintegration process came in August 1999, when the IMF executive board lifted its declaration of non-cooperation against Sudan, which had been in place since 1990. The statement added that the 'de-escalation' process was aimed at encouraging IMF members with longstanding arrears to the Fund to establish a record of policy adherence that would eventually enable them to regain full access to IMF loans.

A year later a major breakthrough took place, when the Fund lifted its seven-year-old suspension of Sudan's IMF voting rights in a further step to restore the

country's standing with the world monetary institutions. Reacting to this progress, the Finance Minister at the time, Mohamed Khair Al-Zubair, said Sudan's foreign debt stood at $20 billion, including $1.6 billion owed to the IMF alone. He added that the country would continue to pay off its IMF debt, 48 per cent of which consisted of accrued interest. As a result he expected that international commercial, financial and economic institutions would be willing to deal with the country.

The IMF statement said the decision reflected good economic progress by Sudan, which had overdue debts to the IMF of $1.5 billion by the end of 1999. Fund figures show that Sudan repaid $36 million in that year and $28 million in 2000 up to July.[25] The move recognized Sudan's success since 1997 in implementing Fund-monitored macroeconomic reform programmes and repaying IMF credits. It also restored Sudan's right to express its opinion within the institution. The board determined that Sudan's performance under a 1999–2001 reform programme had been satisfactory both in terms of policy implementation and payments to the Fund.

> Nonetheless, it will be important for the authorities to maintain the current momentum in successfully implementing the medium-term staff-monitored program in terms of macroeconomic and structural policies, to increase payments to the IMF as committed for 2000 and 2001, and to further improve relations with other creditors.

'This would help provide a basis for a comprehensive resolution to Sudan's arrears to the IMF and to its debt problem', said the statement.

Being a big debtor, Sudan is a possible candidate to benefit from the international community's Highly Indebted Poor Countries' (HIPC) initiative, which rewards reformist debtor states with generous terms of debt relief, and the IMF suggested that better ties with creditors would help provide a basis to resolve the debt problem.

The World Bank documentation on eligibility for HIPC initiative lists Sudan as one of 36 countries with an unsustainable debt burden, but Sudan may find it difficult to make use of this facility given its poor human rights record, the continuing civil war and its tense relations with world and regional powers and bodies.

Privatization

The second area where the regime made significant strides was privatization. In an effort to reduce the role of the state in running the economy, the government took some steps towards liberalizing the economy in order to make it more oriented towards free-market practices. Price controls on many foodstuffs were removed, as well as reducing subsidies on petrol and bread. Marketing arrangements for agricultural products were also relaxed in an effort to encourage production.

The year 1992 saw the enacting of the Privatization of State Corporation Act, earmarking 190 public corporations for sale. The main target of the programme was the public companies. These companies were set up originally to help increase

productivity and add value to the economy through substituting imports by locally produced products, providing public services at lower cost, attracting foreign currency, and supporting the treasury and jobs. The expansion of public companies (parastatals) led to growth of the public sector's share in the GDP to 75 per cent. However, with their deteriorating output, those companies gradually became a burden on public funds and their indebtedness to the central government stood at £6.3 billion in 1988/89.

When public companies were created by the government, the idea was to have an establishment that was able to run their businesses, meet their needs and support the treasury. They were expected to pay 5 per cent of their capital to the treasury in addition to all their profits. However, things started to go wrong and in 1974/75 the government budget included for the first time £2.5 million to support public companies. That figure peaked at £328.5 million in 1989/90 then dropped to £200 million in 1992/93, when the privatization programme started.

Other sectors depended on the central government and the Bank of Sudan in particular to provide them with enough liquidity to enable them to carry on with their duties. Agricultural corporations, Sudan Railways and Sudan Air, and electricity companies all depended on deficit finance. For instance debt of the agricultural sector to the central bank rose from £1.68 billion in 1989 to more than £2 billion in the following year. From there on the government froze the debt at the level of £1.43 billion.

As part of the regime's three-year programme, the issue of these public companies was dealt with and privatization was agreed on as a way to rectify the situation. A higher privatization committee was set up and it agreed on two parameters to look into the public companies: (a) efficiency of fiscal performance, including profitability, added value, labour, foreign currency, competition and distribution; (b) strategic importance, including politico-economic and social considerations.

In the first instance, 17 public corporations were sold during phase one of the programme that covered the period 1993–95. Moreover, three joint ventures were undertaken, two enterprises were leased and another 17 were either restructured or transferred. During phase two which ran through the years 1995–98, the government sought to sell 50 more corporations, including electricity and the railways, but these plans made little headway for a host of reasons. The way that phase was conducted raised many question marks, not only from opposition groups, but even Salvation-NIF ranks and constituencies had an intense debate on the issue.

Responding to the outcry by the public and even within the NIF, the National Provincial Assembly, or parliament, formed a select committee in 1994 to look into privatization steps taken so far. The committee came on the heels of an Auditor-General's report on mismanagement and embezzlement of public funds. In its report, the committee was critical of the privatization practice as it found that the procedures were not conducted in a proper or professional way. For instance sales bids were out and utilities were set to be sold at the same time. As a result, and in most cases, companies were sold at prices below those reached on evaluation.

The report cited the case of the Abu Ne'ama Kenaf Project. The original recommendation was to sell the plant for £S432,749,347 in addition to $9,251,349 and 20,000 pounds sterling. In the end it was sold to al-Dali and Mazmoum Company for only 750 million Sudanese pounds.[26] In some cases where assets were swapped for debt, no bidding was made to get the higher price. As an example, the report cited Bata Shoes Co, which was bought out by the Sudanese African Company for Development and Investment. The evaluation assessed the plant at $3,758,414 in addition to raw materials worth £S12,941,700. Though the plant was sold for this amount, the committee said the project could have fetched a higher price if it was put out to public bidding.

Transforming those corporations into joint stock companies was delayed because no stock market was available at the time, thus depriving the whole process of a vital means of and ability to raise fresh investments.

The committee noticed that the regulations governing the whole process has not been stuck to, as some payments had to be in hard currency, which did not happen, or the buyer did not pay the whole amount. The example to be mentioned here was the case of the White Nile Tannery. Originally estimated to be sold for £S101. 8 million and $8.6 million, that figure was reduced and it was agreed again to sell it for £S120 million and $4 million, but in the end the actual payment made was £S108.8 million and $800,000 only. Eventually the company slowed down the payment and no penalty was enforced on it. The Buyers were Faisal Islamic Bank, Al-Rawasy Co, Bash Co, Rida Co and individual Sudanese investors.

The report noticed that penalties were usually not enforced. Besides, payments were made in local currency. And when soaring inflation and delays in payment were taken into account, the actual value of these institutions was in fact depreciating.

Corruption question marks could easily be raised. For instance, the Blue Nile Tannery was sold on 19 January 1992, only two weeks before the new liberalized policy was officially announced on 2 February 1992. Or there was the case of the Friendship Hotel, which was evaluated originally at $32.7 million, but before the deal was concluded it was re-evaluated and sold to Daewoo for only $20 million, with the government having a 40 per cent share in that. However, there were some rare exceptions, such as the Port Sudan Spinning Factory, which was sold for the same amount as it reached at evaluation, which was $30 million.

All in all, the whole process seemed to have been overshadowed by the low absorptive capacity of the domestic economy. Despite lack of experience, absence of regulations to govern the procedures, no enforcement of penalties, hints of corruption, and an absence of a stock market, all of which tarnished the privatization process, no concrete steps were taken to address these shortcomings. The whole process points to a lack of clear commitment to ensure the public interest.

Because it became a standing issue, an official updated evaluation came out in February 2000, when a technical report was presented to the minister of finance. It stipulated that privatization drive was part of a three-year, 1990–93, economic programme for the regime. It was decided that enterprises to be privatized were to

be divided into three groups: (a) enterprises to be disbanded immediately; (b) those within 2–3 years; and (c) those to be disbanded after three years. The criteria used included:

1 Enterprises with financial and economic ability and strategic or social significance; these have to remain in the public sector.
2 Enterprises with financial ability, but no strategic or social significance; these have to be privatized.
3 Enterprises with no financial ability, but some strategic or social significance; these should become public companies.
4 Enterprises with no financial abilities and no strategic or social significance; these should be discarded.

An extended phase one of the programme ran between 1992 and 1997 when 57 enterprises were privatized. Agriculture accounted for 28 per cent of these, the industrial sector 24.6 per cent, commercial 21.1 per cent, transport and communication and tourism 19.3 per cent and energy 7 per cent.

The report noted that forms of privatization varied, while 28 per cent of companies were sold, 10.5 per cent were dismantled, 7 per cent were restructured, 5.3 per cent became joint ventures, 3.5 per cent became joint stock companies and 1.8 per cent were leased. However, through ownership transfer 43.9 per cent of enterprises were privatized to form smaller units, like state governments from the central body.

In its findings the report found that the agricultural sector in the White Nile and Blue Nile enterprises did not perform well because of weak administration and lack of resources, besides which most of the schemes had devastated infrastructure that needed a complete overhaul. Ultimately farmers deserted their farms and that was reflected in the progressive decline of land under cultivation, as shown in Table 4.2.

As for the industrial sector, some 57 per cent enterprises were privatized through sale. All in all, 14 enterprises were privatized between 1992 and 1997. In that sector 75 per cent of enterprises were sold and 36 per cent had their ownership transferred. Tanneries except Gezira were overhauled by injecting £S32.5 million in addition to $1.1million. By 1996 profits had jumped to £S376.17 million from £S0.18 million in 1990/91.

Table 4.2 The decline in land under cultivation in White Nile and Blue Nile agricultural projects, 1994/95–1998/99

Year/season	*Total area (feddans)*	*Planted area (fed.)*	*Remarks*
1994/95	363,663	111,810	100% govt. support
1995/96	363,663	90,853	70% govt. support
1996/97	363,663	55,390	No govt. support
1997/98	363,663	42,069	No govt. support
1998/99	363,663	30,000	No govt. support

Revenues from privatized enterprises that were sold between 1992 and 1999 amounted to 55.4 million Sudanese dinars (SD), which did not include the value of assets, but the report found out that the main gain was through removing the subsidies burden from the public treasury. (The Sudanese dinar was introduced in the early 1990s, and one dinar equals 100 Sudanese pounds.)

A good example was the Sudan Cotton Co, which had an average net income of SD10.8 million in 1990–93, which increased to SD300.2 million by 1994/96, while its support for the treasury grew from £S20.8 million to SD139.6 million. In addition its export support increased from $82.4 million in 1990/91–1992/93 to $112.6 million in the fiscal years 1993/94–1995/96.

The telecommunications company, Sudatel, on the other hand represented the privatization success story as it managed to improve its services, raising the number of lines from 12,000 in 1993 to 130,000 by 2000. Its net profit in 1999 amounted to $60 million. However, the government, which owned a little over 50 per cent of the company's shares, announced that Sudatel would be fully privatized and that it intended to sell its shares to the public. In the 1999 flotation, the company's shares attracted foreign investors such as the Emirates Telecommunication Corp, which bought 100,000 shares and a similar amount was bought by Qatar Telecommunication Corp.

Phase two of the program that ran through 1998–2000 included privatizing 14 enterprises as a priority, including Sudan Air, post and telegram services, mechanical transport and textiles, with the rest to be carried out in 2001, but that target made little headway.

One of the most negative side-effects of the privatization programmes was manpower layoffs. The report did not draw a picture of what really happened, but it quoted figures estimated by a UNIDO expert, though based on an incomplete survey. Table 4.3 summarizes the figures.

For the 1998–2000 privatization programme, layoffs were expected to be 2,222 in agriculture, 2,198 in mechanized transport, 1,038 in posts and telegram, 4,048 in railways, and 2,658 in textiles, making a total of 12,164.

It was no surprise that two years after Sudan announced sweeping changes to liberalize the economy, a *Reuters* dispatch from Khartoum on 5 January 1994 found that, 'life is getting desperate for those with fixed income. Prices have climbed faster than incomes. Low salaries are fueling migration.'

Table 4.3 Layoffs of employees in Sudan's privatized enterprises, 1992–97

Sector	*Existing manpower*	*Layoffs*	*No. of enterprises*
Agriculture	22,299	3,492	20
Industry	2,360	878	15
Tourism/transport	1,848	1,549	14
Energy/mining	30,163	2,195	8
Banking/construction	2,499	820	17
Total	59,169	8,934	74

The general feeling was that most of the assets presented for sale were seen as poorly managed and unprofitable, and were therefore less able to attract buyers. Like the previous report by the National Assembly committee, the new technical report pointed out that the whole process had been hampered by administrative weakness, and the absence of a stock market at the appropriate time to enable share trading. Most privatization, some 43.9 per cent of it, was done through transfer to state governments, who did not have enough manpower and other financial resources to help them restructure. In addition some assets were lost during the transfer as new owners failed to pay amounts that were estimated by the report to be around $35 million, although the sale provided the treasury in the end an amount of SD554.5 million. Despite its drawbacks, privatization removed some of the fiscal burden from the government as well as opening the way for a more business-oriented environment that was expected to have a positive future impact.

Oil

Oil production is the third area of note and one in which the government recorded remarkable successes. Building on previous experiments, it managed to get Sudan to join the club of oil exporters, thus helping to break its isolation and strengthen its political and economic position domestically, regionally and internationally.

Sudan's attempts to tap its mineral wealth date back to the early period after the country gained independence. The first law to organize mining activity in Sudan, including prospecting for oil, was promulgated in 1958. Over a three-decade period up to 1989, when the current regime took power, 13 foreign companies were licensed to look for oil: one Sudanese–Kuwaiti joint venture, four Europeans and eight US companies. One of them, Chevron, struck oil deposits in commercial quantities in 1979, five years after moving into Sudan.

Ironically it was a consortium of Chinese, Malaysian and Canadian companies, and not the Americans, that reaped the fruits of Sudan's oil exports.

Though Chevron discovered oil near Bentiu in Unity State and Melut in Blue Nile provinces in the early 1980s, it had to abandon its discoveries following attacks by southern rebels on its Rubkona camp in February 1985, which led to the company's suspension of its activities on security grounds. Up to that time, Chevron had managed to drill 85 wells, 35 of which showed positive signs, and 11 development wells for the Heglig and Unity fields that were believed to contain 250–300 million barrels.

However, Chevron continued its presence for seven more years, and when the present regime assumed power, it had as one of its main targets utilizing the oil wealth through exports to alleviate its economic problems. Towards that end, it went as far as seeking the help of Islamic international groups sympathetic to its cause. They seemed to have provided the needed aid in both the oil and the weapons industry, as was revealed later when the struggle erupted between Hasan al-Turabi, the regime's ideologue and the President General Omar al-Bashir.

The first step in dealing with the oil issue was to relinquish the promising concession from Chevron. A set-up was arranged whereby one of the regime's supporters,

Mohamed Abdullah Jar al-Nabi, owner of Concorp company, was to buy the concession from Chevron for an undisclosed amount, believed to be around $24 million. In return Chevron was to receive tax breaks back home. The move was confirmed by Salah Eddin Karrar, energy minister at the time.

To the dismay of Jar al-Nabi, the concession was later given to the Canadian company Arakis Petroleum, with its Unity and Heglig fields. In 1996 Arakis announced that it could produce 13,000 barrels per day (bpd) of oil and production has risen since then to 18,000 bpd. However, production levels were constrained by transport problems. At that time the proven reserves of the Heglig and Unity blocks were put at 262 million barrels, with probable reserves estimated to be 155.8 million barrels. Towards the end of 2000, proven reserves were put officially at 650–800 million barrels and even one billion was regarded as a 'reasonable future target'.

In March 1997, Arakis signed a consortium agreement giving it a 25 per cent share, with the China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) having a 40 per cent stake, the Malaysian state oil company, Petronas Carigali, 30 per cent and Sudapet 5 per cent, representing the Sudanese government, thus the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company (GNPOC) was formed.

