

## **SUDAN**

### **The Narration of the Course of the Civil War in Sudan**

1. Sudan, the largest country in Africa, has with only brief intervals since its independence been in a state war for the past four decades of its independence in 1956. While this analyst is concerned with the latest cycle of war in the Sudan, marking the ascendancy of National Islamic Front, Islamization of Sudan has been an enduring prospect in the history of politics in the Sudan. From the Madhist uprising against British rule in 1884 to the present, Islamists have protested the marginalization of Islamic culture symbolized and epitomized by Islamic law and decried the ascendancy of western culture crypted in the institutions of foreign legal codes.

2. In the Sudan, the forces of anti-imperialism, have conceptualized their resistance in terms of rejection of foreign legal cultures and institutions and as an advocacy for the establishment of an Islamic state. In this Sudan is unique in the Arab world. While others are susceptible to the fundamentalist movement, Sudan, by contrast is the only country where its anti-colonial Arabized leadership have opted for Islam as its system of government. Two movements are thus collapsed into one campaign; the first was the anti-colonial movement for independence from foreign rule; the second has been the fundamentalist movement which found its historical expression in the Madhist challenge to British military occupation in 1884, the year when the formal partition of Africa by Europeans was instituted in the Berlin Conference. In the Sudan the anti-imperialists found an indigenous ideological grounding in Islam and nationalism in the Sudan has for this reason been Islamic.

3. Sudan acquired its present configuration - the largest country in Africa, nearly a third the size of the continental United States - during the 60 years of Egypt's occupation, which was ended by the uprising of the Madhi in 1885. Egypt's interest had been in the provinces close to its borders, where the way of life like its own, was Arab, and Islamic and deeply depended upon the Nile, Sudan's South, which posed no political threat to Egypt, had none of these characteristics. The South has the same features of "Africa's South of the Sahara", its culture that of black Africa. Its practices were culturally different as was its languages. Egypt's only interest in the South was the taking of slaves from slave traders, mostly Muslims, had for centuries operated out of the land that is presently Sudan, conducting raids into the African heartland, transporting thousands of captives annually to buyers throughout the Arab World. These slave raiding wars had created the historical divide between the North and the South. To the South slavery preceded imperialism and imperialism was first Arab and Muslim before it was European and Christian. Within a polity divided by slave raiding wars, the Islam and Christianity were both religions of external powers; if there was any choice to be made, it made more sense for the choice to be Christianity. In the context of slavery, Christianity was adopted as a culture of resistance to Arab Slave System. The political elites of the South nurtured in an anti-slavery resistance found in Christian anti-Islamism a source of political inspiration. Because of the system of Sudan's pre-colonial slave trade, the South was always fearful of the Arab North. This state power division the British Imperialist

gratefully exploited during the period of British Colonial Rule.

4. "As colonial administrators, at the turn of the century, the British established a special status for Sudan's three southern provinces, with a view to attaching them to their own east African colonies. Known as the Closed Door policy, it replaced Arab officials with blacks and barred virtually all northerners from entering the region. Britain turned over authority for education and social services to Christian missionaries and left the day-to-day operational government to tribal chiefs. While doing little to promote economic development, it encouraged the use of English and revitalization of African tribal culture. Northern Sudanese rightly decried the policy as divisive, discriminatory, and anti-Islamic; indeed, a fourth of all southerners were converted from their native religions to Christianity. But when the British empire began to disintegrate after World War II, it was to the more powerful northerners that Britain turned in the negotiations over decolonization. The northerners readily persuaded Britain to renege on its promise to protect the special character of the South. Rejecting a federal constitution, northerners designated Arabic as the state's official language and sent Arabs to seize administrative posts in the South. By declaring themselves in favor of Islamic rule, the Ansar and the Khatmiyah, the major Sufi political orders, brought back visions of the slave trade to the southerners. As southerners saw it, benevolent British colonialism was being replaced by Arab tyranny. By the time of independence in 1956, an insurgency was already under way, and within months it grew into full-scale civil war". (Viorst, Milton, 49-50 1995).

