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Islamic Political System in Sudan and its National, Regional, and International Impact.

Solomon Hailu, Ph.D.*

Introduction

The influence of radical Islamic ideology has been important in international relations at least since the revolution which toppled the Shah of Iran in 1979. However, the influence of political Islam in Sudan's internal politics goes back even longer. The paper begins with an overview of the historical background to the origin and development of political Islam in the Sudan. The next part of the paper reveals that the North Sudan's successive post-independent governments forced Islamization of the South Sudan was the main contributing factor in the longest ethno-religious civil war in Africa that ended in the birth of the state of South Sudan. The specific focus of the next section of the paper will be placed on the Sudan foreign policy of propagating radical Islamic views beyond its own borders as a social and political system which claims universal validity. Sudan has been accused of supporting Muslim extremists to destroy Western influence in their home countries and to topple existing Arab regimes in order to build genuine Islamic caliphate states under the leadership of new Islamist groups. As the study will show, the Islamist goals of the Sudanese government added an important dynamic to the already-complex conflicts of the Horn of Africa. Sudan's ambitions to export its radical Islamic religious and political doctrine have repercussions not only in the region - where Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia are particularly affected - but also as far into Africa as the Democratic Republic of Congo. The strategic importance of north-east Africa and the sensitivity of the USA to radical Islamic influence in international relations generally, make Sudan's policy of exporting radical Islam an issue of more than parochial significance. These things give Sudan an importance in international relations out of all proportion to its size and its power, as measured by any traditional yardstick. The

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focus of the last section of the paper will be on the international dimension of Sudan's Islamist policy, which includes the position of the USA, the Arab countries and Iran.

The Emergence of Islam in Sudan

The rise of Islam in Sudan was the outcome of continuous and often imperceptible penetrations of Muslim settlers which started in the middle of the thirteenth century.¹ At the end of the fourteenth century, the three Coptic Christian kingdoms of Sudan, Nubia, Soba and Alwa were completely Islamized.² With the establishment of the early Muslim kingdoms, in Funji and Darfur in the fifteenth century, Sudanese Islam began an active phase in developing religious traditions, the emergence of institutionalized *tarīqas* (order) and thus expanding its influence beyond its original sphere of influence.³

The Funji kingdom established the Maliki School of jurisprudence,⁴ after which the Shari'a became the law in certain spheres: commercial law, marriage and divorce and court procedure. However, the Shari'a never replaced state or local law in its entirety. In certain major spheres, such as inheritance and control over natural resources like land and water, the Shari'a was not applied.⁵

The Islamization of Sudan entered a new phase in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with the coming of new Sufi brotherhoods introduced by the students of the Meccan Muhammad Abdal-Karim Al-Samman (d. 1775) and the Moroccan Ahmed Idris (d. 1837).⁶ Whether these brotherhoods were doctrinally different from the Sufi affiliations, mainly Qadiriyya and Shadhiliyya which were present in Sudan before, is a disputed point. What is not in doubt is that they created the first

supra-tribal and relatively centralized religious organizations in the region.⁷

In 1881, a Sheikh belonging to the Sammaniyya, Muhammed Abd Allah, claimed that he was the expected Mahdi, the one sent at the end of time to establish righteousness upon the earth before the last day. The Mahdist revolution (1882 - 1885), was one of the greatest cataclysms in modern Islamic history and founded the first ostensibly theocratic state in Sudan.⁸ It identified itself as a messianic movement for the purification of Islam and the unity of Moslems.⁹ The Mahdist regime had emerged as a rebellion against Egyptian rule, which had introduced foreign values as well as foreign encouragement of modernization and cultural change.¹⁰ Mahdi was able to control Sudan until an Anglo-Egyptian force reconquered the area in 1896-1898. But after Britain became involved through its imperialist expansion into Egypt - the chances of successful rebellion against so great an imperial power were slight and the Anglo-Egyptian army overthrew the Mahdist regime in 1898 at the battle of Omdurman.

This military defeat began a period of colonial rule. The British introduced secular or state law to cover the areas omitted by the Shari'a. These areas included institutionalization of law: the creation of institutions for training Qads or Islamic judges, the formalization and codification of the distinction between state and private-status law and a recognition of the potentiality for conflict concerning law.¹¹

In the 1930s and 1940s political movements emerged against Egypt and Britain, the colonial powers in the Sudan. But these Islamic movements, like the Umma and Unionist parties, were movements of resistance to colonial rule rather than vehicles for purely Islamic policies. In the early post colonial period, the Umma and Unionist parties were rivals for both religious leadership and political power.¹² As a result post-independent Sudan was never a completely secular state.¹³ This meant that whatever the political orientation of the government - military or

1. Trimmingham, J.S *Islam in the Sudan* London, Oxford University Press (1949), pp 81ff
2. Voll, O.J *Historical Dictionary of Sudan* New York, The Scarecrow Press (1978) p.12
3. See Gabriel, W. 'Popular Islam and tribal leadership in the socio-political structure of Northern Sudan' in Menahem (ed.) *Society and Political Structure in the Arab World* Newark, Humanities Press (1973), pp.231-80.
4. Woodward, P. *Sudan: Islamic radicals in power* in Esposito (ed.) *Esposito, J.L Political Islam, Revolution, Radicalism or Reform*, London, Lynne Rienner (1997) p.97
5. Twaddle, M. *State and Society in Darfur* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (1980) pp. 109-114
6. Ali Salih Karrar *The Sufi Brotherhoods of Sudan* London (1992).