Under the accord, the consortium was committed to drilling a minimum of 30 new development wells and 21 exploration wells. In 1998 Arakis indicated that GNPOC was drilling 36 development wells and 22 exploration wells. The agreement stipulated also the construction of a 1610 km pipeline, Africa's longest, from the oil fields in the south-west to Port Sudan, via El-Obied and in early 1998 CNPC was awarded the contract for construction of the pipeline.

The pipeline was designed to have an access capacity that could be used by other companies operating in the area. The promise of the pipeline created interest from other oil companies in concession areas near that of the Arakis consortium. In January 1997 CNPC signed a separate concession agreement with the government for the oil field with estimated reserves of 220 million tonnes. In addition the International Petroleum Company (IPC) of Canada signed an agreement for a block of 29,412 sq km next to the Arakis block in February 1997. Petronas and OMV of Austria subsequently took a 30 per cent stake in the IPC concession.

Both the Chinese and Malaysians are in Sudan's petroleum industry for strategic rather than commercial reasons. China became a net oil importer in 1993. Imports are expected to reach 5–7 million bpd by 2010, which will account for 18–24 per cent of total Asian oil imports. At the same time, local Asian production is expected to plummet at the same time as needs increase and even Indonesia, an OPEC member, ceases to be an exporter. Competition will then begin between those countries to secure their oil supplies.

China for its part used the strategy of having stakes in foreign oil fields and hopes to have 50 million tons of oil from these sources by the end of the decade. That was why it adopted an aggressive policy, even overpricing to acquire oil concessions in foreign countries, and Sudan is one of these places.[28]

Malaysia had the great designs of its leader Mahathir Mohamed, who wanted to help fellow Muslims. It was reported in the Sudanese papers that in 1997 Malaysia provided Sudan with $200 million in the form of budget support.

However, failing to raise the needed funds to finance its operation in Sudan, Arakis sold its concession in August 1998 to a leading Canadian oil firm, Talisman Energy Inc., for $192 million. Talisman faced an anti campaign from human rights organizations, and towards the end of 2002 it sold its stake to the Indian Oil and Gas Company. The move put the Sudanese oil industry into Asian hands, run by government-supported companies for strategic reasons.

A landmark in Sudan's oil industry came on 31 August 1999 when exports started to flow, with 600,000 barrels of Nile Blend loaded on to a tanker at the export terminal, Bashayer, south of Port Sudan. The delivery came some 20 years after foreign companies had started prospecting for oil near Bentiu in central-southern Sudan. For the overwhelming majority of this work – estimated to have cost over $2.5 billion – the government had to secure foreign finance and the participation of foreign oil firms in the face of rebel threats and stiff opposition from its external opponents.

The development of the oil industry, including the export pipeline which was completed in June 1999 eased Sudan's balance of payment problems, generated additional growth and opened the way for more investments in hydrocarbons and other sectors. As such it was hailed as the government's most important achievement since it came to power in 1989. In 2000 a trade surplus was achieved for the first time in two decades and the government started to build foreign reserves to meet its imports bill.

Under the production sharing agreement that governed the first phase of the development, 42 per cent of the profit from the sale of Nile Blend went directly to the government coffers and 20 per cent to the GNPOC consortium. The remaining 38 per cent reverted to the consortium to recoup its pre-production investment costs – a process that the EIU expected to take three to four years, depending on the strength of international oil prices.

The Heglig crude is 28.7 API, while that of Unity is 31.4 API, but the Nile Blend is a mix of Heglig and Unity crudes at a ratio of 3:7. The oil, though mainly waxy, is relatively light with a low sulphur content. Heglig crude has a wax content of 20.95 per cent and sulphur content 0.0596 per cent. Unity on the other hand has an 18.81 per cent wax content and 0.0642 per cent sulphur, while the Nile Blend features include a wax content of 18.94 per cent and sulphur of 0.0635 per cent.

Though the initial exports were fairly low, the first deliveries of Nile Blend showed that it can command high prices on international markets. The initial cargo was sold to a Singapore refinery at a discount of $1 compared to the East Asian benchmark, Indonesian crude Minas. However, the subsequent load was sold to an Italian firm Saras at Dated Brent minus $0.10. This reflects the quality of Sudanese oil. Even with estimated production cost around $4 per barrel higher than the cost incurred by Gulf producers, Sudan's oil remains competitive by international standards. It also indicates that the oil sector will remain profitable even when oil prices are weak.

Production from the Heglig and Unity fields, which so far were providing most of the export oil, started to rise slowly but steadily, reaching 140,000 bpd by mid-September 1999, then 155,000 bpd in November and 180,000 bpd in January 2000. Two years later, production hit 240,000 bpd.

Long-term output prospects are positive, with all companies reporting successful test drills. In addition, Sweden's Lundin oil, a subsidiary of IPC, which is operating independently of the consortium, has also reported positive results from its January test drills in its A5 field, suggesting reserves there to be in the range of 250 million barrels. In February 2000 work had already started to link the 90-km road between IPC's field and the Bentiu oil fields of the GNPOC to the north.

Also, the Franco-Belgian Totalfina decided in December 2000 to go back to southern Sudan, where its predecessor Total used to carry out exploration work before its withdrawal in 1985 because of security concerns. Unlike other foreign firms, Total did not sell its concession.

Around June 2000, it was announced that three areas would be opened up for oil prospecting in the Blue Nile basin, Chadian borders and the Red Sea zone. The prospects attracted international firms from all over the world, but no deals were concluded.

According to the EIU First quarter 2000 report, if testing reports proved to be accurate, they will lift total proven reserves to over 1 billion, although this could still underestimate the country's total oil resources as many of Sudan's most promising oil zones have yet to be fully explored. The government is trying to market those opportunities with the aim of raising output to at least half a million bpd by 2005.

The development of the nascent oil industry started to show its impact, helping the country to attain self-sufficiency in products and even exports. At present Sudan has five operating refineries: there is a refinery in El-Obied, western Sudan with a 15,000 bpd capacity that serves the Heglig oil field down south 300 km; and there is Port Sudan, east of the country, built in 1964 that has a capacity of 23,800 bpd. In addition there is the small 2,000 bpd refinery at Abu Jabra oil field, and Sudan's fourth facility is a topping plant built by Concorp with a 5,000 bpd capacity. Finally there is the new $600 million refinery at Al-Jayli, near Khartoum, with a 50,000 bpd capacity. That was why, nine months after its first export of crude oil, Sudan stopped importing products, thus saving the country up to $300 million a year. Then it started exporting 40,000 tonnes of motor gasoline a month.

Oil is not only changing the composition of the country's exports, but it is restoring its credit-worthiness as well. Developing the oil industry is believed to have attracted some $5 billion in new investments from various foreign sources.

However, in September 1999 and less than four weeks after export inauguration, the NDA opposition forces attacked the pipeline, near Atbara, northern Sudan, causing minor damages that were repaired in just few days. The attack was unlikely to discourage firms from entering the Sudanese oil industry as the oil pipeline is buried for much of its route underground, which makes it difficult to damage large portions of the pipe in any single incident. Nevertheless, the incident was a painful reminder of the heavy shadow of the civil war over the country and its negative potential for the economy.

Development of the oil sector could be hampered if rebels attack oil fields and personnel in the south. It was that kind of attack that pushed companies like Chevron to pull out from Sudan about two decades earlier. To avert that threat the

government has been depending to a large extent on the defences provided by local militias in the oil fields area, which in itself was a source of concern.

Conclusion

Despite its huge natural resources and great potential, Sudan is mired in poverty with a record of missed opportunities in its economy as well as in politics. Through political decline, the economy was faltering in attempts to manage the crisis by the 1980s. However, the advent of the Salvation regime, pushed the country – out of necessity since outside help was drying out – to adopt structural economic reforms that allowed for privatization, removal of subsidies and a reduced central role of government in managing the economy.

Coupled with the success in utilizing oil resources to satisfy domestic needs, a major breakthrough for the economic performance, and exports, the country is poised for a take off. Signs of that are clear in normalizing its relations with regional foreign creditors and resumption of its ability to attract foreign investors.

However, a real breakthrough still awaits a peaceful settlement of the civil war, which is not only a precondition for normalizing its relations with western and international financial institutions, but above all is needed to enable the government to radically reduce expenditure on defence, and create a climate conducive to domestic and foreign investment.

5 State and society

During the four and a half decades that have passed since Sudan's independence, the country has witnessed profound changes in its society's composition and set-up. Demographic tendencies showed further urbanization and the growth of urban centres, an increase in the number of people involved in modern sectors of the economy, wide internal and outward migration, and expansion of education at general and higher levels. At the same time the period also witnessed considerable economic deterioration and decline of standards of living for the majority of population on a wide scale and even periods of famine. In their turn these crises generated their own dynamics that affected Sudanese politics and society.

In general, these changes occurred through a combination of natural and socio-economic mechanisms on one hand and the impact of state policies on the other. While some of the changes came in response to state policies, the state also often found itself under pressure to react to socioeconomic realities and changes. A full assessment of the situation therefore has to take into consideration the interaction between state and society.

This chapter looks into state society interactions on three levels: (a) the socio-economic dynamics and policies; (b) the rural–urban dichotomy; and (c) ethnicity and regionalism.

The Structure of the state

Legacy of the imperial state

During the Condominium era the state structure evolved from a rudimentary administration at the beginning of the twentieth century to a complex bureaucracy with specialized administrative and technical departments. Though the imperial administration was largely built around a devolved structure, the Governor General enjoyed more or less absolute power (in theory checked by the British Foreign Office in London) in managing the affairs of the country for the best part of the Condominium.

Over the last decade of the Condominium, however, the government witnessed steady steps towards modernization, democratization, and eventually Sudanization at both central and local levels. The process was said to have reflected also the

transition of government 'from an organisation from the administration of men into one for the administration of services'.[1] Under the self-rule regime, the country accomplished the transfer of power to Sudanese constitutional institutions and the Sudanization of civil and military services, and made the transition from an imperial to an independent state.

The independent Sudanese state inherited from its predecessor the imperial 'colonial' state's two main features: a two-tier administrative system based on direct rule and a native administration system; and a dominant public sector.

Because Sudan was not a straightforward British colony, as well as other considerations, it did not experience the same principle of direct and indirect rule as applied in other parts of Africa. Nonetheless, native administration – a symbol of indirect rule – was implemented in most of rural Sudan.

Though indirect rule became the official doctrine of administration during the mid-1920s, it existed in practice, particularly in nomadic areas with stable tribal structures, as early as the beginning of the Condominium regime itself. On the other hand, implementation of indirect rule throughout the country confronted the Sudan government with many practical problems.

Owing to the tradition of central authority, the spread of Islam, and the impact of the *Mahdiyya*, the tribal structures in northern Sudan had largely been weakened; by the advent of the Anglo-Egyptian administration several of the tribes lacked sufficient coherency to serve as adequate administrative and political units. Nonetheless after a decade or so of trial and error and intensive reorganization of tribal structures that involved the amalgamation of smaller tribal units into larger confederations, and maintaining or splitting others, native administration became a medium of government in at least certain parts of the Sudan.[2]

Due to a variety of strengths of tribal structures, leadership and political traditions, the Condominium policy of native administration resulted in divergent tendencies: where tribal power existed it was confirmed, and it was created anew where it did not. As native administration became the dominant form of government in rural Sudan, it provided an administrative boundary between the urban and rural sectors of the Sudanese society in political, social and economic terms.

Areas ruled through native administration retained a level of autonomy as tribal chiefs and *nazirs* mediated state rule. Though tribal and kinship structures – that existed at the time when native administration was introduced – virtually retained their social and cultural identities, their politics gradually came under the scrutiny and manipulation of the Condominium establishment. Tribal authority was meant to fit into a particular model envisaged by the British administrators and was designed to serve certain political or economic objectives. By and large the tribal chiefs were supposed to be the local agents of the Sudan government on the one hand and representatives of the collective interest of their tribes on the other, a balance that was usually very difficult to maintain in practice. Nonetheless, the maintenance or creation of tribal structures under the native administration regime accorded the tribal chiefs with autonomous constituencies and a potential for political utility.

In areas under direct rule authority was channelled from central to local levels without the mediation of traditional or customary structures. Hence the pattern of state–society relations that grew in these sectors was markedly different from the one that prevailed in areas under native administration. By the very nature and composition of these modern sectors, the state came to affect the lives of the population under its control in various ways.

In the absence of traditional forms of sociopolitical organization, new structures for articulation and defence of collective demands and group solidarity had to be established. As in similar societies under colonial rule, the growing educated elite initiated modern-type organizational structures for political or trade unionist purposes. Thus graduates of Gordon Colleague and the military school established non-traditional secular organizations, such as the White Flag League, the Graduates' Congress and the political parties in the 1940s, all of which led the anti-colonial movement in their time. Later on, other modern-sector groups, such as industrial workers and tenant farmers, established trades unions to defend their interests.

At the economic level the imperial state produced a dominant public sector. This came about mainly by virtue of two developments: in the first place the Sudan government from the outset discouraged European settlement and the acquisition of private land holdings by foreigners. The rationale was to avoid replicating the Ottoman-Egyptian system of capitulations with its complicated legal systems, as well as removing the likelihood of reigniting a possible Mahdist uprising. Accordingly, the state emerged as the primary landowner in Sudan with the exception of pockets of private land holdings, mostly in riverian Sudan.

In the second place the government from the outset oversaw the establishment and operation of a wide railway network, which soon became one of the most important governmental departments, as an essential dimension of the administration and economic management of a vast country like Sudan. Furthermore, the largest production schemes in agriculture that developed during the Condominium, such as the Gezira scheme, were also state owned.

By the early 1950s the parastatals – mostly in agricultural and infrastructural sectors – had grown up to become the dominant feature of Sudan's economy. The state became the major source of jobs and services, a situation that would be a major factor in the politics of independent Sudan.

The independent state

The Sudanese independent state witnessed successive rotations between civilian and military regimes with the latter dominating most of the period. By and large, however, both forms of government represented a continuity of the colonial state, albeit with some reforms introduced particularly under the second military regime (1969–85). As rightly suggested by Mahmood Mamdani 'what appeared as a game of musical chairs, a back and forth movement between civilian and military regimes, represented a change within a broader continuity: from a decentralised civilian despotism to a centralised military despotism'.[3] Such a characterization is

all the more true in relation to Sudan given the sectarian nature of its parliamentary civilian politics and regimes.

The first government to assume power on independence was a coalition between the two main sectarian parties in northern Sudan: the *Umma* and the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Hitherto regarded as the greatest archrivals in Sudanese politics, the leaders of *Khatmiyya* and *Ansar* agreed a reconciliation on the eve of independence that paved the way for the formation of the *Umma*–PDP coalition government. Sectarian loyalties, which lent the main parties their power base, were both divisive and unitary. By its very nature sectarianism was a manifestation of divergent loyalties and orientations, yet it provided the two main political forces; unionists and *Umma*, with an umbrella that covered broad coalitions, grouped modern and traditional forces, and linked town and country, merchants and farmers, literate people and laymen. In other words the sectarian coalitions transcended the domains of direct and indirect rules.

Though the independent state maintained the structure of the imperial state virtually intact – including its two-tier administrative system of direct and indirect rule, things were bound to change as an elected government replaced an authoritarian imperial state. In theory, such a change may be viewed as a transition from an autocratic colonial state to a democratic national state. In reality, however, elections – though free and fair – were in the majority of constituencies little more than a modern camouflage of well-entrenched religious and tribal loyalties.

Furthermore, as soon as the independent state came into existence, it fell victim to multiple pressures primarily from its own components and constituencies. These pressures may be summarized as partisan competition for control of the state; divided loyalties along sectarian and partisan grounds; and expectations of rewards and accountability. Responses differed among groups in and outside the ruling sectarian coalitions. For some groups who accumulated certain privileges during the colonial era, their expectation from the new state was how to retain and maximize these benefits and privileges. Other groups who felt deprived or marginalized were inclined to fight for a broader system of rights and better access to resources and services.