5. The Sudan declared an Independent Country in 1956 was born divided. For the Northern Nationalist the post-colonial civil war, has been a war to unify the country against Southern secessionist parties. For the Southern parties the war was for security against the power of a class that had prospered through enslaving the best of its population. Constitutional parliamentary governance in such context of civil war had to be based on the military victories of Government forces in the war. Sudan's military was of necessity developed as anti-insurgency force, a mission which entailed its concomitant politicization. A force thus politicized was also susceptible to Islamization. The ascendancy of Colonel Jaafar Nimieri in 1969 through a coup supported by Sudan's communists would ensure praetorian control of the Sudan. To effect this purpose, Nimieri, would seek the isolation of the forces of Arab Islamic nationalists. Thus Nimieri negotiated the agreement for Southern autonomy that gave regional relations a decade of peace. Nimieri sought to weaken the Islamists by jailing their leader, Turabi. However as Nimieri's secular support became dangerously undermined, he switched sides and sought the support of the Islamists. He released Turabi, already seven years in prison and named him the Attorney-General. "Reversing his earlier policy of tolerance, in 1983, he decreed the September Laws, which re-imposed the Sharia, including the notorious hudud, the amputation of the hand for theft. By then, the discovery of oil in the South had raised the stakes for both sides. Southern army units mutinied over the decree, and the fighting, at a cost so far of more than a million lives, still continues" (Viorst., 50 1995).

6. In 1989, Colonel Umar Hassan Ahmad-al-Bashir, deposed Nimieri and assumed the office of Head of State. With this change the ascendancy of Sudan's Islamists was established. Bashir is committed to Islam as a system of government. "We're now in the

process of writing a constitution for the country" Bashir said, "based on the bedrock principles of Islam. The fundamental characteristics are already beginning to show up in our constitutional decree, and they will be completed into a political system that will be ratified by an elected body. Not all groups agree on how we are interpreting the Sharia, but we believe there is wide latitude. We have chosen a moderate way, like the Koran itself, and so the Sharia in Sudan will be moderate. The dispute over what it requires lies not in the area of private but of public affairs. Unfortunately, there is no model in history for Islamic government. Fourteen centuries have gone by since the prophet, and everyone now has his own image of an Islamic state. Some countries confuse traditions - like the suppression of women - with religion, but tradition is not Islam. We don't claim that we will implement Islam perfectly, but we're serious about rising to the challenge" (Bashir in Viorst 1995)

7. Hassan Al-Turabi, the leader of the National Islamic Front whose vision guides the Bashir Government explains the state power mission of his party in theological terms. Turabi speaks on his own positions in the following "What would an Islamic government mean?" Turabi asks "The model is not very clear, the scope of government is limited. Law is not the only agency of social control. Moral norms, individual conscience, all these are very important, and they are autonomous. Intellectual attributes towards Islam are not going to be regulated or codified at all. The presumption is that people are free. The religious freedom not just of Non-Muslims, but even of Muslims who have different views, is going to be guaranteed. I personally have views that run against all the orthodox schools of law on the status of women, on the court testimony of non-Muslims, on the law of apostasy. Some people say that I have been influenced by the West and that I border on apostasy myself. But I don't accept the condemnation of Salman Rushdie. If a Muslim wakes up in the morning and says he doesn't believe any more, that's his business. There has never been any question of inhibiting people's freedom to express any understanding of Islam. The function of government is not total. Islamic government is not total because it is Islam that is a total way of life, and if you reduce it to government, then government would be omnipotent, and that is not Islamic. Government has no business interfering with one's worship, for example, or prayer or fasting, except, of course, someone's public challenge to fasting. We don't confuse what is moral with what is legal." (Turabi in Viorst p. 53-54 1995). Both Bashir and his mentor Al-Turabi give a Sufist liberal interpretation of liberty, but it is liberty within Islam. Islam as the source of norms, the grand norm is placed above all controversies. The choice is not between Islamic and a Secular State for Turabi, the question of statecraft is choosing between options of Islamic states. To the opponents of the Arab North and of any version of Islamic State, Turabi's reasoned defense of freedom expression within an Islamic State is potentially despotic. Thus the polarization of vision.

8. The leaders of the Khartoum Government embroiled in a civil war are men of reason passionately committed to their vision of Sudan as an Islamic State. For them the question of peace is finding a place within a unified Islamic Sudan for non-Muslim minorities. Though Bashir and Turabi are moderate Islamists, their vision of an Islamic Sudan, cannot be effected by security forces that are ethnically and religiously pluralistic. The instruments for creating the Islamic Sudan have to be sectarianly effective. This is

why power in Khartoum cannot be shared. "Observers said that well before the coup, the NIF infiltrated both the state bureaucracy and civil institutions, thereby painlessly capturing the society's administrative levers. After the coup, the NIF replaced thousand of key job holders with its own supporters, assuring its supremacy in the judiciary, security services, armed forces, trade unions, professional societies, and education and communication systems. It extended its dominion over the economy by taking control of banks, foreign trade, and much of farm and industrial production. Moreover, it has penetrated the entire culture with a program of Islamic indoctrination" (Viorst 35-56 1995).