7. Fathey, R.O.S. and Radtke, B *Neo Sufism reconsidered*, in *Political Islam* (ed) Esposito, J. (1997) p.153
8. Holt, P.M *The Mahdist State in the Sudan* London, Collings (1970).
9. Woodward, P. *Condominium and Sudanese Nationalism* London, Collings (1973) p. 3
10. Alexander, S.C 'Islam and politics in Sudan' in Piscatori (ed.) *Islam in the Political Process*, London, Royal Institute of International Affairs (1983) p.37
11. Fleuhr-Lobban, C *Islamic Law and Society in the Sudan* London, Frank Cass (1986)
12. Esposito, *Political Islam* p.8
13. Esposito, *Political Islam* p.8

parliamentary socialist or liberal democracy - the question of adopting an Islamic constitution increased.¹⁴

The Rise of Political Islam in Sudan

The modern politicization of Islam in the Sudan started after the end of formal colonial rule. With increasing urbanization and education, more and more northern Sudanese were being exposed to an urban form of Islam that derived many of its patterns of behavior from Egypt. The Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood took advantage of these circumstances, crystallizing around the leadership of Dr. Hasan al-Turabi in early 1960. From this point, the goal of the ultimate establishment of an Islamic order in Sudan became increasingly prominent in the country's politics.

In the 1970s, the Sudanese Brotherhood received ideological guidance from Islamists outside Sudan in developing their growing Islamic ideology. The writings of Hasan al Banna of Egypt, and Abul-A'la Mawdadi, the Asian Islamist, were very influential in establishing Islamic-oriented political groups like the Muslim Brotherhood in Sudan.¹⁵ Sudanese students who had come into contact with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood while studying in Egypt began, along with Egyptian supporters, to establish similar groups in Sudan.¹⁶

In addition to external influence, there were also internal reasons for the progress towards the Islamization of Sudan after independence. John Voll suggests that as the more modern Sudanese who received a modern style of education, preserving traditional institutions and observing traditional laws—that this was no longer enough to express their Islamic identity and they could not accommodate the programs and platforms of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Sudan.¹⁷

The current Islamic State in the Sudan was established by, and remains identified with, Hasan al Turabi. He was an articulate, patient and calculating politician whose life-long objective has been to establish an Islamic state based on Sharia.¹⁸ A law graduate of university of Khartoum and university at the Sorbonne in Paris, France, Turabi

became an internationally known articulator of a new style of Islamic ideology, expanding the scope of Sharia, for development, for agriculture and for social cohesion.¹⁹ His conception of the political meaning of Islam went beyond the traditional Sufi Islamic laws which stress an indirect political role for religious leaders. The politics of Islam from the 18th century onwards was a reflection of the growth of the Sufi orders or *turuq*, who came in to Sudan and steadily grew in size at the beginning of the twentieth century. As they grew, they often constituted socio-economic as well as religious societies.²⁰ The Sufi tradition emphasizes that Moslems should aim to achieve holiness through contemplation of the deity and imitation of the prophet's life.²¹ According to the Sufi order, the pursuit of political power is a deviation from the Moslem path and an obstacle to the attainment of holiness.²²

By contrast, Turabi's Islamic ideology holds that the state is only the expression of an Islamic society and an Islamic state evolves after the Islamic society.²³ These views on the correct relationships between religion and the state were expressed in texts like *The Role of Women in (1973)*²⁴ and articulated his broader call for the renewal of the foundation of Islamic jurisprudence which appeared in 1980.²⁵ Turabi saw the need to modify the Sharia to make it responsive to the modern Islamic State and has worked to modify Sharia for this purpose.

Sharia was formally introduced as the law of the land in the Sudan by Gaffar Numeiri, ruler of Sudan from 1969 to 1985, in his so-called September law in 1983, aimed at wide legislation of social, political and economic activities in Sudan. Numeiri's Sharia based policies opened the door for the Muslim Brotherhood which had sought an Islamic order based on Sharia since its formation in 1954 under the leadership of Hasan al Turabi. In fact, it took almost three decades for the Muslim Brotherhood to accomplish its vision of implementing Sharia as the law

14. Esposito, *Political Islam* p.8

15. Esposito, and Voll. *Islam and Democracy* p.87

16. Esposito, and Voll. *Islam and Democracy* p.87

17. 'The evolution of Islamic fundamentalism in twentieth century Sudan' in G. Warburg and U. Schmidt (eds.) *Islam, Nationalism and Radicalism*. New York, (1983), p.131