At the centre of these pressures were the recognition by the population that power had passed from alien to indigenous hands and the expectations generated by independence. In this atmosphere the government's attempt to ensure the continuity of the unquestioning loyalty of its subordinate structures and citizens proved very difficult to attain.

Unable to cope with the multifaceted pressures, or to devise an operative mechanism for partisan competition or power sharing, the first parliamentary regime soon lost its place to a military take-over in 1958.

The first military regime (1958–64) replaced the partisan regime by 'a neutral and technocratic state' a factor which relieved it from the impediments of divided loyalties and improved its capacity to govern.[4] By and large, however, the military regime represented an incarnation of the colonial autocracy and authoritarian control, but in a more centralized form. It was also a fairly conservative regime that retained most of the administrative features of the imperial state including its

system of native administration. When the military regime sought to introduce some top-down reforms in the system by way of broadening participation, its package closely resembled the Condominium experiments of constitutional developments in the 1940s.[5]

Though the military regime had been able to replace partisan rule with a state that was comparatively more efficient and capable of running the country, its social base was inevitably narrower than that of the sectarian parties. At the same time the capacity of the military regime to coerce was rather limited. Unlike the colonial state, the military government did not have the potential of resorting to the imperial metropolis for military reinforcements in times of emergency or crisis. Meanwhile the state structure remained rather soft and fragile.[6] It took the opposition forces just a few days of civilian protest and riots – during which junior army officers expressed support to protesters – to bring the Abboud regime down.

Although politics became more ideological (e.g. polarization between socialist and Islamist discourses) during the second spell of parliamentary rule, the period hardly witnessed any innovation as far as the state structure was concerned. The main parties were not able even to agree on a permanent constitution despite extensive debates both within and outside parliament. Once again the same problems that beset the first parliamentary period, caused the collapse of the second. In 1969 the country once again came under a military regime led by junior ranking officers.

Changes under Nimeiri's regime

Under the second military regime (1969–85), the Sudanese state underwent significant adjustments and changes. From radical beginnings in its first years, the May regime proceeded to establish a one-party state and a presidential republic. Local government was reformed by the promulgation of the Local Government Act of 1972, which abolished native administration and established a pyramidal skeleton linking local structures with national decision making bodies. The south was granted regional autonomy, following the peaceful settlement with the Anya Nya that ended the first civil war in 1972.

Like the first military regime of General Abboud, Nimeiri's, or the May regime once again replaced the partisan system with a technocratic state. However, unlike both Abboud and the Condominium regimes, Nimeiri's was a populist regime that sought to consolidate 'national unity' through the establishment of a one-party structure, the Sudanese Socialist Union (SSU).[7] In the opinion of the proponents of the one-party system it was a device that would replace the partisan divisions with broader popular participation and grass-roots democracy. The party structure was meant to complement and substantiate the newly introduced local government system. In this regard, the Sudan under the May regime experienced reforms in its administrative structure that were similar to the experience of radical one-party states in other parts of Africa and the Middle East.[8]

Despite these structural changes, however, the May regime was basically a resurrection of colonial autocracy, and the figure of the President of the Republic

came gradually to resemble the post of the Governor-General. Yet, whereas the latter was moving towards more institutional control, particularly during the last decade of the Condominium, the former eventually demolished its own institutions and degenerated into 'one-man' rule. As a result, the state structure, which was initially strengthened by the expansion of its central bureaucracy, reform of its local and central structures and legal system, and expansion of its social base, was eventually weakened as a result of the destruction of its own institutions and the impact of erratic rule.

The third parliamentary episode, which replaced Nimeiri's regime after a one-year transitional period, witnessed a further weakening of the Sudanese state. On the positive side of things the period may be seen as a victory of democracy over dictatorship, and a period during which there was a serious search for consensus building in a climate of freedom and dialogue. Yet, the post-Nimeiri state was both too structurally weak and too politically handicapped to be in a position to handle the overwhelming problems it inherited.

To start with, the parliamentary regime inherited a state structure damaged by the deleterious impact of a lengthy period of one-man rule, a highly politicized army and civil service, and a shaky judiciary (particularly in view of the *shari'a* experiment of 1983–85). It soon became clear that despite the departure of Nimeiri and his government, this very state machinery was bound to continue virtually intact as the Transitional Military Council (TMC) saw its role as merely paving the way for a return to civilian rule.

The successive parliamentary governments of Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi that took over subsequently were too divided and preoccupied with maintaining fragile coalitions to be able to attend to overhauling the machinery of the state. Equally significant was the fact that the parliamentary government was operating under the shadow of a civil war, partial elections (that may well cast doubt on its legitimacy), and a rapidly worsening economic crisis.[9]

Given the scale of problems confronting the elected civilian government and its failure to tackle them or to attend to reforming the state machinery at central or regional levels, the already fragile state structure entered a process of terminal decline. By then, the state became no more than a crisis management institution and one that was barely coping with the rapidly deteriorating situation at all levels. A testimony to this state of affairs was the growing inability of the state to assert its control on all territories. The SPLA/M managed to dislodge the government army from most of the south with the exception of a few garrison towns and their vicinities, the war was threatening to spill over from the south to the western and eastern parts of Sudan, and the security situation was becoming increasingly precarious throughout most of the country.[10]

Predictably, the parliamentary regime once again lost power in a military take-over. As on previous occasions there were hardly any defenders of parliamentary rule. The Salvation-NIF regime that replaced it came with the ideological vision of radical transformation and restructuring of the state on Islamic grounds (known as the civilizational scheme, or cultural authenticity). Accordingly, the first phase – geared towards consolidating its rule – witnessed extreme oppression and a

heavy-handed approach towards all other political forces and potential or actual opponents. The same period also witnessed a systematic purge of the civil and military services as well as all other professions on ideological and political grounds.

These measures resulted in the destruction of the state structure inherited from the previous regime, which was in decline anyway. As noted, that structure had rested on the foundation laid by the imperial state that was retained, with some modifications, throughout the independent era. The Salvation-NIF regime sought to destroy this secular state structure and replace it with an ideological state machinery to be entrusted with carrying out the movement's vision for change. In the process force was used first to assume power and then to consolidate it. Consequently, a highly authoritarian and overtly ideological state emerged from the ruins of the post-imperial state.

Though the Salvation-NIF regime managed to hold on to power against all odds, its vision of state and society transformation was showing all symptoms of failure by the end of the 1990s. Islamism had to continue as an ideological cover and a source of the regime's legitimacy, at least in the eyes of its own constituency. In reality, however, Islamism became no more than window-dressing as the indoctrination programme of the regime lost much of its intensity. With the ousting of the movement's leader – Hasan al-Turabi, in 1999, the Islamic credentials of both factions of the former NIF became at best questionable.

The political economy of power and protest

As already pointed out, the Sudan inherited a dominant public sector from the Condominium era. The state had legal control of most of the land, customary and usurped rights by groups and individuals notwithstanding. Additionally, most of the large economic projects such as the Gezira scheme – which constituted the backbone of the Sudan economy until a few years ago – were state owned. The same goes for the railway network, which was the main means of transport, and a major infrastructural establishment.

On the other hand there were no land-owning or capitalist classes of any significance. Private investment was mainly confined to commerce, an ancient profession in northern Sudan, and limited enterprises in modern agriculture such as pump schemes and mechanized farming, manufacturing and road transport. Yet, even private investments grew out of concessions from the state, which granted leases of land and other facilities.

In such a situation control of the state meant also control over strategic resources and assets, and control over their distribution. It was within this framework that the struggle for power was pursued during the post-independence periods.

Patterns differed between the successive civilian and military regimes that assumed control of the independent state. During parliamentary periods the partisan nature of the state governed competition and the distribution of resources and benefits. Under military regimes, however, new beneficiaries appeared and so did a new system of patronage under the auspices of the military and political elite of these regimes.

The *Umma* and NUP parties, which assumed power on independence, were not organized on a class basis. By their very regional and sectarian bases and the broad spectrum of their supporters, they attracted followers from different stratas of society. Both parties, however, were led and/or supported by powerful groups that accumulated significant economic privileges during the Condominium era. Prominent among these were the Mirghani and Mahdi households who led the *Khatmiyya* and *Ansar* sects respectively and were the guardians of the NUP and *Umma*. Both the two Sayyids, with members of their families and some of their close associates were among the most prominent agricultural capitalists, landlords and businessmen. Other privileged groups were the chiefdoms of native administration, leaders of smaller *Sufi* orders, and the rapidly expanding commercial and business class. The latter – which was mostly dominated by households and networks chiefly recruited from riverian lands – had mostly pledged support to the NUP from the early 1950s and remained loyal subsequently.[11]

Whether by virtue of religious loyalty and prestige, financial support, or leadership mechanisms, these groups were effectively in a position to guide their parties' policies. Thus when in power both the *Umma* and the NUP exhibited a tendency to manipulate resources under state control for the benefit of their partisan supporters. A glaring example of this orientation was the excessive distribution of licences – such as for the export–import trade – and agricultural tenancies on a partisan basis. Other areas included granting state contractual businesses and similar concessions to partisan tenders. In view of the different economic patterns prevalent in the two parties, it became a feature of parliamentary politics in Sudan that the ministry of commerce was always the lot of the NUP, whereas the *Umma* was usually in control of the ministry of agriculture in coalition governments.[12]

The ability of the new power holders to manipulate the resources under state control for their own and their parties' benefit, allowed them also to extend patronage to community leaders and other influential figures whose support would be crucial for the continuity and consolidation of their power base. At the same time, however, the partisan scramble and competition over state resources and benefits sharpened power struggles and squabbles among the main parties and generally contributed to the instability of the parliamentary system.

Under the military regime of General Abboud the state control passed into the hands of a rather neutral administrative and technocratic elite under the auspices of the army command. Yet the same privileged groups who were the major beneficiaries during the parliamentary interlude managed to retain and maximize their gains during the years of military rule.[13] Devoid of partisan squabbles, the military regime was able to continue and expand on the Condominium style of economic development and even added new areas such as the introduction of an indigenous banking system and significant expansion of industry.

In view of the conservative nature of the Abboud regime, the Sudanese capitalist and mercantilist classes were able to benefit from the opportunities offered by the new economic ventures and the flow of foreign capital in terms of aid and investment. The opportunities created for private businesses under the military

regime attracted new groups such as senior civil servants and military officers who turned to business enterprises on retirement or resignation, or even while still in service with full utilization of their positions and contacts. The same pattern continued, more or less, during the second parliamentary era, which had basically maintained the economic policies laid down by the Abboud regime. As a result, private businesses considerably expanded between 1956 and 1969, covering various diversified areas from commerce and real state to transport and mechanized farming.[14]

The outcome of these developments was twofold: (a) at the social level these developments brought about growing commercialization and stratification, increased consumerism, and the growing interaction and complexity of Sudanese society; (b) at the political level the manipulation of state power and resources for the advancement of class interests by the ruling elites and parties meant the alienation of other forces and groups – such as workers, farmers and other employees – and resulted in cultivation of their hostility.

Under the May regime the new structure of power and the government's economic policy led to the emergence of a 'new class' composed of the new ruling elite and a new breed of rich and well-off groups. The measures taken by the regime during its leftist phase (1969–71) led to the weakening of the beneficiaries of the post-independence economic set-up: traditional religious and tribal notables, the agricultural capitalists, and leaderships of the *Umma* and DUP and their close associates. The era also witnessed nationalization of British-based and other foreign banks and companies, and their replacement by the parastatal companies. As aptly put by Peter Woodward, 'in overturning a party system that had been the political reflection of the old social hierarchy . . . the Free Officers opened the way for change'.[15]

However, the road to change did not lead to socialism as the Free Officers pledged during their take-over, but rather to the emergence of new beneficiaries in place of the old classes associated with the partisan regime. The swing of the May regime to the West after the confrontation with the SCP in July 1971 opened the way not so much for a socialist transformation, but rather for the adoption of a policy aimed at utilizing Sudan's resource potential, particularly in agriculture, with the aid of Arab capital (from oil rich countries of the Gulf) and western technology.

It was within this framework that the strategy to turn Sudan into the 'bread-basket' of the Arab world was elaborated in the mid-1970s. Consequently, the period witnessed an unprecedented flow of foreign capital – in loans and investment – and a rising interest among international businesses in Sudan. On the other hand, nationalizations, and the expansion of the parastatals boosted the resources under direct control of the state and further enhanced its economic role.

The enhanced economic role of the state and the growing business interest in Sudan combined to bring about the rise of a new brand of Sudanese businessmen and entrepreneurs who appeared on the scene as investors, contractors or managers in association with the 'breadbasket' strategy. The stage was open 'for those with the right connections, or luck to get rich very fast . . . [and] in 1981 it was rumoured

that there were about twenty millionaires in Sudan far more than their number in 1969 and of a different character'.[16]

The new class grew under the regime's patronage and protection. Corruption seemed to have played an important part, both as a source of wealth and capital such as in embezzlement of public funds, or in providing access to resources under state control, such as acquisition of agricultural schemes and trade licences.[17]

Fields of investment for the new economic elite remained, more or less, the traditional fields of commerce, real estate and agriculture, and particularly mechanized farming. Mechanized farming registered unprecedented growth and by 1977 the area under mechanized cultivation was said to have covered about 6–8 million feddans in any season.[18] The composition of the leaseholders of mechanized farms – that encompassed a diversity of groups from ex-army officers to big merchants – closely mirrored the new economic elite.

Commerce and real estate investments also witnessed a substantial boost during the May era in view of the increased flow of money and international business during the 1970s. The same period also witnessed the rising tide of migration of Sudanese expatriates to the oil-rich Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. Remittances sent by these groups to their families and dependants in Sudan contributed another source of money flow in the country, enhanced consumerism and opened additional opportunities for investments in trade and real estate.

At another level, the Nimeiri years saw the expansion of the middle class. This came about as a result of the growth of the civil service and state bureaucracy,[19] post-independence expansion of education, extension of professional and technical jobs in association with development schemes, expansion of parastatals and the growth of urban centres.

Towards the end of Nimeiri's era, a new player appeared on the scene, namely the rapidly expanding Islamist business class. This neo-class benefited from the political alliance between Nimeiri and the Islamist movement led by Turabi, the concessions given to Islamic banks established in the late 1970s, and the remittances of the Sudanese expatriates abroad. At first the Islamist business group grew on the margins of the new class that came about during the Nimeiri years, but by the end of the period it came to occupy an important place aided by the *shar'ia* experiment.[20]

With the return of parliamentary rule, the old capitalist and business groups associated with the *Umma* and the DUP sought to regain some of the ground they had lost during the last decade and half. The strategy was to use their positions in power both to curb the new Islamist class on the one hand, and to have more access to economic resources on the other. At first it appeared that the climate was more conducive for the implementation of such a strategy in view of the unpopularity of Nimeiri's regime, and the wide resentment towards all those who benefited from it. Hence there were calls for combating unlawful enrichment, and – significantly – investigation of the suspected irregularities and privileges of the Islamic banks. In view of the continuity of state machinery inherited from Nimeiri nothing much was done on any of these suggested reforms. Moreover, it soon became clear that

the structure of the economy and society had changed to the extent that a return to the old ways of the 1950s and 1960s was simply not possible.[21]

Accordingly, both Nimeiri's 'new' class and the Islamist business class were soon vindicated, though in a more competitive atmosphere and under a potentially hostile government. In this climate the National Islamic Front (NIF) – whether in opposition or government – emerged as the patron and political cover of both factions of the new/Islamist class (popularly known as parasitic capitalism). The NIF's strategy aimed at both protecting the gains and privileges accumulated by this class during the Nimeiri years, and blocking all attempts of the old capitalist classes to use the return of their patrons to power to stage a comeback. It was in this vein that NIF subsidiary organizations and media organs were actively engaged in 'anti-corruption' campaigns directed at DUP and *Umma* ministers and executive officials.[22]

The 1989 NIF-led coup provided better chances for the Islamist business class. However, rather than using the state as a vehicle for accumulating economic gains and privileges, the strategy of the Salvation regime was to de-economize the state. The comprehensive privatization programme that was rigorously pursued from 1992 onwards worked as a new device for the redistribution of wealth and resources. Thus the bulk of the parastatals were sold to the private sector almost at knock-down prices and the recipients were indeed prominent figures in the Islamist business class.[23]

For the first time since the Condominium the state seemed to have lost its central place as the major organ of economic control and development and the major provider of jobs and services. Yet the climate that ensued, was not one of classic *laissez-faire* and fair competition. Instead, the political leadership saw to it that Islamist business groups – new and old – would have the better share of the deal; whereas heavy taxation, sudden changes in regulations, and executive controls were imposed to drive other competitors from the market.