9. The man recognized as the alternate voice to Turabi, with a pedigree unchangeable in the political North, Sadiq al-Madhi who is head of the Ummar Party, which his grandfather founded during the fight for independence against Britain and is the great-grandson of the Madhi, the Sufi Holy man Muhammad Ahmad Al-Azhar, the liberator of Sudan from Egyptian occupation, compares Turabi to his grandfather. The Madhi established a thirteen-year peace regime based on the Sharia, a regime that was autocratic in its evangelical thrusts. Sadiq draws from the liberal strand of his family's Sufism. Twice Prime Minister and an opponent of Turabi is himself an exponent of an Islamic Sudan. "The Mahdiyya (the Madhi's regime) provided the missing link between Sufi Islam and the state". Sadiq said when asked about the ongoing influence of his family on Sudan, "Sufism was for hundreds of years seen as "Islam minus the state". The Mahdi restored the presence of the state to it, assuring to Islam a permanent place in the body politic of Sudan. The British always fearful of re-igniting the Mahdiyya, never tampered with Islam during the occupation, and, on independence the mass political parties, except, for the communists, were all Islamic. Once Islam was in, it never came out. It is impossible to imagine Sudanese politics today without the Islamic component.". (Viorst 56 1995).

Sadiq had sought to make the Umma a national party by providing leadership for an alliance that effected the legitimization of the national identity of the Umma party. A pluralist national polity in which the hegemony of Islamic leadership is based on trust is Sadiq's alternative to the NIF which in seeking to Islamize the society has alienated not only the South but also the adherents of a secularized version of Islam. With NIF's control of all the basic institutions of society in its hands, it of necessity has created a zero sum power situation in Sudan. Having all to lose, it is desperate to end the war with its control intact. This fact has resulted in the prolonging of the war.

10. Executive control over the judiciary and the conduct of the courts has seriously compromised the rule of law in Sudan. This control is exercised within the framework of emergency regulations imposed by Bashir's military regime. The war situation has promoted the exercise of unchecked power by the security services and in the political manipulation of the court system. The security of the state is defended by every means. Turabi explains this situation clearly and without apology. "In many respects, Sudan recognizes that it is not achieved the model it has set for itself. Sudan is going through a transition, and in times like these, of course, we haven't the capacity to observe normal procedures. How can you expect a complex country like ours, which is economically in

very bad shape and politically in a state of civil war, to maintain a constitutional system without some limitations on liberty? We admit we've tipped too far forward toward government control; we need more freedom. But we haven't forgotten the model, and we are working actively to attain it. In other countries, nationalism must be the alternative to Islam. But the only nationalism available to us, if we want to assert indigenous values, originality, and independence of the West, is Islam. Islam is the only modernity. It is the only doctrine that can serve as the national doctrine of today." (Viorst 54-55 1995).

11. For John Garang, the leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Army now in its fourteenth year armed struggle against Khartoum, such views leave very little options for accommodation. The SPLA's rejection of Arab Islamic State Culture means that there is no middle ground between the NIF and SPLA. Each party can only realize its vision of a unified Sudan by the total military defeat of the other.

The civil war has the structure of a war of extermination. It is in this phase that it has become internationalized. Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Uganda have all been alienated by the aggressive fundamentalist policies pursued by Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and his regime's spiritual leader Hassan al-Turabi. They accuse the two of supporting the export of a militant band of Islam into their countries. The United States has also accused Sudan of sponsoring Islamic terrorist groups. Armed by Iran, Iraq and Libya, Khartoum campaigns for military extirpation of the SPLA. The SPLA with support from Sudan's neighbors has dug in, frustrating the effort of Khartoum to import unified control of the country. The SPLA holds grounds in Sudan and rules over territories it controls. Sudan is effectively divided by the war, however tenuous and tentative the SPLA control over its domain may be. This is the sixteenth year of the war and both sides are still in contention.

12. In this war the road to peace seems to be one that is to be found in a version of federation. The federal arrangement would allow for regional autonomies that provides accommodation for diversities. The federalism that would provide accommodation for sectarian state power differences must however be secular in its premises. Turabi has rejected this option.

For Turabi, this option would endorse a Two Legal Systems For Sudan. "The government rejected a dual legal system, with different rules for Muslims and Non-Muslims, he said, because it would require that the police, before bringing a charge, determine the religion of the accused. That, he said, would be a mockery of the law. Instead, it chose regionalization waiving for the non-Muslim South not only laws against drinking alcohol but also the imposition of Islamic penalties particularly maiming, for crimes. Under this system, he said, non-Muslims would be guaranteed their rights, while Muslims were assured of the full practice of their religion." (Viorst 54: 1995). Sudan would be Islamic but would accommodate its non-Muslim citizens by creating special statuses for them. This is a recipe for Islamic Majoritarian Despotism. The SPLA rejects this view of federation. The only type of federalism that is acceptable to the mainstream Southern Leadership is one premised upon the elimination of the virtual monopoly of power by Islamic parties. The re-structuring of power in the

Sudan is the minimum that the SPLA affirms.