18. Makinda, S.M'Iran, Sudan and Islam. 'The World Today Vol. 49 (1) January 1993 p.109

19. Makinda, 'Iran Sudan and Islam' p.109

20. Woodward, Sudan: *Islamic Radicals in Power* p.96

21. Makinda, 'Iran, Sudan and Islam' p.109

22. Makinda, 'Iran, Sudan and Islam' p.109

23. Turabi: Interview with Susan Bridge, Independent Broadcasting Associates, for the radio series. *The World of Islam*, 14 January 1982

24. Hasan al Turabi *Women in Islam and Muslim Society*. London, Milestones, (1991)

25. Hasan al Turabi, *Tajdid usul al-fiqh al-Islami Khartoum: Dar al Fikr*, (1980) in Esposito, J.L and Voll, J.O (eds.) *Islam and Democracy* New York, Oxford University Press (1996)p.92

of the land, gaining access to governing power only during Numeiri's regime.²⁶

In 1976, the Muslim Brotherhood attempted to overthrow Numeiri's government in a coup. This forced him to enter secret negotiations with the Brotherhood that led to the 1977 agreement of national reconciliation with most of the northern opposition politicians including the Brotherhood itself. Politically, Turabi's tactic was to compromise with Numeiri's leadership but at the same time, to raise the pressure for an Islamic constitution.²⁷ Turabi rose to become Attorney General and the Muslim Brotherhood had won a foothold in government for the first time. They exploited this foothold to the fullest.²⁸ For his part, Numeiri gave them the right to participate in the political process, provided of course that they exercised this right within the existing political framework.²⁹ Furthermore, Numeiri showed his commitment to the Brotherhood's Islamization policy when, in April 1977, he set up a committee for the revision of Sudanese laws, with a view bringing them in line with Islamic principles.³⁰

By September 1983, Numeiri's decrees were in accord with the general goals of the Brotherhood. It welcomed the initiatives taken by him and saw the new situation as an important breakthrough and opportunity to implement Sharia in the Sudan. It was largely because of Turabi's maneuvers and influence that Numeiri agreed to introduce the Sharia in September 1983. In the years after the 1977 coup Numeiri was haunted by the threat of another attempt to overthrow him. He made many concessions to Turabi and his supporters, allowing them positions of influence and political space to strengthen their position. By 1983 Numeiri was captive to the machinations of the Muslim brotherhood and did what the fundamentalists asked him. Numeiri was the nominal head of state, but the real power was exercised by Turabi, who became a presidential adviser on foreign affairs in late 1983.³¹

The Muslim Brotherhood made good use of the opportunity given by the Sharia decree and undertook the major organizational step of creating the National Islamic Front (NIF) in 1976. This created a mass Islamist movement that would work actively for the continuing Islamization of society and could participate directly in the party politics of the time.³²

26. Woodward, 'Sudan: Islamic Radicals in Power' p. 99
27. Woodward, 'Sudan: Islamic Radicals in Power' p. 99
28. Woodward, 'Sudan: Islamic Radicals in Power' p. 99
29. Alexander, 'Islam and Politics in the Sudan' p. 47
30. Alexander, 'Islam and Politics in the Sudan' p. 47
31. Makinda, 'Iran, Sudan and Islam' p. 109
32. Esposito, and Voll I Islam and Democracy, p. 87

Numeiri was removed by coup in April 1985. His downfall was the result of mass popular demonstrations from northern intellectuals and trade unions against the repressive Islamic policy on the south and the government's inability to deliver balanced, sustainable internal economic development. Despite this, the NIF did not lose its position as a result of Numeiri's fall. In the succeeding regimes, those of Abdulrahman (1985-1989) and the present Al Bashir government it retained its influence until Turbi was jailed by the Al Bashir regime in 1999 because of a power struggle between him and Al-Bashir. Nonetheless, the NIF has continued to maintain a hold on power due to its position as the wealthiest and most highly motivated political party in the country.³³ These qualities have enabled it to manipulate the political and economic system to a degree unprecedented in the Sudan.³⁴ Its economic power is based on financial support from the Arab Islamic Banks which are wedded to the idea that there is an Islamic alternative to the old order.³⁵

The introduction of Sharia as the law of the land and the total commitment to Islam expressed by the modern Islamic movements in the Sudan, are not things which arose only in the late 20th century. These aims were deeply rooted in Sudan's history. Nor were they the effort of individual personalities alone, but they had deep historical roots in successive stages of Arab settlement in northern Sudan. Despite this, it is also undeniable that prominent personalities like Hasan al Turabi shaped the political process of Islam in Sudan until his death in March 2016. Al-Turabi was an instrumental figure in the combination of skills which he used to organize the Islamist project into broad-based political forces. Through the Muslim Brotherhood and later the National Islamic Front, he had sought to establish Islamic political, moral and juridical foundations of coherent national government.³⁶ Arguably, Al-Turabi's political, religious and scholarly influences will continue to shape Sudan's domestic and foreign policy after his death.