Trade unionism

The trade union movement, which was mostly led by radical groups, provided the primary opposition to state economic policies. From the Condominium period, the state emerged as the largest employer in the country by virtue of the dominant position of the public sector in the economy. Subsequent socioeconomic developments produced little change to this picture despite the rapid expansion of private investments during the post-independence years. Consequently, the Sudanese trades union movement, which appeared in the late 1940s and early 1950s, soon acquired a conspicuous political character and gradually became a 'party' in the country's politics.

The first to emerge was the labour movement, with the railway workers in the industrial towns of Atbara and Khartoum in the north spearheading unrest in response to rising inflation during the war period, and then establishing the Workers Affairs Association (WAA) in 1946. Two years later the Sudan Railway Workers Union was established under new government legislation, the Trade Unions

Ordinance of 1948; and in 1950 the Sudanese Workers Trade Union Federation (SWTUF) was established. Soon after the Gezira tenant farmers founded their own organisation, the Gezira Tenant Farmers Union with the help of the SWTUF.[24]

During the self-rule period and after independence both unions had a series of confrontations with the national governments on issues of pay, redundancies and recognition of the unions as legitimate representatives of their respective constituencies. Between 1953 and 1958 the Tenant Farmers entered into a series of disputes punctuated by strikes and protest actions with both the Condominium and self-rule governments on matters pertaining to farmers' and workers' rights, the cost of living and economic policies in general. A famous and violent episode in this regard was the incident of the Goda farmers whose dispute with the scheme licensees and the authorities led to violent clashes and the killing of over 200 farmers in February 1956.[25]

Indeed, both organizations, as well as other unions that came into existence later, were bodies that had been primarily established to cater for the interests of their members in the usual collective bargaining techniques. In such a capacity, trade unionism represented a direct response to the socioeconomic policies of the independent state and its partisan or class-oriented nepotism in the allocation of resources and benefits. That is to say the dispute between state and trades unions in some respects represented a reflection of the struggle between various classes in society over the nations resources and state-sponsored services. Furthermore, as the main employer of the country's labour force, the state found itself under pressure from the unions with various budgetary considerations and/or consequences of potential or actual industrial action.

At another level, however, the trades union movement from the outset exhibited a clear political tendency due both to the existence of the colonial state as the main employer, and the domination of the unions' leaderships by political groups. The trades unions' demands for recognition of their structures or articulation of the collective interests of their members that were mainly addressed to the state soon became intertwined with anti-colonial agitation and campaigns. The unions became forums for political action in relation to the decolonization process on a par with political parties and similar structures.

During the first half of the 1950s, which witnessed intensified activities for the liquidation of the colonial state, trades unions, particularly the SWTUF, became heavily involved as corporate bodies in mass political action calling for accelerated steps towards complete independence. Thus SWTUF was part of the United Front for the Liberation of Sudan (founded in 1950) that emerged out of the campaign against the Legislative Assembly and included the unionist parties. During the following years the workers', students' and farmers' unions joined other forces in leading various campaigns against self-rule or independent governments, such as campaigning for the anti-subversive law of 1952, the campaign for withdrawal of British troops in 1955 and accelerated Sudanization, and the call for the formation of a national government in 1956. In 1957/58 the same unions led a campaign against the US aid package, and in November 1958 joined the NUP and other groups and formed the Patriotic Front to articulate opposition against the

Umma–PDP coalition. An indication of the magnitude of the unions' politicization was their involvement even in foreign policy matters. During the Suez War in 1956, the SWTUF initiated a campaign of sending volunteers to fight with Egypt against the tripartite troops.[26]

In line with its authoritarian policy towards representative bodies, the military regime of General Abboud dissolved the unions' structures, imprisoned their leaders, and generally adopted a heavy-handed policy towards them. From the viewpoint of the latter, emphasis therefore shifted from agitation over national policy issues to the priorities of reinstating their own structures and campaigns for trades unions rights. The focus and framework, however, remained political.

Throughout the six-year-long Abboud regime many unions such as those of the workers, farmers and students, experienced a series of confrontations with the government. The uprising of October 1964 represented the peak moment in this process, when the unions led a political strike that brought down Abboud's regime and restored civilian rule. The first caretaker government that took over following the collapse of the military regime was led by a unions' coalition – the Professionals Front – who had a majority of ministerial portfolios (8 out of 15). Though the unions lost power to the mainstream political parties during the second parliamentary period (1965–69), they remained a vocal political force during the era.[27]

Shortly after Nimeiri's coup of 1969, the trades unions organized a march in support of the new regime on 2 June 1969, one week after the coup. The march was referred to by government sources as 'the popular recognition of the May Revolution'. At a time when most of the political parties were banned, the trades union movement was looked on as providing a constituency for the new military regime. In its turn the latter presented itself as a continuation of the October Uprising and raised similar slogans and programmes. As most of the unions' leaderships were in communist hands their support to Nimeiri's regime lasted as long it maintained its alliance with the SCP. The clash between Nimeiri's regime and the SCP in July 1971 brought the regime's alliance with the trades unions to an abrupt end. The unions were dissolved and most of their leaders were either imprisoned or, in some extreme cases, executed.[28]

In 1971 the Nimeiri government issued a new trades unions act that sought to reorganize the union movement on sectoral, occupational and industrial lines. Under the new law about 87 unions were established in 1973 comprising both white-collar (employees) and blue-collar unions (workers); the SWTUF reconstituted for the former, and the Sudanese Federation for Employees and Professionals formed in 1975 for white-collar groups. All unions and federations were to operate within the guidelines set forth by the Sudanese Socialist Union (SSU), the ruling party of the May regime.[29] The government adopted various measures including intimidation and outright oppression to ensure control of the unions' federations by SSU cadres and loyal elements.

Nimeiri's regime paid special attention to the workers' and farmers' unions and sought to keep them under firm control in view of their reputed militancy during the 1950s and 1960s. The policy seemed to have paid off as there were no major

confrontations between the government and these unions with the exception of a lengthy dispute with the railway workers in 1981, in which the government prevailed. Instead, militancy shifted to white-collar and professional unions. Expansion of the middle class and the strategic location of its members in the state machinery, services and parastatals enhanced their role and significance.[30] Hence they were able to lead a series of successful strikes during the period 1979–84, and eventually to play an important role in the *intifada* that toppled Nimeiri's regime in 1985.

After the *intifada*, the trades unions continued to be active economically and politically. The worsening economic situation and their regained confidence induced the unions more and more to flex their muscles; and lengthy disputes ensued between the parliamentary government and the trades unions, mostly accompanied by strikes leading to repeated disruption of services and further deterioration of the economy, and contributing to political instability. A major showdown between the unions and the government took place in December 1988, sparked by a decision by the latter to increase sugar prices.[31]

During the third parliamentary period the unions embarked on a process of reorganization as a result of which five trades unions federations (workers, professionals, employees, teachers, and farmers) came into existence and established a coordinating council by early 1989. Structurally the trades union movement appeared stronger, with enhanced economic and political roles.

The experience of the 1950s and 1960s established a pattern that was to be a feature of Sudanese politics. During parliamentary regimes, the unions would be mostly involved in economic disputes with the government without losing sight of their political activism. During military regimes, the unions would be mostly involved in a political dispute with governments over independence and control of the trades union movement without losing sight of their economic activism. Hence the unions came to play significant roles in leading protest actions against, and eventually overthrowing, military regimes. On the other hand, the parliamentary periods became characterized by the sharpening of economic disputes – punctuated by numerous strikes – between the unions and respective governments.

As a result of the unions' extensive involvement in direct political affairs of the country and in particular their opposition to, and success in overthrowing, military governments, there were calls for unions to be represented in parliaments and governments during parliamentary periods. The first such call came in 1965 when the workers' and farmers' unions demanded allocation of extra-territorial constituencies for the election of workers and farmers as members of parliament on a par with the constituencies allocated for secondary school graduates. Likewise in 1985, the Unions' Alliance campaigned for the allocation of special constituencies to modern-sector forces, as primarily represented in trades unions and professional bodies. The campaign was unsuccessful on both counts, but the underlying message behind it was clear: an overtly politicized trades union movement.

The politicization of the trades union movement in the Sudan was brought about not just by the centrality of the state as the chief employer and controller of wide economic and human resources, but also through the control of trades unions'

leaderships by political groups. The first political force to play an active role in the trades union movement was the SCP, the establishment of which coincided with the emergence of the Sudanese trades union movement in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Communist members soon assumed the leadership of the newly established workers' unions and by extension the leadership of the powerful SWTUF. From its foundation in 1950, the SWTUF was led by al-Shafi' Ahmad al-Sheikh, who was also a member of the central committee of the SCP until his execution in 1971. The same more or less goes for the Gezira Tenant Farmers' Union which was also led by another communist leader, Sheikh al-Amin Muhammad al-Amin, from its foundation until 1965 when the SCP lost control over the Gezira Farmers' Union to the NUP. Likewise, communist cadres equally dominated white-collar unions, which came into existence in the late 1950s and 1960s, but significantly grew during the 1970s.

As a result of this communist control of the trades union movement, the latter did not just assume an explicit political role, but invariably came to advocate stands on national policy matters that were close to if not identical with those of the Communist Party. In other words, the political stands and policies that were adopted by unions reflected more the politico/ideological views of the communist leaderships of these organizations than the broad consensus of their membership.

As a pioneer force in organization and leadership of the trades union movement, the SCP contributed to the building of a tradition of political activism and partisan manipulation of the trades union movement in the Sudan. Consequently, the rest of the political forces in the country as well as the successive governments came to react to the trades union movement primarily as political entities that espoused the political views of whoever managed to control their executive bodies. It was from such a perception that other political groups viewed the Professionals Front, which led the October uprising, with deep suspicion – as a communist-controlled body.[32]

By the same token, governments – particularly military ones – came to view trades unions as basically agents of the Communist Party (as long as they were controlled by the latter) and sought a strategy of containment towards them. The strategy adopted by the Abboud regime was simple: ban the unions, arrest their leaders and introduce new labour laws that would ensure government control. Nimeiri's labour policy, on the other hand, was more sophisticated as it involved recognition of the trades unions federations as corporate bodies under the umbrella of the ruling party – the SSU. The system allowed the government to filter the unions' leaderships through various stages and structures, until a loyal executive was installed at the national level.

In their turn, the other political parties tried to compete with the SCP for control of the executive bodies of the unions. The first to enter the fray was the Muslim Brotherhood, who – from the late 1950s – started to compete with the SCP over the leadership of the student unions. By the mid-1970s the student body became the stronghold of the Islamist movement, though the latter were not able to score similar successes in the rest of the trades union movement.

During the second parliamentary era, the NUP was able to dislodge the communist leadership of the Gezira Tenant Farmers and to retain a measure of control over the union during the subsequent decades. Other forces were gradually drawn into the race for control of the unions' leadership, and by the 1980s the trades unions movement was more heterogeneous in its political composition. Nonetheless, the SCP – by then significantly weakened – retained control of a significant sector of the union movement; namely the professionals and white-collar unions who played a leading role during the 1985 uprising. On the other hand, the leadership of the once powerful workers' and farmers' unions passed, almost entirely, to other parties (DUP, *Umma*, and the NIF to a lesser extent).

Yet, owing to the heterogeneity of its political composition, the trades union movement emerged in the second half of the 1980s as a separate force that was virtually autonomous from both the government and political parties. A reflection of both the strength and heterogeneity of the trade union movement was its representation in the last parliamentary government – formed in March 1989 – by two ministers of divergent politico/ideological persuasions.[33]

With the collapse of the third parliamentary regime, the trades unions found themselves yet again banned, their leaders and activists persecuted and their rank and file facing uncertainties in their job prospects and standards of living. An early showdown took place between the unions and the new regime in December 1989 when the physicians led a strike that was apparently supposed to be followed by other professionals. The move was harshly met by the government, which took a series of measures aimed at breaking the strike and preventing similar ones from being organized.

The leaders of the doctors' association were arrested, tortured and some of them tried and sentenced to death (although later pardoned), rank and file members of the union were intimidated, and armed NIF elements toured hospitals forcing the doctors to go back to work. Subsequently, the government adopted a firm and repressive policy towards the trades unionists that exceeded anything in Sudan's contemporary history, accompanied by massive and systematic layoffs. Consequently, large number of professionals and white-collar workers started to leave the country *en masse* in search of protection or alternative sources of living abroad.

Following its success in containing the union movement – through repression and intimidation – the government adopted policies that seemed to have eventually removed all traces of trades unionist militancy.

1 It sought to reorganize trades unions on the basis of *institutions* rather than *professions*; thus rendering all organizational experiences accumulated through half a century of trades unionist activism and professional solidarity virtually irrelevant and unworkable.[34] At the same time the Salvation regime continued the policies of previous military governments in trying to ensure control of unions' leaderships by loyal elements through suppression and intimidation of trades unionists from opposition parties.
2 The privatization measures, which resulted in huge reductions of the workforce in various institutions and reduced the role of the state as the main employer,

neutralized the impact of potential strikes on government operations and services.

As a result of these experiences and a decade of oppression and deliberate structural destruction, the future of the trades union movement as a significant political force became very uncertain if not questionable.

This development also called into question the role of the 'modern forces' whose pioneering role was much celebrated in Sudanese political debates. As seen above, the peak moment for the modern forces came in the late 1980s when the trades unions – the cornerstone of modern forces – were represented in the last government of al-Mahdi on a par with the political parties and the army. The wisdom of the day was that the Sudanese political process as evolved from 1985 onwards rested on three pillars: the political parties, the trades unions and the army. Later on, whether by accident or design, when the NDA was formed as an umbrella opposition to the Salvation regime, it rested on the tripartite formula of political parties, trades unions and the armed forces.

In reality, however, the concept of modern forces has become quite problematic. In the first place, the new power holders, the NIF and their military wing/allies were themselves part of the modern forces in sectoral and sociological terms. Therefore, the concept of *modern forces* could only be used in relation to particular ideological and political factions of the 'modern forces', namely secularists and leftists or those who championed the cause of modernity in general. Such a categorization would not accommodate the rank and file the of trades unions' structures, which were usually organized on economic, not ideological, grounds.

Ideological considerations apart, the deliberate destruction of the unions by the Salvation regime through repression, reorganization and privatization robbed the champions of modern forces of their most effective tool of political protest and action. Likewise, the expansion of higher educational institutions had the potential of removing the unique role of the educated elite in a virtually illiterate society. It was this sustained elitism that provided the justification for allocation of extra-territorial constituencies for graduates (first of secondary schools, and then of universities) during the three transitional periods in Sudanese contemporary politics (1953, 1965, 1986).

Town and country

A census conducted in 1955/56 at the independence of Sudan, showed the country's economy to be chiefly dominated by primary producers such as farmers and herdsmen. About 66 per cent of the population depend on agriculture and 15 per cent on animal husbandry. All in all about 81 per cent were dependent on land and water for their living. Therefore only a minority of the gainfully employed population were engaged in productive occupational sectors apart from cultivation and shepherding. In regional terms, it appears that the north and east were more developed than the south and west.[35]

As can be seen from the distribution of occupational groups, Sudan was dominated by a rural economy. The survey found 92 per cent of the population

living in rural areas (with 78 per cent living in rural settlements, and 14 being nomadic), against 8 per cent in urban locations distributed over 68 towns. A little over half of the urban population lived in seven large towns, five of which were in the north and central regions, one in the east (Port Sudan), and one in Kordofan in the west (al-Obyeid). Neither Darfur, nor any of the southern provinces appeared to have a major urban centre.[36]

A similar pattern may be witnessed with regard to the low literacy rates that more or less followed urban concentrations. At independence, over 80 per cent of the population were illiterate on average (with a 2.7 per cent literacy rate among females, and 21.6 per cent among males). Not surprisingly, the highest literacy rates were in Khartoum (61 per cent), followed by Northern province (56 per cent) and Blue Nile (36 per cent). Southern, Darfur, and Kordofan provinces fared poorly in educational achievement.[37]

The country profile as exhibited by the 1956 census pointed to the existence of a narrow-based and geographically confined modern economic sector alongside a traditional segment that provided the overriding majority of the population with their sources of living. Although this situation was sometimes characterized in terms of a modern/traditional duality, there were sufficient interactions between the two sectors. At the economic level the farmers and herdsmen of the traditional sector were linked to the urban markets, and by extension to the export–import outlets through a chain of traders, brokers and agents. Moreover, many of these traditional sector farmers and herdsmen found themselves compelled to take seasonal employment in modern irrigation schemes or mechanized farming in order to subsidize their incomes.

Interactions also existed at the levels of social and political organizations. Kinship and tribal affinities straddled the boundaries between modern and traditional sectors and so did religious and sectarian loyalties. Individuals and groups who migrated to towns and urban centres because of education, work or business tended to retain their links to their places of origin. Yet, all these interactions notwithstanding, there existed, and still does, a sharp dichotomy between the town and the country. It is a dichotomy that manifests itself mainly in the divergent, sometimes contradictory, life-styles and inequality of access to public and social services between the two sectors.

Limited modernization during the Condominium period meant that most of the social services – education, health, and public utilities in general – were confined to the limited urban centres that gradually came to develop a life-style that was distinct from traditional norms of life in rural areas and increasingly dependent on modern technology and facilities. The fact that the majority of the population lived outside these pockets of modern life – the urban centres – meant that a limited number of people had access to these services and life-styles.

Such was the structure inherited from the colonial regime, and it remained more or less the same for about two decades after independence. Most of the development ventures that were carried out from independence up to 1969 followed the pattern set forth by the Condominium administration: Gezira-style irrigation schemes, mechanized rain-fed farming, and essential transport facilities. The

overall outcome of these economic ventures was the expansion of the modern sector's base including the rise of new urban centres, and the drawing of more people under its jurisdiction. Yet the profile of the socioeconomic structure of the country changed very little, with the traditional sector still providing a livelihood for the majority of the population. Furthermore, the interactions between modern and traditional sectors seemed to have provided equilibrium and a balance between the divergent life-styles and contradictions between town and country.

Under Nimeiri's regime (1969–85) the country underwent significant changes and transformations that were bound to disrupt the balance between town and country and unleash the latent conflict between them. These transformations came as a result of the combined efforts of state policies, and the socioeconomic responses and developments that were generated by these policies.

During its leftist and populist phases (1969–71 and 1972–77), Nimeiri's regime introduced and pursued policies that would have a far-reaching impact, despite the changes in direction and in the regime's alliances. These included economic development plans and policies, the abolishment of native administration, and the expansion of general education.

In the field of economic development, Nimeiri's regime adopted a number of development plans that established new large agricultural and industrial projects (such as the Rahad agricultural scheme, and the Kenana sugar plantation), expanded the road transport network, and vigorously expanded the area of rain-fed mechanized farming schemes. Most of these ventures came as part of the 'breadbasket' strategy of the 1970s.

Regardless of the failure or success of these projects they had a major impact on the socioeconomic set-up of Sudanese society. Though the development schemes increased the modern sector's contribution to GDP and enhanced its capacity to provide a livelihood for a wider sector of the population, their ultimate impact on Sudanese society was negative.

In general the development programmes laid more emphasis on the modern sector's expansion at the expense of the traditional sector, a factor that gradually led to the decline of the subsistence economies of farmers and pastoralists. The expansion of both irrigation schemes and mechanized farming did not just grow at the expense of land and water resources that used to sustain subsistence economies, but also had serious implications on the environment with deleterious effects on the country's economy at large.

The urban bias of developmental schemes, combined with the decline of the subsistence economies, led to growing rural–urban migration. As the new projects seemed to offer employment opportunities and better access to social services, this rural–urban migration became a frequent feature; in 1983 Khartoum alone received some 511,000 new migrants.[38] The percentage of the population in urban areas overall rose from 13 per cent in 1965 to 20.5 per cent in 1983, and was believed to have reached 43 per cent by 2000.[39]

Figures show that the major cities attracted migration and steadily became centres of urbanization growth. The inhabitants of Khartoum accounted for 2.4 per cent of the country's population in 1955/56, which rose to 5.3 per cent in 1973; to

6.2 per cent in 1983; and then jumped to 11.7 per cent in 1993, at a time when Khartoum occupied less than 1 per cent of the country's area.[40]

In addition to the socioeconomic considerations, other factors were at work. The expansion of education in rural areas meant the rise of a younger generation with enhanced expectations that could hardly be satisfied in a declining rural economy. Meanwhile, rural Sudan, having almost lost its subsistence mode of living, was being rapidly integrated in a socioeconomic set-up characterized by rising rates of inflation and dominated by growing consumerism.

The abolishment of native administration coupled with the suppression of sectarian based parties (*Umma* and the DUP), meant the absence of the traditional institutions of social and political control, at a time of important changes and transformations. Hitherto, these institutions, though patriarchal in nature and manipulative at times, had contributed to sustaining the social integrity and harmony of the rural society. Their breakdown meant that this society was less well equipped to cope with the major changes and transformations.

The drought of the early 1980s, which resulted in the famine of 1984/85, was both a manifestation of, and a contributor to, the collapse of subsistence economy in rural Sudan. The outbreak of the second civil war in 1983 seemed to have sealed its fate.

The combined effects of these dynamics and changes led to accelerated rates of internal rural–urban migration and international out-migration to oil-rich countries. Both tendencies contributed to rapid urban growth. In its turn the growth of urban centres generated new problems and pressures. There is now more demand for education and health services, greater need for housing and indeed more pressure on public utilities. Urban areas consume more food supplies, and are now required to spend more on housing, sewage, water, transportation, electricity, and garbage collection. Yet, due to shortage of public funds and the increasing financial burden, large parts of towns – including squatter settlements of Greater Khartoum – lack adequate housing facilities, electricity and running water, with serious implications for public health.

At a broader economic level the new migrants were converted from producers contributing particularly to food production, into consumers competing for meagre resources in towns. At the same time, migrants were finding it increasingly difficult to secure proper jobs in towns. Rather they were swelling the 'informal sector' of the urban economy, mostly as petty traders and unskilled workers.[41]

In their turn these developments were bound to have important implications for the state–society relations. From the second half of the 1980s, the state came under heavy pressure as a result of the rising urban population and their competition for the diminishing resources and shrinking services.

Ethnicity and regionalism

It is common knowledge that Sudanese society is one that exhibits diversity in its ethnic, linguistic and religious composition. The census of 1955/56 showed the Sudan to be a home for at least 570 tribes and ethnic groups at the time of the

country's independence. In broader terms, this ethnic composition may be re-grouped into seven categories. About 39 per cent of those surveyed by the census claimed Arab descent, 30 per cent were classified as southerners (African affiliation), 13 per cent found to be westerners (denoting mainly non-Arab inhabitants of Darfur and parts of Kordofan), 6 per cent Nuba (inhabitants of the Nuba Mountains in southern Kordofan), 6 per cent Beja of eastern Sudan, 3 per cent Nubians of northern Sudan, and 3 per cent foreigners and miscellaneous.[42]

In terms of regional concentration, the Arabs formed about 74 per cent of the Blue Nile province in central Sudan, 61 per cent of Khartoum, 56 per cent of Kordofan, and 66 per cent of the Northern province. (Sudan had nine provinces at independence: Khartoum, Northern, Kasala, Blue Nile, Kordofan, Darfur, Equatoria, Bahr al-Ghazal, and Upper Nile.) Thus the Arabs or Arabized stock formed a majority in northern and central parts of Sudan. Westerners constituted a majority (63 per cent) in Darfur. Obviously, southerners composed the overwhelming majority in southern Sudan with the Nilotics (Dinka, Nuer and Shilluk) being the majority in Bahr al-Ghazal and Upper Nile, and the smaller ethnic tribal groups – of Bantu, and Nilo-Hamitic origins – inhabiting Equatoria. By and large, the regional distribution at the time of independence was characterized by the uniformity of ethnic composition of the population in each province.[43]

Linguistically, the country also demonstrated significant diversity. Arabic was shown by the survey to be spoken by 51 per cent of the population; yet 39 per cent stated an Arab descent. The extra 12 per cent therefore represented an indication of the expanding influence of the Arabic language and culture over other people. About 18 per cent spoke Nilotic languages and 12 per cent spoke Nilo-Hamitic languages. In general it was found that the various ethnic groups in Sudan spoke about 113 languages in addition to the dominant Arabic language.[44]

All in all, the profile of the country as drawn by the population census of 1955/56 reflected a social structure that was characterized by ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity. Yet to say that Sudanese society is characterized by ethnic and other diversities should not be automatically perceived as a suggestion that Sudanese politics is dominated by conflicting tribal and ethnic identities. Rather, the question of ethnicity must be located within the context of wider conflicts and divisions. At a primary level, this may be placed within: (a) the north–south divide and conflict; and (b) the centre–periphery dichotomy. At a subsidiary level ethnicity may be placed within the framework of the divergent emphases between local and national politics.

North and south

The north–south divide, which grew to become a permanent feature of Sudanese post-independence politics, is often regarded as a powerful manifestation of ethnicity. Indeed there is the stereotypical media reporting that 'war in Sudan is between the Arab-Muslim North and the Christian/animist South'. Yet, this is not just an oversimplification, but it also gives the inaccurate categorization of a conflict between two distinct ethnic and religious identities. In reality the situation is much more complex.

In sociopolitical terms, there are indeed distinct differences between the north and the south. The north experienced large-scale Arabization and Islamization over a lengthy period of time, as opposed to the predominantly African identity of the south, which maintained its ethnic and cultural traditions and continued to adhere to local religious beliefs (with a strong affinity to African traditions), in addition to the spread of Christianity among the educated elite. Additionally, there was a stronger and ancient tradition of state building in the north, as well as a wider interaction within the region as a result of large-scale demographic movements, the rise and fall of kingdoms, trade, and the spread of Islam. No comparable developments seemed to have taken place in the south, which remained more or less isolated from the north – apart from occasional mutual raids and frontier contacts – until the nineteenth century.

Important as these distinctions are, they do not by themselves explain the eruption of the north–south conflict. More direct causes have been traced to the existence of socioeconomic disparity between the two regions (in view of the concentration of all the development and infrastructural ventures in the north); the history of violence and slavery that characterized the process of integrating the south into Sudan polity during the Turko-Egyptian rule; the British 'southern policy'; and the rampant racism that stamped the institutional and individual attitudes of the northerners towards the southerners.

Yet, once the conflict had erupted and became the dominant feature of north–south relations, the distinct particularity of each region come into play as factors feeding the conflict, or obstacles hindering its resolution. In this sense ethnicity and religion were significant, not just as distinguishing factors, but also as essential considerations in the debates about the conflict resolution, and the problem of reaching a consensus over the country's identity.

At another level, and despite all the historical and sociocultural differences, the north–south conflict is not a regional one between the northern 'region', and the southern 'region'. Rather it is a conflict between the Sudanese state, which is primarily dominated by a northern political and economic elite, and a southern-armed opposition movement usually led by one or more factions of the southern elite. Within this framework, there is room for both collective/regional manifestations as well as heterogeneous and pluralistic complexities on both sides.

Thus over time the north has essentially dealt with the south from within the confines and security of the state and its subsidiary institutions, notably the army. Nonetheless, the north has been divided across the range of political parties and regimes with different blueprints, policies and strategies. Likewise, although the south shared and continues to share collective grievances against the northern establishment, it is equally divided into political parties and movements with divergent visions and strategies.

For reasons of history and divergent sociopolitical traditions, ethnicity played different roles between north and south. In addition to their control or proximity of the nation's state, or adoption of a national discourse, the main northern political forces were not organized on the basis of ethnic groups and tribes. Rather they rested either on sectarian loyalties (*Umma*, DUP), or ideological doctrines (SCP, Muslim Brotherhood, etc.). This is not so in the south where tribal and ethnic

groupings continued to be the strongest forms of sociopolitical expression and as such constituted the power bases for most of the parties and movements in the south. In this sense divisions in the south often appeared as tribal, whereas those in the north were often projected in political or ideological terms.

In the south, ethnic-based dichotomies existed between the Nilotics and Equatorians at one level and within each category at another. The movement that fought the first civil war – Anya Nya – was led and mostly, but not exclusively, joined by Equatorians; whereas the SPLA/M – though more representative and broadly based – was mostly dominated by Nilotics, particularly the Dinka. In both cases, other groups in the south as well as influential players in the country at large, tended to take positions or devise policies that were more often than not informed by an actual or perceived tribal hegemony of the movements in question. That said it is important to bear in mind the differences in military strategies, political significance and representation between the two rebel movements.

When the first civil war was resolved through the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972, leading to the establishment of regional autonomy for the south, tribal and ethnic divisions took a different dimension. On the one hand the regional autonomy enhanced a southern identity in political as well as social and cultural terms. On the other hand, the regional government and politics opened up new ground for competition for power, resources and jobs within the south.

There were also disputes among the southern political elite: notably between the ex-Anya Nya leaders (represented by Joseph Lagu) and the non-Anya Nya or 'insiders', represented by Abel Alier who became the first president of the regional government, and his group. Within this framework tribal and ethnic divisions flared up significantly, first between the Dinka and the Equatorians, and then at local levels among smaller ethnic divisions and sub-groups. Such divisions and rivalries enabled the central government under Nimeiri to play off one faction against the other and created the motif behind the policy of redivision of the southern region in the early 1980s.

During the second civil war, the ethnic issue appeared on at least two levels: (a) in association with the military conflict itself; and (b) at the political level in relation to the discussions and debates about a peaceful settlement to the war, and in search of a viable political system for the Sudan.

At the *military level*, the ethnic factor surfaced at several levels, such as recruitment, the phenomena of tribal militias, and warlordism. As far as recruitment was concerned, it should be stressed that the SPLA/M was not essentially an ethnic-oriented movement but an ideological one, with a declared programme that called for the establishment of a 'New Sudan'. Yet, it was a southern-based movement that came about in response to the failures of southern 'regional' politics, and as a manifestation of the collapse of the Addis Ababa arrangement.

Established against the backdrop of the controversy around the redivision of the south in the early 1980s, the SPLA/M found its main recruitment ground among the Nilotic tribes (Dinka, Nuer and Shilluk) the bulk of which had opposed redivision.[45] In broad terms, therefore, the SPLA/M was better received in the Nilotic areas where the movement was viewed as a liberator, than in Equatoria

where it was regarded as an invader.[46] This is not to suggest that all the Nilotics joined the SPLA/M and all the Equatorians were opposed to it. The presence of fairly autonomous sub-groups within the major tribal groupings in different geographic locations put the emphasis on local rather than regional politics and allowed for divergent agendas and choices for groups within the same tribe or ethnic group. Thus groups of the Nuer tribe fought on both sides of the SPLA and its rivals such as Anya Nya II or government militia, mostly on account of considerations dictated by the local politics of each group. Likewise, the SPLA's reception was not enthusiastic in certain areas of Dinka concentration, such as Aweil in Bahr al-Ghazal where the influence of pro-division politicians was great.[47]

On the other hand, the SPLA enjoyed substantial support among the Pari of eastern Equatoria, where hundreds of young men apparently joined the movement in order to ascertain their claims for tribal leadership.[48]

By and large, however, responses of the government and rival groups to the SPLA/M and its activities, particularly during the first years of its existence, were often based on the perception that there was a hegemony of one particular ethnic group, the Dinka, over the movement. As a result, Dinka civilians suffered many atrocities due to retaliatory attacks in response to operations carried out by the SPLA/M.