Forced Islamization of the South

Since the introduction of Sharia in September 1983, Islam has had a great impact on Sudan's public life, as the source of legislation which

33. Makinda, 'Iran, Sudan and Islam' p. 109
34. Makinda, 'Iran, Sudan and Islam' p. 109
35. 'Sudan: The Islamic Front in power', *Africa Confidential*. 12 July 1991, pp. 3-4
36. El-Affendi, A 'Turabi's revolution; Islam and power in Sudan' *Journal of Modern African Studies* Vol. 33 1995 p. 724

regulates social, political and economic activities of northern Sudan. The Sharia has inevitably exacerbated long established animosities between northern Arabs and Muslim Sudanese on the one hand, and predominantly Christian, Aninist and African Southern Sudanese on the other.³⁷ The first rebellion of the south started before the declaration of independence on January 1, 1956. The first Sudanese civil war started by the black Sudanese in 1955. The British and the northern Sudanese reached an agreement to create a federal system in Sudan to separate the Christian south from the Muslim north. However, the Northern leaders rejected the idea of giving the South substantial autonomy upon independence and took over administration of all areas including the south. As the result, the people of the South formed their first military rebellion movement also known as Anya-nya I.

Under conservative rulers like Ebrahim Aboude (1964-1969) an Islamization policy in the south continued to be enforced. As a result, in 1963 the southern guerrilla army, Anya-nya II came into existence to continue their struggle against northern domination and demand for regional autonomy.

The first civil war lasted from 1963 to 1972. Jaffar Numeiri, who seized power in a 1969 coup, made an agreement with Anya-nya at the Addis Ababa conference in 1972. This granted regional government for the south. After the Addis Ababa agreement the civil war ended in the southern Sudan. However, the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in modern Sudanese politics influenced President Numeiri to compromise on his agreement with the southern Sudanese. His Machiavellian maneuvers were to move him to return to the support of the sectarian groups he had overthrown in 1969, and to move from his initial alliances with the communist party to embracing the Muslim Brotherhood. The discovery of oil in the southern Sudan in 1970s was also influential in making Numeiri change his mind on his agreement with the Southern forces.

The repressive Islamic-based policy, following the introduction of Sharia as the law of the land in September 1983, and the increased economic interest of the northern government after the discovery of oil in the south brought new tensions to the relationship between the two parts of the country. The result was a renewed outbreak of guerrilla war in 1985. The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) took up to the struggle to secure southern Sudanese political and economic interests and they have continued their campaign since 1985. What has marked the period since 1985 is the reluctance of successive Khartoum governments to pursue seriously any

political solutions with the South through negotiations.³⁸ For the NIF government, it has always been difficult to allow the idea of the southern demand for self-determination. The grand promotion of Islamization and its economic interest in the south were the NIF's two major policy objectives in the area. They appear to be completely non-negotiable.

The attempt to impose Sharia, the Islamic law, on the non-Muslim Sudanese communities made peace and stability impossible in Sudan. Sharia was the cause of the longest civil war in Africa. Apparently, Islam was not an instrument conducive to unity and co-operation in Sudan.

Sudan's Islamic Revolution

Despite internal political challenges, the NIF government of Sudan continued to pronounce its commitment to promote pan-Islamism worldwide.³⁹ Hasan Al-Turabi once proclaimed that Muslims would forever aspire to the ultimate ideal of the Caliphate restored, of one central authority that holds the Muslim world community together. In a limited concession to national sovereignty, however, he admits that countries may remain as areas of self-management but only for the full enrichment of Islam in the particular environment.⁴⁰ Turabi's dream of a united Muslim world, in which national sovereignty is limited by the imperatives of a wider community is reminiscent of the Brezhnev Doctrine, in the security of the Socialist Commonwealth as a whole justified intervention in particular communist-ruled states. This makes a fitting point to introduce the extra-territorial claims and the cross-border agenda of the NIF project.

The NIF's world view has much in common with earlier, secular, revolutionary doctrines. It shares two things with, for example, the French and the Soviet revolutionary movements in their respective historical periods. In the first place radical Islamism, as interpreted by the NIF and utilized in Sudan's foreign policy, embraces a universal value system. It is universal in both the sense of global and in the sense of governing all major dimensions of individual and social life: ethical, economic, political, spiritual and legal. Secondly, radical Islamism, like previous revolutionary movements, is a worldview of global oppositions,

38. Numeiri is depicted as a Machiavellian figure in Jackson, R and Rosenberg, C *Personal Rule in Black Africa* Los Angeles, California: University Press, (1982)

39. Woodward, 'Sudan: Islamic Radicals in Power' p. 104

40. Woodward, 'Sudan: Islamic Radicals in Power' p. 104

effectively Manichean in nature, in which the revolutionary doctrine must be exported if it is to survive the hostility of an all-encroaching and hostile other. For revolutionary France, this was represented by the monarchical principle and for Soviet Russia, by capitalism and imperialism. For the Sudanese governments and other radical Islamists, the threat of modernization and western values is ever-present and all-pervasive. An Islamic revolution confined within the borders of a single state - especially one drawn up artificially by colonialists - would be vulnerable and meaningless.

Sudan's radical Islamic revolution has more specific conditions which encourage extra-territorial agenda. Sudan occupies a strategic position, poised between both the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa. The Middle East is a zone of great potential instability, as the conservative Arab regimes face up to their radical Islamic challengers. And to the south, an arc of instability, of weak or even collapsing states and competitive power politics stretches into Africa, as far as the Great Lakes region. Closer to home, the Horn of Africa has been a zone of conflict in which the neighboring states have regularly interfered in each other's domestic conflicts. Sudan's own experience of civil war, in which successive, northern, Islamic governments have tried to subdue the claims to autonomy of the African, Christian and Animist South, has been a hard school in which the north's proselytizing, expansionist policies have been nurtured.

Sudan's Radical Islamic Policy Towards its Neighbors

Militant Islam has been a source of intense concern for Sudan's neighbors and for Africa as a whole. Especially, its Islamic expansionist agenda has greatly affected its relations with neighboring countries. Sudan's commitment to cross-border Islamization and its ambition is to create an Islamic model which can be exported to the rest of Africa has been directly stated in the Sudan Democratic Gazette, as the following quotation shows:

"Sudan's expansionist agenda and its strategic policy is correct and it will not stop until Islam becomes not only the religion but, indeed the way of life for the whole of Africa."⁴¹ According to the report, which is unusually open about Sudan's goal, Sudan has targeted ten African

countries for military action by fundamentalist groups. Members of these groups are being trained at eight different camps in Sudan.⁴² The report identified the targeted countries as Sudan's neighbors, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Chad, Djibouti and Somalia. The Central African Republic and Zaïre (now the DRC) were also singled out.⁴³ They include states in which there is a substantial Islamic presence and others where there is little Islamic influence. Sudan had used military means to further its Islamic siege and interference in the internal affairs of these neighboring countries by supporting Islamic opposition groups in their desire to overthrow the existing secular governments.

Some African countries have officially protested against Sudan's radical Islamic policy. Among African leaders who are worried by Sudan's Islamization program in Africa is President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, despite the geographical remoteness of his country from Sudan. In a statement to a news agency he said: "Islamic fundamentalism is not welcome in Africa ... can it be denied that in countries like Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and the Sudan there are movements ... which are disturbing Africa as a whole."⁴⁴

Clearly, Sudan's regional Islamic policy has created tensions with all of its neighbors. Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Egypt have officially broken relations with Sudan at least once since Al-Bashir came to power in Sudan in 1989. They have come close to taking military measures against Sudan's regional Islamist expansionist policy.

Although each had accused the regime in Khartoum of supporting internal oppositions, Sudan's Islamic campaign to replace the existing secular regimes in non-Muslim African states like Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda had made worse the already existing tensions and regional suspicions. None of the neighboring countries can accept the proposed Islamic models which Sudan proposes. Sudan's place in contemporary international relations exemplifies and emphasizes the problem of Muslim fundamentalism and the dilemmas associated with it, as seen from a number of perspectives. These include the perspective of African neighbors, for whom the aggressive, extra-territorial promotion of Islamic values complicates existing secular conflicts over borders, historical grievances or competition for resources. The ethnic cast to the Sudanese civil war between the Arab north and the African south further makes for tensions associated with religious fundamentalism. In more general terms, Sudan poses problems for human rights and humanitarian

42. 'African states face Islamic revolution plot' *The Observer*, London, 25 June 1996.

43. *The Observer*, 25 June 1995

44. Horn of Africa Bulletin Vol.6 (4) 1994 p. 32

41. 107 'Eritrea takes complaint to the United Nations Security Council', Sudan Democratic Gazette, March 1994. p.11

concerns. In a form which has become familiar over the last three and a half decades in the Horn of Africa, conditions like famine are inextricably bound up in issues of repressive government, civil war, denial of rights and the threat of state collapse.

Arguably, Sudan's own internal situation was scarcely an encouraging example for other Africans to follow its proposed Islamic model. The repressive and oppressive Islamic policies of the northern Sudanese against the southern Christians and animists denying their fundamental human rights had contributed to deteriorating living conditions and forces internal and cross-border displacements and in the end, led to the breakaway of the South Sudan as the newest country in Africa.

The Islamist goals of the Sudanese government add an important dynamic to the already-complex conflicts of the Horn of Africa. Sudan's ambitions to export its religious and political doctrine have repercussions not only in the region - where Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda are particularly affected - but also as far into Africa as the Democratic Republic of Congo. The strategic importance of north-east Africa and the sensitivity of the USA to radical Islamic influence in international relations generally, make Sudan's policy of exporting Islamism an issue of more than parochial significance. These things give Sudan an importance in international relations out of all proportion to its size and its power, as measured by any traditional yardstick.

The NIF government - just like many revolutionary governments before it - has perceived its Islamic movement as having an impact not just on Sudan but on the wider Islamic world as well.⁴⁵ Indeed, for what it would doubtless to regard as reasons of self-defense and national security, concerns for propagating Islam go beyond the existing Islamic world. Retrospectively, Sudan faces sanctions and even isolation for the cross-border Islamic agenda, which it has adopted under the influences, which are outlined above.