With regard to the tribal militias, it was on the battlefield that the ethnic issue surfaced even more prominently, as diverse ethnic groups soon became party to the conflict on both sides. The rise of the SPLA/M was accompanied by a dispute between its founding members and the leadership of the previous rebel group known as Anya Nya II on matters of political strategy and leadership; hence the latter refused assimilation within the SPLA/M and insisted on retaining the independence of Anya Nya II. Disputes between the revived Anya Nya II and the SPLA/M soon degenerated into fighting between the two movements.

Such a situation provided the government with the opportunity of trying to encourage one faction against the other using tribal affinities as a vehicle. Thus the Governor of Upper Nile region at the time, D.K. Matthews, was able to persuade the mainly Nuer leadership of Anya Nya II to rally on his side, the government's side, against the Dinka as represented by Garang and the SPLA/M.[49] In doing so the leadership of Anya Nya II aided by the government became organized along tribal lines, recruiting exclusively from the Nuer.[50]

During the transitional period the TMC continued the policy of supporting the Anya Nya II militia to fight on the side of the government. As the scope of the war widened, the TMC started arming other 'friendly' tribal militias to fight the SPLA/M on their own behalf or on the side of the government. The process of creating proxy militias included arming Muslim Arabic speaking tribes such as the Missiryya in Kordofan and the Rizayqat in Darfur, known as the *Murahalin* militia, to counter the SPLA's expansion northward. Likewise, southern tribes hostile to the Dinka-dominated SPLA such as the Mundari, the Murle and the Bari, were also armed or encouraged by the government. Meanwhile, proxy militias were also recruited by the SPLA in areas in which it did not have a permanent presence.

The military strategies of the government and SPLA notwithstanding, the phenomenon of the tribal militia is a complex one. As put by Alex de Waal it represented the combination of at least three factors: local disputes, economic deprivation, and deliberate military strategy.[51]

Thus, in arming tribal groups adjacent to SPLA areas of operations, the government utilized traditional inter-tribal animosities and inter-ethnic conflicts between groups who shared a given geographical locality and competed over land and water resources. Though these had animosities existed as long as these groups had existed, their impact was somehow kept under control either by local mediation (tribal reconciliation councils) or intervention of the state to impose law and order.

However, the abolishment of native administration in the early 1970s and the increasing economic deterioration of the early 1980s (as manifested by retreating pastures, expanding desert, and successive droughts) both created more incentives for tribal conflict and removed the means for its resolution. Meanwhile the state appeared on the scene, not to resolve the tribal conflict or impose law and order, but to provide one party or the other with modern weapons, and to fuel the conflict further.

The whole process pointed to a weak state incapable of asserting its authority or fighting its own war against what it regarded as a rebel army; hence it resorted to war by proxy. Once introduced, the militia war assumed a life of its own and the situation became rife with indiscriminate raids and plunder across tribal frontiers. As a result, tribal and ethnic divisions became more sharpened and hostility between them enhanced.[52]

The ethnic factor was warlordism. In some cases ethnic divisions provided the framework for political and military conflicts, such that between the SPLA and *Murahalin* militia in the 1980s; in other cases political divisions soon degenerated into ethnic/tribal conflict, as happened with SPLA factionalism in 1991, which soon became a Dinka versus Nuer/Shilluk conflict.

By 1989/90 the SPLA/M was in control of about 90 per cent of the territory in southern Sudan, including many important towns in all provinces of the south. As the movement's strength and the territory under its control expanded it became clear to rival groups that there were more benefits in cooperating with the SPLA/M or fighting on its side rather than fighting against it. Thus, gradually, the SPLA/M managed to incorporate most of the southern-based militia that had hitherto fought against it, and was also able to neutralize the *Murahalin* militia.[53]

At that point the SPLA/M had effectively become the most influential regional movement throughout the country at large, and one with clearly pronounced claims to power at the national level.

Yet by the end of 1992 that picture had significantly changed. The split of 1991 coupled with the major government offensive of 1992, which managed to dislodge the movement from several important positions, triggered a process of further splits and factionalism that weakened the movement both militarily and politically and hampered its regional integrity.

Between 1992 and 1995 the SPLA/M factionalism with its multiple breakaways and splinter groups pushed the entire region to the brink of rampant warlordism

characteristic of chronic civil wars. Once again, the ethnic factor was significant, sometimes in providing the main motif behind a split, but mostly in providing a given faction with a constituency and a recruitment ground. That was how a leader like Riek Machar, who broke with Garang on matters of policy and the movement's democracy, soon became little more than a Nuer chieftain. The SPLA-mainstream (as the Garang faction was known at the time) had in its turn become almost an entire Dinka movement. Such a state of affairs provided the government with fertile ground to advance its favourite concept of tribal war in the south.

After that, the SPLA/M was more or less vindicated as a regional movement, as it regained some of its lost territory (though it never recovered its whole territory of 1989/90), won over some of the breakaway factions and military leaders and restored its position as the main force in the south to reckon with. Nonetheless the way things developed in the 1990s showed that despite the SPLA/M's national agenda and ideological discourse, the ethnic factor remained the strongest form of identity with any plausible political or military utility for the movement.

With regard to the *political framework*, the ethnic issue became part of the discussion on the distribution of wealth and power in Sudan and formed part of the 'nationalities question' that the SPLA put forward in negotiations with northern political forces from 1985 onwards.

A document titled *On the New Sudan* prepared by SPLA/M's Department of Information, pointed to the contradiction between 'the projected homogeneity [of Sudan] as an Arab state and its reality as a multi-national state' and demanded the resolution of the *nationality* and religious questions.[54] The document maintained that 'the diverse nationalities making up Sudan can and will have to coalesce into a Sudanese nation (National Formation) with its own distinct civilization'.[55] In a more recent document, the SPLA/M leader Garang referred to what he called the 'contemporary diversity' of Sudan, namely that 'Sudan is composed of many nationalities, many ethnic groups, and many tribes'. The challenge in Garang's view was how 'to fuse together our historical diversity [civilizations of Kush, Nubia, Islamic Kingdoms, etc.] and our contemporary diversity in order to evolve a Sudanese nation'.[56]

The SPLA/M never elaborated its concept of nationality and the nationalities question, and whether it is indeed different from, or synonymous with ethnicity.[57] Nonetheless, and primarily at the instigation of the SPLA/M, the theme of the 'nationalities question' found its way into the Koka Dam Declaration of March 1986, a document that received the agreement of important political forces across the country at the time.[58] In any event, from the mid-1980s onwards almost all political groups and active intelligentsia seemed to have gradually reached a broad consensus that there was a need to recognize Sudan's reality as a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society. There was no clear idea, however, of how this could be reflected in the country's political structure.

The discussion about ethnicity was closely linked to the debate over the issue of identity, a debate that also became prominent from the mid-1980s onwards, particularly in connection with the projected constitutional conference. Several assessments and blueprints were put forward, ranging from Arabism, to Africanism,

to the synthesis between the two, and the 'melting pot' theories.[59] An elaborate examination of this debate is not the purpose of this study. At the strictly political level, however, the debate was about power: domination/exclusion, or pluralism/participation. In reading SPLA/M's literature, in which the question of identity was a very significant theme, one comes across the recurrent contention that power in Sudan was usurped by a political and economic elite drawn from the north whose identity was Arab-Islamic, to the exclusion of other regions, ethnic groups and cultural identities.[60] However, the SPLA did not elaborate on how an alternative all-encompassing and accommodating political system could be established; its own experience of managing the multi-ethnic southern population in areas under its control was not that impressive either.

Centre and periphery

The population census of 1955/56 showed significant imbalances and regional disparities in socioeconomic terms. The southern provinces lagged behind with regard to economic development and urban settlements; and by extension fared poorly in educational achievements and accessibility to state-sponsored services. By contrast, the six northern provinces took the lead in economic and social progress in general terms, though the western provinces were more comparable to the southern region than to the rest of the northern provinces.

Of the total domestic investment on the eve of independence, Khartoum, Northern and Kassala provinces received 56 per cent – 64 per cent of government investment and 60 per cent of investment by private enterprises; while Blue Nile, Kordofan and Equatoria received 20 per cent, 15 per cent and 23 per cent respectively. This regional disparity was caused by the uneven socioeconomic development in the Sudan.

The economic policies of the Anglo-Egyptian administration led to the concentration of all socioeconomic activities in the central region, Khartoum, and Northern provinces to the neglect of other regions. One decade after independence, a study showed that almost 75 per cent of the industrial plants were located in the Khartoum area. Two decades after independence, another study argued that almost all the towns that had an industrial base were located within central Sudan and the riverian lands.[61] The whole process seemed to entrench a dichotomy between the centre (in both sociopolitical and geographical terms), and the periphery.

As we know from the profile of the 1956 census, the central and northern regions were home to the majority of Sudanese Arabs and the Arabized population. In that sense the regional disparity between the centre and peripheries also manifested itself in the racial marginalization of the non-Arab elements. In such a context, the inhabitants of the peripheral regions tended to express grievances against the hegemony of Khartoum – the centre of political and economic power – as well as against the hegemony of 'Arabs' of riverian Sudan.

The resentment against the hegemony of the centre came from the educated elements of the marginalized regions whose education as well as contacts with the centre induced them to lead the campaign for a more equitable distribution of

resources that would give their regions better access to services. Thus, from the mid-1960s, regional movements such as the Beja Congress of Eastern Sudan, and the Nuba Mountains Union and Darfur Front (respectively of central and far western Sudan), appeared on the political scene and even managed to elect members of parliament from their number to articulate their demands in the capital.

All these regional movements shared the objectives of articulating the demands of their respective regions and campaigning for more say in the affairs of state at national level. At the same time these movements tried to act as vehicles for raising the awareness of the populace in their regions about their rights and interests.[62] Regardless of the success or failure of these movements they managed to put regionalism firmly on the agenda of national politics.

Thus, although the regional movements were disbanded by Nimeiri's regime alongside other political parties, the leaderships of these movements as well as their agenda survived and most continued their careers under the auspices of Nimeiri's ruling party, the SSU. In this context it has been argued that the regionalization introduced by Nimeiri's regime in the early 1980s was to a 'certain degree a result of lobbying by the leaders of the [former] regional movements'.[63]

After the fall of Nimeiri, regional movements appeared once again on the political scene, though in a significantly different environment. In 1985/86 a coalition of regional groupings under the name of Rural Solidarity Movement (*tadamun quwa al-riff*) appeared, mostly spearheaded by educated elements from marginalized regions resident in Khartoum. The grouping did not win any seats in the parliamentary elections of 1986, yet the campaign on behalf of marginalized areas had become more outspoken compared with the 1960s.

The changes that took place during the Nimeiri years deeply affected rural Sudan, destroying most of its economy and driving large numbers of its population into the urban areas. Moreover, these regions, particularly Darfur and the land of the Beja in eastern Sudan, were hard hit by the famine of 1984/85. For these reasons the regional movements that appeared in the 1980s combined campaigning on behalf of the marginalized regions with articulating the interests of the migrant country people who settled, mostly in poor conditions, in the outskirts of Khartoum and other cities. Most of the migrants came to swell the ranks of the urban poor (locally known as *shamasa*, in reference to those who work – mostly as petty traders and unskilled workers – under the heat of the sun). It is therefore not surprising that the programmes of the resurrected regional movements of the 1980s included acknowledgement of the role of the urban poor in the political process.[64]

Another tendency that became more visible during the third parliamentary period in the 1980s was the appearance of regional lobbies within the mainstream parties with the aim of campaigning on behalf of their marginalized regions. In this sense both sectarian parties, but more significantly the *Umma* party, appeared more accommodating at the organizational level to the presence of such pressure groups, but in effect did nothing to address their demands and grievances while in power. On the other hand the ideological parties, the SCP and NIF, tried to champion the cause of these regional groupings in their political discourse (the Communist Party

was the first to endorse regional autonomy for the south in the 1950s; whereas the NIF proposed federalism in the 1980s). Yet both parties, however, saw the ultimate solution as being in the transformation of Sudanese society on socialist or Islamic grounds.

After 1985, the SPLA/M appeared as the most outspoken champion of the cause of marginalized groups. In fact it was the SPLA/M that marketed the concept of marginalized areas in Sudanese political literature. The SPLA/M appealed also to the urban poor, the *shamasa*, who mostly originated from the marginalized areas.[65] On the ground, the movement tried to recruit supporters from the Nuba Mountains, southern Blue Nile, and Darfur and even to take the war to these areas (they were less successful with Darfur than with the other two areas). Later on, particularly in the 1990s, the SPLA/M negotiators started to present the issue of self-determination for the marginalized areas – on a par with the south – as part of their package regarding the future political settlement to the conflict in the Sudan.

Local versus national

As pointed out earlier, political processes and organizations in northern Sudan did not rest on tribal or ethnic groups. Yet, ethnicity and tribal identity were not completely devoid of any sociopolitical value. Native administration, which was actively pursued by the Anglo-Egyptian administration from the 1920s and remained in force until abolished by the May regime in1970, contributed to the advancement of tribal politics at the local level.

Likewise, the suppression of political parties during Nimeiri's era, and the failure of the SSU to become a credible alternative, seemed to ignite ethnic and tribal affinities as more meaningful forums for sociopolitical platforms at the local level in both rural and urban areas. The introduction of regionalism in 1983 also encouraged ethnic and tribal politics at the regional level. Hence the rise of regional institutions soon assumed ethnic and tribal dimensions. A case in point was the rejection by the majority of people in both provinces of an initial proposal to have both Darfur and Kordofan as one region, and the appointment of a Fur, in the person of Ahmad Dirage, as the Governor of Darfur.[66]

The introduction of regional government coincided with the controversy over redivision of the south, and the renewal of the civil war. As we have seen, in both events the ethnic issue figured significantly, and soon became a driving force. Therefore, in some areas – mostly Kordofan and Darfur – the regional authorities, who were themselves formed on ethnic and tribal grounds, were soon dragged into the complexities of the war and its inter-ethnic dimensions and tribal militias.

At the spatial level, the migration from rural to urban areas usually resulted in intensification of ethnic identities as newly arrived migrants tended to associate with other migrants from their own tribes or ethnic groups. Increased migration to the urban areas – from the late 1970s onwards – coincided, and was indeed precipitated by, the worsening economic situation in rural Sudan. This in reality meant that migrants had to compete for scarce jobs and services and to face the growing inability of the urban areas and their 'modern' institutions to absorb the

newcomers. Accordingly, new migrants had to rely on networks of their relatives or fellow countrymen from earlier migrations, who provided shelter, hospitality and contacts to the new arrivals to enable them to settle in the town. The importance of these migrants' networks was that they acted as compensation for the social institutions they left behind in their home villages.

At the same time the absence of national social, political or civic institutions capable of absorbing or providing support to new migrants in the urban areas had left them with no option but to pursue the obvious avenue of ethnic solidarity. Once again local affinities and primary loyalties found their place in the metropolis and eventually penetrated the sociopolitical processes at national level.

The parliamentary elections of 1986 reflected the growing presence of ethnic and localized tendencies in national politics. Thus a regional party – the Nuba-based Sudan National Party, won a constituency in Khartoum, the national capital. Historically, the constituencies of Khartoum and other large urban centres were usually the lot of ideological and 'national' parties; hence this was a reflection of a political choice that emphasized national rather than local identity. If the victory of a 'regional' party in Khartoum reflected the changing demography of the city, it also showed clearly the political choices of the migrants. In a way the tendency may also be taken as a manifestation of the increased ruralization of the city.