Despite African suspicions of its radical Islamic policy, however, Hasan al-Turabi claimed that Sudan is very popular in Africa, developing new, original models of political organization and foreign relations.⁴⁶ However, the truth is that instead of becoming a beacon for political Islam, Sudan has become regionally and internationally isolated as a reward for trying to attain the unattainable.⁴⁷

Neither Sudan's internal situation nor its external environment hold out much promise for its goal of exporting an Islamic model of society and government to the rest of Africa. Human rights abuses in the Muslim majority Darfur region, economic decline, civil war and population displacement all contribute to a grim picture of conflict and decay. By sanctioning tribal violence and sponsoring domestic opposition groups within neighboring states, the Sudanese government inevitably brings about rejection and counter measures. Lastly, Sudan's vision of ideological Islam provides no clear guidelines to inspire socio-economic recovery and sustainable development.

Sudan's Islamization Policy and its International Repercussions

Sudan's policy of Islamization has international repercussions on two levels. In the first place, its determination to sponsor subversion in other countries where radical Islamists are in opposition, as well as its determination to retaliate, through terrorist actions to western imperialist actions, bring it into direct conflict with other states. In the second place, its domestic policies of forced Islamization in the South and human rights abuse in the Darfur region - make it the subject of critical investigation in a context where human rights and democratization are increasingly seen as international issues.

Sudan's attempt to build an international Pan-Islamist movement has emerged to rival and even replace the post-colonial ideologies like Arab nationalism and local variants of liberalism and socialism, which have all proved unsuccessful and bred disillusionment.⁴⁸ Even movements which have claimed to possess an Islamic agenda have been discredited. For instance, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) was established in 1969, but it is led by states that have remained subjected to western influence and, in the eyes of Islamists, is politically unrepresentative of the true spirit of the community that animates the Muslim people.⁴⁹

Sudan has proposed to turn away from this framework and move in the direction of greater Muslim unity, even at the expense of the present nation state, with its structures, moral foundation and claims to rights.⁵⁰

45. Woodward, 'Sudan: Islamic Radicals in power' p. 95

46. Harper, M. H 'Devil in disguise' Focus on Africa, Vol. 7 (2) April-June 1996, p.38

47. Woodward 'Sudan: Islamic radicals in Power' p.113

48. Woodward, 'Sudan: Islamic Radicals in Power' p. 103

49. Woodward, 'Sudan: Islamic Radicals I Power' p. 103

50. Woodward, 'Sudan: Islamic Radicals in Power' p. 103

In place of these things, the new Islamic model, as practiced in Sudan since 1989 would be the guide.⁵¹

Sudan established the Popular Islamic and Arab Conference (PIAC) in April 1991. The PIAC was intended to be developed as a vehicle for Islamic revolution throughout the Islamic world in support of oppressed Islamic communities and declaring Jihad or religious war against the western-influenced governments and secular regimes in the Muslim countries of the Middle East.⁵² The April 1991 Islamic Conference, which was held in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, laid the basis for the PIAC's aims. The leading Islamic politicians and intellectuals from 55 Countries and three continents met to draft a common strategy to establish Muslim states in their respective lands. Among the participants were Rishad al-Gharan Qushi, the exiled leader and spokesman of al-Mahada, Tunisia's Islamic opposition movement; Ibrahim Shukri, a chief of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, Gulbuddin Kekmatyar, the radical militant leader of Afghanistan's fundamentalist Herb-I-Islamic faction; Absi Madani, then one of the two leaders of Algeria's increasingly militant and influential Islamic Salvation Front (FIS); and, of course, high-ranking delegates from the Islamic Republic of Iran. The host was Hasan al-Turabi, the spiritual chief and the mastermind of the Sudan's Islamic military government, who supervised the effort to draft a plan of action for defying the tyrannical West. To conclude the conference, the group put together a six point manifesto whose central message was a call to destroy Western influence in the home countries of the participants and to struggle to build Islamic states at home.⁵³

Subsequently, successive Islamic-oriented conferences were undertaken in Sudan. Sudan's Islamists raised their Islamization program to the global level, aiming to set free all Muslims including minorities in Christian countries. This new agenda was launched at the Third Popular Arab and Islamic Conference (PAIC) which was held in Khartoum at the end of March 1995.⁵⁴

Officially released reports from the Sudanese government have confirmed that the NIF is serving as a base for Islamists and is sponsoring them. According to the chairman of the legal affairs committee in the Transitional National Assembly, Hassanel-Beeli, Sudan is an open Country for all Muslims especially those who fight for the Islamic State and who look to Sudan for a safe haven.⁵⁵

Such open claims raise serious national security concerns among the western governments, especially the United States. From the perspective of the West, particularly the United States, Sudan represents a threat to stability in the region and more generally to western interests and influence. The United States tried to pressure the Sudanese military regime bilaterally before it mobilized the international community to impose sanctions on the Sudan. For instance, former American Deputy assistant secretary of state for African affairs, Robert Houndek, went to Khartoum in December 1991 to express concern about Sudan's decision to permit some Middle Eastern terrorist organizations to operate in the Sudan,⁵⁶ including Osama Bin Laden who was accused of running global terrorist network from Sudan. America further warned the Sudanese leaders that Sudan risked isolation if it did not stop sponsoring international terrorism during Madeleine Albright's visit to Khartoum when she was US ambassador to the UN in 1993.⁵⁷ But Sudan's position towards America's anti-terrorist policy was that it is an imperialist conspiracy.⁵⁸