The introduction of federalism (26 states) by the Salvation regime in 1992 further enhanced tribal and ethnic divisions at the local level and even carried them into national politics. The Salvation regime not only banned the mainstream parties – *Umma* and the DUP – but deliberately encouraged tribalism and tried to revive native administration in an attempt to weaken the constituencies of these parties. With the absence or weakening of national political platforms, tribal and ethnic affinities came to assume more importance as the only possible alternatives for political action.

People who would previously have articulated their demands through political parties, trades unions, or other independent platforms to local and central authorities came increasingly to raise them through ethnic and tribal platforms. Moreover, suppression of pluralist politics and the conduct of elections on single-party tickets, the ruling party, also allowed ethnic and tribal identities to creep in as differentials among candidates who otherwise shared the same ideological credentials.

In the first instance, where people resorted to their ethnic and tribal affiliations in place of their banned political platforms, ethnicity appeared as resistance to a 'national' vision being imposed from a particular perspective, in this case Islamist. The second instance, where members of the ruling party competed with each other on tribal or ethnic grounds, represented the shrinking of the nationalist agenda of the ruling elite and its regeneration into fragmented ethnic loyalties. In both cases the result was a shift from national to local loyalties. Local affinities became increasingly elevated to the levels of national politics.

6 Conclusion

The Sudan – which was created from an amalgamation of Arabs, Nubians (or Arabized Nubians) and Africans – has been involved in a painful search for its soul for the past half a century. Failure to come to grips with its identity realities led to political and economic instability that expressed itself in a chain of brief parliamentary regimes, followed by longer military ones, each of which was ousted by a popular uprising. In the meantime, civil war has raged throughout most of the country's independent history.

The country inherited a soft state structure and a narrowly based, if dynamic, civil society. Thus during parliamentary regimes, which were usually weak and divided, the social and civil society movements appeared stronger and in a better position to influence state policies and agenda. However, the experiences of military regimes showed that they could prevail through will, determination and oppression and hold their ground for longer periods. The popular protests and uprisings notwithstanding, the first military regime fell because of its lack of will to rule; whereas the second military regime of General Nimeiri collapsed because of its inability to use force.

Nonetheless, throughout the history of independent Sudan, the state remained weak and incapable of either coercing or rewarding. Meanwhile, because of the narrowing base of the ruling elite, which pursued its own interests even at the expense of other members of the same elite, and its inability to pursue or expand on economic development, each regime ended up worse than its predecessor. From the end of the 1970s until the time when the country knocked on the doors of the IMF, the Sudan had resorted to crisis management at both political and economic levels. There were neither coherent plans of any sort, nor the political will or vision to push for change.

The absence of a national party, leadership or representative platform to address the growing crises of Sudanese state and society, led in the end to the re-surfacing and mushrooming of tribal affiliations and tendencies at the expense of national loyalty. The lengthy years of military rule and suppression eroded the ability of the mainstream/sectarian parties to accommodate the regional and ethnic grievances. As a result, the country's economy continued to deteriorate and the successive governments were not able either to tap its huge natural resources or to stop the economic decline. Thus, instead of being a breadbasket for the region, Sudan was plagued by famines and desertification.

On the other hand, the Sudanese state, which was primarily inherited from the imperial period (Condominium rule) and maintained with some modifications throughout the independent era, became caught up in a perpetual crisis that weakened it both politically and structurally. By the second half of the 1980s, the state had lost its capacity to lead and control and was barely grappling with crisis management.

The present Salvation-NIF regime tried in one shot to resolve the country's problems by applying its own version of an Islamic ideological solution. At the political level it started by suppressing all other political forces – sectarian parties, the south and the left – pushing all of them to ally under the umbrella of the National Democratic Alliance. At the ideological level the Salvation regime started an intensive process of indoctrination of society (through media, education and *jihad*).

The regime redrew the state machinery (staffing it with committed NIF cadres) in a decisive and effective way that had never been seen before. Through its missionary zeal, determination and ruthless oppression, it managed to destroy the post-imperial state – or what was left of it – and re-establish its own state. In a way the attempt may be regarded as the second establishment of the state in contemporary Sudan, the first being the independent state, which was a modified version of the imperial state.

However, the Salvation economic programme – characterized by privatization, lifting up of the safety net, reducing subsidies, and systematic reduction of public sector jobs had several casualties. It led to widespread poverty and to almost wiping out the middle class, which was supposed to be the power base of the NIF (judging by the results of the 1986 elections). Likewise the policies of the Salvation regime appeared to have dislodged the old capitalist and business classes and effected a redistribution of wealth in favour of Islamist business groups and government supporters.

At the social and structural levels the Salvation regime may soon fall victim to some of its populist policies, such as the massive expansion of higher education. This unprecedented educational expansion is bound to create future problems, as more young people – with enhanced expectations – enter the labour market in search of jobs and status.

The way ahead?

After seizing power, the NIF was faced with the task of state building, and seemed to fall short of what was needed. Hasan al-Turabi, the NIF's leader and ideologue (until his ousting in 1999) said in a lecture in London in 1992 that the available *fiqh* (jurisprudence) met only 25 per cent of the modern state's needs and the rest remained to be filled somehow. Yet the Islamist decade-long rule does not seem to have produced the promised imaginative Islamic solutions in today's state and society.

Despite the success of the Islamist movement in controlling and maintaining power, the experience has raised specific issues in relation to the projected Islamic

state, such as the position of non-Muslims in an Islamic polity; the relationship between Islam, human rights and democracy; and the mechanism of settling internal differences or power disputes within the Islamist movement itself.

In the Sudanese context, the question of non-Muslims is not just a question of minority/majority or equality and rights. Rather it is an issue that closely cuts across the perpetual conflict between a government dominated by northern Muslims, and a southern rebel movement dominated by non-Muslims. Under the Salvation regime, the war did not just escalate but was forcefully prosecuted by the government under the banner of *jihad*. The pursuit of the civil war as a *jihad* focused attention on the religious dimension of the conflict and complicated the prospects of its resolution, particularly in view of the SPLA/M's calls for the establishment of a secular political system.

Nonetheless, the Salvation regime insisted that its system was capable of accommodating non-Muslims as well as Muslims. Federalism was advanced as a formula that provided for devolved power, and allowed the predominantly non-Muslim southerners to rule themselves. The federal structure was also proposed as a formula to resolve the issue of the *shari'a* through exemption of the southern states from the application of *shari'a* laws. In the Khartoum Agreement of 1997, the Salvation government went a step further by recognizing the right of self-determination for the south and endorsement of a virtually secular political system at the federal level.

These steps notwithstanding, the various rounds of peace negotiations between Salvation and the mainstream SPLA/M did not provide any agreement or settlement. On the other hand, recognition of the right of self-determination, although representing a very unorthodox step from an Islamist-*jihadist* government, did not address the thorny question of the status of non-Muslims under an Islamic state.

The Khartoum Agreement, however, provided another formula by endorsing the concept of citizenship as the basis of all rights. Indeed, citizenship is a concept that is capable of providing a good basis for equality and rights. Yet, it is a secular concept that, if pushed to its logical conclusion, would undermine the whole rationale behind the imposition of an Islamist vision and doctrine.

Whether an Islamic government is compatible with the modern concepts of democracy and human rights is an issue that has been confronting the Salvation regime throughout its rule.

The issue of access to power is far from being an academic question. The way a political movement attains power is bound to influence the way it deals with other political forces as well as society at large. Therefore, after the NIF assumed power through a military coup, its priority was consolidation of its rule, a task to which it attended by the employment of sheer force and oppression. It was this situation that provided the context for the gross human rights violations that characterized Salvation-NIF rule, particularly during its first five years in power.

As for democracy, the Salvation regime was wrong-footed from the outset since it came to power as a result of a military coup that overthrew a democratically elected government. A decade later it could safely be said that nothing uniquely

Islamic seemed to have been produced by the Salvation regime. After a period of trial and error it established a system that did not differ from other authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and Africa except in its ideological cover. When the government started a process of ostensibly opening up the press, elections and registered political associations, the apparent aim was to produce something similar to the systems of 'controlled democracy' prevalent in the region (cases in point are indeed Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria).

Meanwhile the Islamist movement had to face tests of power and disputes within its leadership. With the official dissolution of the NIF, a 'super organization' began to play a bigger role based on personal initiatives, with no organizational mechanism of checks and balances.

The first signs of a struggle for power appeared in the Islamist movement following an assault on its leader Hasan al-Turabi in Canada in 1992 centring around who should be the successor. Later on divisions crystallized around Turabi himself, his continued leadership of the movement, his heavy-handed approach towards his aides, and his attempts to assume more executive powers.

The struggle surfaced during the conference of the ruling party, the National Congress, in December 1998 when a group of prominent Islamist figures raised a petition calling for curtailing Turabi's powers and for more consultation in the decision-making process.

Finally the struggle culminated in December 1999 when the parliament, of which Turabi was the speaker, was dissolved and a state of emergency declared by the president of the republic Omar al-Bashir. In May 2000 Turabi was removed as the Secretary-General of the National Congress Party, which effectively split into two factions: one siding with Turabi, the other with president al-Bashir. Subsequently, Turabi and his faction formed their own party, the Popular National Congress, to counter the ruling party.

The whole episode did not differ from similar disputes and struggles for power within secular authoritarian regimes in the region.

On the other hand though the Salvation regime has clearly failed in its endeavours to restructure Sudanese society and has had to fall back on modern, democratic principles that it used to despise (pluralism, freedoms, and even self-determination) it has managed to effect far-reaching changes in state and society.

For the first time in Sudanese politics a leader of a party faced a successful revolt from his own disciples. Though the removal of Turabi was brought about by the sheer power of the state, it sent a message to other parties too whose leaders had been in their positions for decades. After all Turabi was the leader who transformed the party from a mere student organization and lobby group into a modern political party that sought power, then achieved and controlled it for more than a decade against all odds, domestically, regionally and internationally. The *Umma* party saw a similar move when Mubarak El-Mahdi led a breakaway group and joined the government against the will of Sadiq, who resorted back to his *Ansar* base, and got himself elected as Imam, a position he had shunned for 30 years.

Furthermore, with a kind of controlled democracy, a margin of liberties and a facade of pluralist politics, the regime thought it could continue its control over

the state and the economy while the others played around without posing any serious threat to its hold on power.

At the economic level the flow of oil is changing the economic climate, improving relations with the IMF and European Union, and enhancing Sudan's position in the region. Sudan has now acquired a significance of its own, not as a result of external factors or geopolitical considerations as in its previous history. Long-term adversaries like Ethiopia and Eritrea are more inclined now to deal with the regime than to work towards its overthrow. The improved economic climate and reduction of the state's role in running the economy through privatization, have opened the way for the revival of the middle and business classes, with all possible political ramifications for the future of the country.

Yet the most significant progress is the peace process through a reinvigorated IGAD role with active backing from the United States and Britain. A framework agreement was signed between the government and the SPLA, followed by a suspension of hostilities that covered the whole country for the first time in the 20-year long civil war, but detailed issues of wealth and power sharing still have to be solved. The ups and downs of the process leave the situation open to scepticism.

From their reconciliation with the Nimeiri regime in 1977 throughout the third parliamentary era, the Islamist movement has been for about 25 years in the corridors of power; the last ten years of which on its own. As such, the Islamists have had the longest period of governing in Sudan of all political forces. Yet, it now appears very hard to sell the concept of a religious state again to the Sudanese people, not just because of the unhappy memories and atrocities associated with the experiment, but because it simply did not work and the Islamist groups ended up fighting each other. The regime has now entered a new phase based on its own sheer grip on power. Its major bargain is to capitalize on its achievement in producing and exporting oil, and on the promise that it is about to deliver the long awaited peace for the whole country.

The threat to the regime comes mainly from its policies such as federalism and education expansion, which have raised people's expectation. If the margin of political and press freedoms is to be sustained, these expectations may develop into a serious challenge to the regime in the near future, especially if a peace deal is signed, leading to a national unity government and eventually new and free elections.

At this stage, Sudan seems to be at a crossroads, either to lead the way for democracy, peace and development simultaneously, and for the first time in its history, or to delve into a period of fragmentation.

Postscript

By the Autumn of 2004, Sudan seem to be at a real crossroads: to tackle the issue of nation building once and for all and end soul searching that has engulfed the country for more than half a century, or squander the opportunity, which will open the way for fragmenting Africa's largest country. After two long years of tough negotiations with the southern rebels, six protocols covering power, wealth sharing as well as security arrangements and agreements on three contested areas (Nuba Mountains, Southern Blue Nile and Abyei) have been signed in May 2004 in Naivasha, Kenya, but a final deal awaits the resolution of some technical issues like ceasefire and measures guaranteeing the forthcoming peace.

But the process has been stalled by the crisis in Darfur, western Sudan, following a rebellion that started in early 2003. Termed by the UN as the worst kind of humanitarian crisis, the Darfur conflict was submitted to the UN Security Council by the end of July 2004 and resulted in two resolutions (in July and September 2004) which, among other things, threatened Sudan with sanctions if it did not act seriously to end the crisis that has resulted in some 1.2 million people being displaced. The UN also backed the efforts of the African Union (AU) to send troops to Darfur for ceasefire monitoring and assistance with security. The AU furthermore offered to mediate politically, in talks between the Sudan government and two Darfur rebel groups, which were hosted by Nigeria, the current AU president. By early September 2004, these talks have collapsed over disagreements between the two sides, but are supposed to resume in about a month or so.

At the same time and after long shunning of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the long standing opposition umbrella, the government opted for a political dialogue with the NDA under Egyptian auspices. The two sides apparently resolved to continue negotiations within an agreed set of agenda, though nothing significant seems to have been achieved at this round. Though these efforts are fragmented, for the first time all political forces seem to be engaged in serious talks to resolve the fundamental problems of the country. In this context the accords signed with the south, known as the Naivasha Accords, provide a precedent to deal with the real issues of relationship between the centre and regions, as well as power and wealth sharing; thus they open the way for a real change towards a viable political system capable of taking the country along the path of peace and development.

This climate coincides with two other important developments: the international and regional interest in Sudan coupled with the growing importance of the country as an oil producing state that is expected to pump some half a million barrels a day in 2005 and double that amount a year or two later. Oil could be a blessing or a curse. If Sudan is to continue its tradition of political instability, the newly acquired oil wealth will be wasted in buying arms to deal with insurgencies erupting in southern, western and, potentially, eastern Sudan (i.e. the regions known as the 'marginalized' areas). But a change in the centre towards democracy, protection of human rights and peace will open the way for accountability and transparency and a better use of oil revenues for the sake of the people in forms of expenditure on social development and welfare.

The international concern over Sudan could be utilized to keep up the interest on the country and to find a way out of its current crises; Sudan could be used as an example of how a developing country could break the cycle of failed state. However, despite these positive signals and processes that can pave the way for a remarkable change with regional ramifications, having three different tracks of negotiations with various political forces (Naivasha, Kenya with the south, Abuja, Nigeria with Darfur rebels and Cairo, Egypt with the NDA) is in itself a problem as it may be tempting for the government and other actors to play one force against the other. On the other hand, the Naivasha Accords, which were regarded as having the potential of creating an atmosphere conducive for change, fell prey to the Darfur crisis. It remains to be seen whether the three tracks of talks, will collectively bring about the long awaited peaceful change in Sudan, or will be yet another wasted opportunity.

One fact is slowly, but clearly, emerging out of this turmoil: that resorting to a military coup to seize power by one political group to tackle the country's problems, is no longer a viable option, out of sheer experience of more or less all political forces of the country. In addition, it is also clear that it is hard and almost impossible for one party or a political force to rule the country on its own. It is perhaps a tacit recognition of this fact that explains these multifaceted political processes. To move forward Sudan needs to break the cycle of a brief, weak parliamentary system, overtaken by a military coup, to be toppled by a popular uprising that paves the way for yet another brief, weak parliamentary experiment.