The same year, the US placed Sudan on its list of "state sponsors of terrorism" alleging Sudan of hosting, training and arming terrorist groups of Islamic fundamentalists from other countries and returning them to accomplish their Islamic vision by violent means. The relations between the US was further strained following the first World Trade Center bombing in February 1993. The U.S. State Department notes that "five of 15 suspects arrested" following the bombing were Sudanese.⁵⁹ The US also associated bombings of its embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 with Sudan based terrorist groups. The US retaliated by missile attack on an industrial complex inside Sudan. The US also encouraged African neighboring countries to take action against Khartoum.⁶⁰ The US gave military aid to Sudan's neighbors including Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda.⁶¹ The US also assisted internal opposition forces in Sudan as another way of working for the overthrow of the NIF government.⁶²

56. Makinda, 'Iran Sudan, and Islam' p.111

57. Horn of Africa Bulletin Vol. 6(2), 1993, P.22

58. Horn of Africa Bulletin Vol. 6(2), 1993, P.22

59. 'The Nation: Unconventional Wisdom Since 1865'

60. Sidgi Kaballa, 'Sudan: over four years of fundamentalist rule' in Review of African Political Economy, No 58 (1993) p.107.

61. 'Sudan front line US Aid' Africa Research Bulletin Vol.33 (12) 1996 p.12479

62. 'Sudan front line US Aid' Africa Research Bulletin Vol.33 (12) 1996 p.12479

51. Woodward, 'Sudan: Islamic Radicals in Power' P. 103

52. Woodward, 'Sudan: Islamic Radicals in power' p.104

53. Miller, 'Is Islam a threat?' p.45

54. The Indian Ocean News Letter 8 April, 1995 p.4

55. Horn of Africa Bulletin vol.5 (6) 1993, p.6

In the diplomatic front as well, the US did engage in international and regional diplomacy to isolate the Sudanese Islamist government through international organizations like the UN, EU and the Organization for African Unity (OAU/AU). The US renewed its economic sanction against Sudan in relation to genocide and abuse in the Darfur region of Sudan in 2007. The European Union and Canada also joined the United States in stopping any economic assistance, except that justified by humanitarian reasons, to the Sudanese regime.

Even though none of the terrorists who attacked the United States on September the 11, 2001 were Sudanese, President Bush's post attack speech of warning countries "you are either with us or against us" has sent out a clear message to the Sudanese authorities of the United States readiness to take military action against Sudan for regional and international of sponsoring of terrorism. The Sudanese authorities have publicly conceded to cooperate with the United States in the fight against global terrorism. Arguably, the NIF government in Sudan had to rethink conduct of its foreign policy of state sponsorship of terrorism more precociously in the post-September 11 changing international climate. At least publicly, the NIF regime in Sudan has backed away from making official statements of supporting Islamic radical elements within or outside its territory. Given the Sudanese government historical interest in spreading radical Islam, there is no clear indication that it has connections with international terrorist groups such as the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS) as well as regional extremist groups known as Boko Haram in West Africa. The independence of South Sudan in 2011 has also forced a change in the view of the northern Sudanese government of longstanding national policy of imposing Islamization on the South to that of efforts to peacefully coexist with its newest neighbor.

Sudan's Relations with the Arab Countries

Relations between Sudan and the Arab countries have deteriorated since the Al-Basher government came to power in 1989. There are two main reasons for this. First, all Arab governments are going through an intensive struggle between traditionalism and modernization. The emerging new class of the younger generation is challenging the existing autocratic regimes in the Middle East. Arab states are in conflict with the Sudanese military regime for its policy of hosting and serving as a base for Muslim extremists to topple them. The Saudi government has claimed that: The fundamentalist leader, Hasan al Turabi and his

supporters have pledged to spread the Islamic revival throughout the Arab and African World.⁶³

Sudan has appeared to be a serious challenge to the very existence of the ruling traditional monarchical rulers in the Muslim world by supporting the attempts of the home-grown Middle Eastern militant, Islamic groups to remove them from their office. For example, Egyptian Islamic groups in Sudan attempted assassination on former Egyptian ruler Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa on his way to the OAU summit in June 1995. Al-Turabi said after failed assassination on Hosni Mubarak "The sons of the Prophet Moses, the Muslims, rose up against him confounded his plans, and sent him back to his country."⁶⁴

Secondly, Sudan's support for Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War has cooled relations with some Arab countries like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. Both Sudan and Iraq are listed among America's terrorist countries. Ideologically Saddam's secular Ba'athist regime had no great inclination towards Sudan's revived Islamic policy. Prior to the 1990 Gulf War crisis, Iraq's interest in Sudan was low key and its main goal was to help moderate Moslems maintain some influence because of the fear that a fundamentalist dominated government might drift towards Iran.⁶⁵ But there was a common interest between Baghdad and Khartoum in opposing the demonstration of western might, as well as forming a front to reject the support of many Middle Eastern governments for the West during the gulf War. However, Sudan's support did not go beyond diplomatic backing.⁶⁶

The problems that Sudan poses in contemporary international relations can also be viewed from the perspective of other Moslem states. This is a problematic category. It can include conservative, monarchical states like Saudi Arabia, in which religious devotion is woven into the fabric of politics and government. At the same time, secular states like Iraq demand inclusion because the majority of the population is Muslim and the government exploits cross-border religious solidarity in the course of its conflicts with the west. Sudan's explicit agenda of extra-territorial Islamism can be anything from a mixed blessing, to a reproach, or even a direct threat to the states in this diverse and complex grouping.

63. Kaballa, 'Sudan fundamentalist rule' p. 103

64. Peterson, Donald, *Inside Sudan: Political Islam, Conflict and Catastrophe*, Boulder CO, Westview, 1999, p. 179

65. Makinda, 'Iran, Sudan and Islam' p. 110

66. Makinda, 'Iran Sudan and Islam' p. 110

Sudan-Iran Relations

The Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979 had little or no impact in contemporary Sudanese Islamic politics. For instance, the Sudanese Sunni dominated Muslim Brotherhood criticized the Iranian Revolution in particular that an Islamic state was not a theocracy run by mullahs or religious leaders.⁶⁷ Sunni Muslims believe that the leaders of the state should be elected by the people or their representative. Only after the Islamic-based government of Al Bashir took power in June 1989 did Sudan establish close relations with Iran. The formation of close Sudan-Iran relations came when the Iranian president, Ali Rafsanjani visited Khartoum in December 1991. Some observers regarded Rafsanjani's visit as a cementing of the relations between Iran and Sudan. Others went further to suggest that it represented a bold effort by Iran to export radical Islam to Africa.⁶⁸

Iranian involvement in Sudan after the NIF came to power in 1989 consisted initially of security advisers and trainers. By mid-1991, relations had improved considerably and there were reports that Iran had given Sudan \$300m worth of arms from China.⁶⁹ There have also been claims that Iran has sent about 800 pasadars (revolutionary guards) to Sudan, having withdrawn them from the Bekaa valley in Lebanon, and that some of them were training the Sudanese at three camps in Eastern Sudan.⁷⁰

As other countries have closed their doors on Sudan, Iran has done the opposite. Radical elements in Teheran saw an opportunity to use Sudan to promote Islamic fundamentalism, and this has prompted Iran's supply of arms and hardened Shiite fighters with experience in Lebanon and Afghanistan, as well as funding for major purchases of new equipment from China.⁷¹ Sudan's relationship with Iran only emphasizes the isolated state which its domestic and foreign policies have brought. What is striking about this isolation is that it extends to relationships with other African and Arab countries and cannot simply be seen as a function of Sudan's relationship to the West.

67. El-Affendi, Turabi's Revolution p.146

68. 'Sudan Democratic Gazette, January 1992, p.1

69. Strategic Survey 1991-1992 London, Brassey's for the International Institute for Strategic Studies (1992) p.106

70. Ignatious, D 'Sudan seen as a new base for Iranian forward policy?' Guardian Weekly, February 1992, p.19

71. Makinda 'Iran Sudan and Islam' p.110

Conclusion

Since 1989 Sudan has been considered as a pariah state by many in the West, the Arab World and Africa. Its regional and global Islamic project has alienated Sudan from the international community and made Sudan an internationally labelled "public enemy". None of the neighboring countries can accept the proposed Islamic models which Sudan proposes. Sudan has appeared to be a serious challenge to the very existence of the ruling traditional monarchical rulers in the muslim world by supporting the attempts of the home-grown Middle Eastern militant Islamist groups to remove them from their office. Sudan's Islamic campaign to replace the existing secular regimes in non-Muslim African states like Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda has led to the breakdown of peaceful relations with Sudan. Sudan's own internal situation has been scarcely an encouraging example for others to follow its proposed Islamic models. The repressive and oppressive Islamic policies of the northern Sudanese against the southern Christians and animists not only denied their fundamental human rights but also directly contributed to independence of the people of the South Sudan in 2011. In a country like Sudan where there are diversities of ethnic groups the central government should have considered the socio-economic and political demands of the different ethnic groups for self-determination. The inability of successive Sudanese regimes to recognize facts and realities like cultural diversity, the historical demands of the northern opposition groups for equality, democracy and secular rule, make the attainment of sustainable peace difficult in present day Sudan.

In order to maintain peaceful relations regionally and globally Sudan has to limit its Islamic policies within its geographic boundaries. What has failed at home can hardly succeed abroad. Locally, regionally and globally, Sudan's Islamic fundamentalist government under Al Bashir suffers from a negative image and much criticism. At present Sudan is an isolated state, forced to rely upon itself, with no foreign investment and help from international donor organizations. Sudan is separating itself from the global community in this age of globalization, in which no state can afford either voluntary or enforced isolation for long. Sudan's already deteriorating economic condition, under the impact of sanctions, and the resulting suffering of ordinary Sudanese is testimony to this inescapable fact of life in contemporary international relations.