If all the political forces currently engaged in talks with the government are to reach a consensus on a mechanism for allocation of power and national wealth, then Sudan would be poised for an evolutionary, hybrid stage that may open the way for an orderly change of regime towards a more representative form of government and change of power through ballot boxes, not bullets. Yet a major question remains as to whether the state, which was inherited from the Condominium era and worn out by successive decades of socio-politico and economic failures, will be able to meet up this challenge of change. More crucially, it remains to be seen whether the political forces will have the vision and framework needed to accommodate the massive social movement and rising expectations of the people in times of intense pressure and constant change both at home and abroad.

Notes

1 State formation

1 Hasan (2000).
2 Conte (1976: 16–17).
3 Ibid.
4 Haycock (1971: 26–41).
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Shinnie (1967).
8 Haycock (1971).
9 Shinnie (1967: 153ff.).
10 Conte (1976: 29–31).
11 Fantini (1981).
12 Hasan (1973).
13 Ibid., pp. 20ff.
14 Ibid., pp. 128ff.
15 Ibid.; see Conte (1976: 50–51).
16 O'Fahey and Spaulding (1974: 15–215); Spaulding (1985).
17 O'Fahey (1980).
18 O'Fahey (1971: 87–97).
19 Ibid.
20 Sidahmed (1991).
21 Butt (1962).
22 Voll and Voll (1985: 134).
23 Hasan (2000).
24 Voll and Voll (1985: 34–35).
25 Hill (1959: 22ff.).
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Voll and Voll (1985: 36ff.).
29 McHugh (1994: 136ff.).
30 Voll (1983).
31 Hill (1959: 42ff.).
32 Ibid., p. 68.
33 Hill (1959: 73–74).
34 Gray (1961: 69).
35 Ibid., p. 31.
36 Bjorkelo (1989: 78–80).
37 See ibid. and Spaulding (1985: 292ff.).
38 See Holt (1958).

39 Al-Qadal (1993: 120ff.).
40 Holt (1961: 77).
41 In his Muqadimma (Introduction), the renowned Muslim writer Ibn Khaldun wrote: 'It became an established fact among the Muslim public that in the end of the world (fi akhir al-zamman), a man from the house of the Prophet would emerge and the Muslims would follow him, he would conquer the Muslim kingdoms, re-establish the faith, and spread justice, he would be called the Mahdi.' Ibn Khaldun referred to the expected Mahdi as the Fatimid in a way denoting the Shiite origins of the idea. Yet, he also stated that the Sufis have the same concept of Mahdi though they conceive of it differently, and sometimes in the context of kashf (Ibn Khaldun, al-Muqadimmah, Dar al-Fiker (Beirut), 246).
42 Al-Qadal (1993); Voll and Voll (1985: 39–40).
43 Holt (1958); Al-Qadal (1993: 202ff.).
44 Holt (1958: 225ff.).
45 Ibid.
46 Clark (1998: 207).
47 Daly (1986: 1–11).
48 Omar (1952: 43–53).
49 See Abdel Rahim (1986: 29–38); Beshir (1974: 20–21).
50 Warburg (1971:98).
51 Ibid., pp. 99–100.
52 Khalid (1990: 50–51).
53 Beshir (1974: 141).
54 Robertson (1974: 13).
55 Ibid., p. 13.
56 In a way the SPS became like the staff of present international organizations, who claim to work to their own set of standards, without being accountable to a higher body or a state.
57 Robertson (1974: 44–45).
58 Alier (1992: 17–19).
59 Sanderson (1985: 101–20).
60 For an overview about the steps leading to the project and its implementation see Gaitskell (1959).
61 See Beshir (1974: 106).
62 Abdin (1985: 52ff.).
63 Beshir (1974: 81ff.).
64 See Beshir (1974: 153); see also Woodward (1979: 23ff.).
65 See Beshir (1974: 160ff.); Abu Hassabu (1985: 72ff.).
66 See Alier (1992: 17–19).

2 Complex politics of a post-colonial state

1 *Al-Ayam Daily*, Khartoum, No. 827, 28 July 1956.
2 Election Commission's Report 1958, Government Press, Khartoum.
3 Holt and Daly (2000: 175).
4 Ibid., p. 182.
5 Malwal (1981: 94). The incident shows that if northern politicians were treating the south as a marginal force, they were helped in their endeavour with the attitude of southern politicians. The scene was to repeat itself throughout Sudan's political history. Thirty years later when Pacifico Lado was approached to be elected member of the five-man Supreme Council, he agreed to provide an undated resignation in advance so that it could be used when deemed necessary!
6 Sidahmed (1997:89ff.); see also Suleiman (1968: 41ff.).
7 Khaled (1990: 225/6).

8 Ibid., p. 227.
9 Tahir (1986: 120).
10 Khalid (1993: part two, pp. 217ff.).
11 Ibid.
12 Sidahmed (1997: 175–87).
13 Jadin (1997: 97–99).
14 *Asharq Alawsat* daily newspaper, 26 June 1989.
15 Holt (1961: 183).
16 Suleiman (1971: 321ff.), First (1970: 230ff.).
17 Holt (1961: 187).
18 Aboud was said to have been planning to retire in two-months time, draw his pension and establish a garage in Khartoum North. See Khalid (1990: 168).
19 Alier (1992: 21–22).
20 Ibid., p. 23.
21 Ibid., p. 33.
22 Ibid., p. 33.
23 Beshir (1975: 64–67); Khalid (1990: 267).
24 Ibid.
25 Alier (1992: 267).
26 Johnson (1993: 117–41).
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.; Alier (1992: 284).
29 Ibid., p. 286.
30 The Mengistu regime was overthrown by a joint effort of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front and the Tigray People's Liberation Front with active help from Khartoum.
31 *Africa Confidential*, a fortnightly Newsletter, London, July 1992.
32 Khalid in *Asharq Al-Awsat* daily newspaper, 7 July 1997.
33 Abdel Rahim (1986: 195–97).
34 The Sudan Permanent Constitution, 1973, *Gazette of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan*.
35 For further details on the debate around politics and Islam in Sudanese affairs see Sidahmed (1997).
36 Ibid., pp. 132ff.
37 Ironically enough, Nimeiri himself came to declare from exile in Cairo in 1992, that he would repeal the *shari'a* laws as a way to restore peace to the country. The declaration did not have any practical value, but it laid bare the political expediency behind the whole issue.
38 Ibid., p. 180.
39 *Republic of the Sudan Gazette*, March 1991; and see *Africa Watch Report*, 9 April 1991.
40 El-Affendi (1995: 218).
41 Sidahmed (1992: 201ff.).
42 Ibid., pp. 207–09.
43 Omaar and de Waal (1997: 13–14).
44 Al-Amin (1992: 266).
45 *Al-Ayam* daily newspaper, Khartoum, 9 August 2000.
46 Al-Amin (1992: 262–5).
47 Ibid., p. 270.
48 Khalid (1993: part two; p. 258).
49 *Al-Ayam*, 9 August 2000.
50 *Africa Confidential*, 7 July 1995, *The Independent Daily*, London, 4 June 1993.
51 *The Independent*, 4 June 1993.
52 *The Independent Daily*, 2 May 1993.
53 *Al-Khartoum Daily*, newspaper, Cairo, 26 July 1994.

54 *Africa Watch*, 26 April 1990.
55 *Al-Khartoum Daily*, 29 December 1996.
56 *Sudan Democractic Gazette*, Lonon, April 1991, which attributed to Turabi the admission before a conference of an Islamic Youth Movement hosted by Sudan on 13 March 1991.
57 *The New York Times*, 26 January 1992.
58 *The Christian Science Monitor*, 10–16 April 1992.
59 Bodansky (1995).
60 *Strategic Report*, Institute of Strategic Studies, Khartoum, 1999: pp. 124–39.
61 *Sudan Permanent Constitution*, 1998, publication issued by the Sudan Embassy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1998.
62 *Asharq Al-Awsat* daily newspaper, London, 5 May 1998.
63 *Al-Khartoum* daily newspaper, 30 March 1998. Full text of the memorandum by the National Committee on the Constitution.
64 International Institute for Strategic Studies Military Balance of 1998/99, quoted in *Economist Intelligence Unit, Sudan Country profile for 1999/2000*.

3 Foreign relations: complex geopolitics and domestic instability

1 Underlying this issue, it is noted that Sudan is usually classified as an African country in many foreign affairs ministries and research institutes around the world.
2 Khalid (1990: 104).
3 Mohamed (1994: 137).
4 Charet (1996).
5 Lesch (1991: 43–70).
6 Ibid.
7 Indeed in 1990 – barely ten months after the NIF coup of 1989 – officers in the army believed to have strong connections with the Iraqi *Ba'athist* party tried to stage a coup.
8 Lesch (1991).
9 Khalid (1993: 258).
10 *Al-Riyadh* daily newspaper, Riyadh, 23 August 1990.
11 *Washington Post*, 3 October 2001.
12 *The Sunday Times* newspaper, London, 17 November 1996.
13 Lam Akol later signed a peace agreement with the government, joined the ruling party and became federal minister of transport. Ali al-Hajj sided with Turabi in the split of 1999 and became the spokesperson of the National Popular Congress outside Sudan.
14 Khalid (2000: 43).
15 *Associated Press*, 5 September 2001.
16 *United Press International*, 21 September 2001.
17 *Washington Post*, 3 October 2001.
18 The administration, for reasons to do with its vision of the freedom of its market, opposed the resolution because of fears that adopting it would lead to capital escaping to a freer environment in Europe and Asia.

4 The economy

1 Niblock (1987: 51).
2 Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), *Sudan Country Reports*, 1st Quarter 2000.
3 Quoted in EIU, *Sudan Country Profile* Basic Data 1999/2000, London 2000.
4 Ali (1994: 43).
5 House (1994: 17–32).
6 Beshir (1974: 106).
7 Khalid (1985: 63).
8 Field (1994: 124).

9 House (1994a).
10 *Al-Majalla* weekly magazine, London, Issue 629, 26 February–3 March 1992.
11 *Strategic Report 1999*, Institute of Strategic Studies, Khartoum, 2000: p. 480.
12 Omaar and de Waal (1997: 14).
13 Khalid (1985: 96–117).
14 Yassin (1983).
15 Omaar and de Waal (1997: 18).
16 Ibid., pp. 21–23.
17 *Sudan Year Book*, Sudanow, Khartoum, 1983: pp. 164/5.
18 EIU: *Sudan Country Profile*, Basic Data 1999–2000, London, 2000, p. 28.
19 Sudan Environmental Society (1993: 27).
20 Omaar and de Waal (1997: 110/111).
21 *The New Yorker*, March 1989, New York.
22 Interestingly enough, the announcement coincided with the second conference of the opposition groups assembled under NDA, and who in the economic field called for adopting market economy policies.
23 Omaar and de Waal (1997: 17).
24 Ibid., p. 113.
25 *Reuters*, 1 August 2000.
26 'Report On Privatisation', A Select Committee of the Provisional National Council, Omdurman, 1994 (unpublished report).
27 'Evaluation of the Privatisation Process in the Public Sector Enterprises', Khartoum, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, 2000 (unpublished report).
28 Calder (1996: 55–69).

5 State and society

1 Woodward (1990: 79).
2 Daly (1986: 360ff.).
3 Mamdani (1996: 25–26).
4 Woodward (1990: 102–04).
5 Holt and Daly (2000: 176–77).
6 Woodward (1990).
7 See Charter of Sudanese Socialist Union, Khartoum, 1972.
8 See Mamdani (1996: 25–26).
9 For an observer's view of the period, see Anderson (1999).
10 Ibid., pp. 91ff.
11 Niblock (1987: 204ff.).
12 Nugdalla (1973: 146ff.). See also Awad (1970), which documents abuse of political power for economic gains.
13 First (1970: 265–66).
14 Woodward (1990: 124ff.).
15 Ibid., p. 187.
16 Ibid., p. 186.
17 Between 1975 and 1982, more than 800 cases were said to have been reported of embezzlement of on average more than £1,000. See Metz (1992: 133).
18 Ibid., pp. 133, 151; Woodward (1990: 187).
19 While the central government posts were put at around 79,000 in 1968/69, the budgeted posts of central and regional governments stood at 274,941 in 1978/79. See the ILO Report, pp. 124–25.
20 Sidahmed (1997: 207ff.).
21 Woodward (1990).
22 Personal observation.
23 See Report of the *Hizbah* (Complaints) Committee, a National Assembly sub-committee,

on Privatisation Irregularities, Omdurman, January 1995. Text of the Report reproduced with other documents and articles in Sudan Studies Centre (1995: 44ff.).

24 Metz (1992: 141ff.).

25 Goda was a private agricultural scheme of 5,150 feddans on the White Nile. The dispute occurred over the refusal of tenant farmers to hand over their cotton crop, apparently in protest at low prices – an action that led to the arrest of their leaders. Demonstrations followed in which 24 tenant farmers were killed and many injured in clashes with the police. At least 200 were arrested and detained in a tightly enclosed cell; 197 died of suffocation as a result. See Suleiman (1971: 205–09).

26 Ibid., pp. 246–51.

27 Sidahmed (1997: 80–82).

28 For example, al-Shafi' Ahmad al-Shaykh, longstanding Secretary General of the SWTUF, was executed by Nimeiri's regime following the abortive communist coup of July 1971.

29 Metz (1992: 141–42).

30 See Metz (1992: 142); Woodward (1990: 190).

31 Personal observation.

32 Sidahmed (1997: 81–82).

33 These were Dr Abd al-Rahman Abu al-Kul of the Physicians Union who became Minister of Health, and A 'Akasha of the Teachers Union who became Minister of Labour.

34 See 'Trade Union Laws', Attorney General Chamber's Publication, Khartoum, 1992, 2001.

35 First Population Census 1955/56, Final Report, Vol. 11: Chapter 5, Department of Statistics, Khartoum, 1962.

36 Ibid., Chapters 9, 10.

37 Ibid., Chapter 8.

38 Hassan (1994: 129).

39 Ertur and House (1994: 41, 132).

40 Ibid.

41 'Informal sector has been identified with the mass of small scale, family-run, unlicensed, unenumerated, and labour-intensive economic activities that provide cheap goods and services for the bulk of a city's poor residents', House (1994b: 249).

42 First Population Census, Final Report, Vol. III: Chapters 6–8.

43 *21 Facts about the Sudanese: 1st Population Census of Sudan*, 1955/56, R. Kielsel, Salzburg, Austria, 1958, p. 25.

44 Ibid., p. 26; Census Report, table 6.

45 Johnson, and Prunier (1993: 117–41).

46 Ibid.

47 Reference here is to ex-SANU politician Aldo Aju Deng and his group who were engaged in political rivalry with Abel Alier's group, mostly ex-Southern Front leaders. See ibid., p. 127.

48 Kurimoto (1994: 95–111).

49 Johnson and Prunier (1993: 128).

50 Ibid., p. 128.

51 De Waal (1993: 71–83).

52 See M.A.M. Salih, Tribal Militias, SPLA/APLM and the Sudanese State, 'New Wine in Old Bottles', in Ahmed and Sorbo (1989: 65–82).

53 Johnson and Prunier (1993: 134–35).

54 Ahmed and Sorbo (1989: 84).

55 Ibid., pp. 84–85.

56 Kameir (1998: 40–41).

57 See Woodward (1991: 205–15).

58 Ibid.; for full text of the Koka Dam Declaration see Ahmed and Sorbo (1989: 130–32).

59 Hurreiz and Abdel Salam (1989: 29–68).
60 Ahmed and Sorbo (1989: 83).
61 Hurreiz and Abdel Salam (1989: 47).
62 Adam (1995: 177).
63 Kurita (1994: 202–16).
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
66 Woodward (1990: 196).

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