13. The commitments of the combatants in the Sudanese Civil War show that the Sudan is the classic example of a country in which the issue of politics is the desire of both sides to be the sole proprietor of state power. Though the SPLA may not have set out on this course, the logic of the political process has transformed it into a contestant for state power *over* the whole of Sudan. It is important to keep in mind the history of state power contests in Ethiopia. Those who started out secessionist appear now to be securely resident in Addis. It will also reward us theoretically to remember the case of secessionist Biafra - at a point in the war the road to separate existence became that of the establishment of Biafran military supremacy over the rest of Nigeria. The point to keep in mind is that of the logic of all civil wars.

As a genre of wars, civil wars are fought with state power resources with a view to establishing supremacist control over the state or replacing the existing state with a new state. Secessionist groups cannot secede until they have affected the necessary change in the equilibrium of force that enables them to frustrate the moves of central authorities to contain them within existing state power relations. The power that makes the option of secession feasible also makes it possible for the secessionists to become new central authorities. This is why wars are inherently dynamic and rich in state power crises.

14. These remarks contextualize the Sudanese Civil War. The Bashir regime in Khartoum appear committed to the policy of total Islamization and Arabisation of the whole of Sudan. These actions of the Bashir administration presuppose a policy of war. It is a policy that decrees that the peoples of the South and the SPLA in particular must give up their views of God, of man and society in order to live under the laws promulgated by the Government of Sudan. Such a policy transforms the war in Sudan into a *Jihadist Civil War*.

The military situation which such wars seek to establish for the Jihadist is that of total victory over "unbelievers." Thus, the Bashir government must be presumed to seek the monopoly of control of military means in the whole of the Sudan; a condition in which it has routed the SPLA and in which it has the South on its knees as supplicants, weary of war, ready to be converted to the faith to save their lives, thereby.

Given the real military situation presently on ground, Khartoum must embark on a zero sum military campaign to wipe out, disgrace and discredit the SPLA and make it foolish for any groups in the South to defy the program of the National Islamic Front of Al-Turabi. The Islamization and Arabisation war policy of the Bashir government in Khartoum assumes the logic of imperialist theocratism.

15. Given the policy of the NIF, the SPLA is of necessity radicalized in their reaction. To the Jihadist thrust of Bashir, and anti-Jihadist response is made. This is why the Sudan situation is of theoretical importance. The war process is employed to institutionalize a divine order by one party, while the other party already committed to contrary visions of the Divine, seeks a secular Sudan in which all faiths can be freely

practiced and equally protected by the law.

On 12 September, 1991, in Torit, SPLA made the following declaration:

"In any future peace talks, the position of the SPLM\SPLA on the system of government (in the Sudan) shall be based on resolving the war through a *United secular democratic Sudan* or *confederal* secular democratic Sudan or an *association* of secular sovereign states or self-determination. The SPLM\SPLA notes that its call for the unity of the Sudan has always been a qualified one *contingent* on whether the Northern Elite that holds the reins of power in Khartoum are able to transform their *sectarian, racial, religious* vision of the Sudan".

The SPLM/SPLA asserts that it controls the entire countryside and most of the towns in Southern Sudan and the entire countryside of the Nuba Mountains and that it is present in Darfur and Southern Blue Nile.

The military situation explains the radical definiteness of the SPLA. The SPLA is radically definite because their call for a secular democratic Sudan cannot be negotiated. This call cannot be negotiated because the Bashir administration has committed Sudan to a future of fundamentalist Islamization and Arabisation. In return, the definiteness of the SPLA further radicalizes the National Islamic Front since a call for a *secular* Sudan is the very negation of their view of an Arab Islamic Sudan. As the war proceeds, the bitterness between the two sides increases as the logic of their positions drive them to opposite poles.

16. The SPLA may argue that their call for a united secular democratic Sudan is the reasonable alternative to the sectarian racist view of the Nationalist Islamic Front (NIF). But against the background of a determined effort by NIF to arabize and islamize the Sudan, the SPLA's call can only be accommodated in the Sudan by the defeat and routing of the NIF forces and with the overthrow of the Government of Sudan.

The military situation *disallows* the two extreme views on what the Sudan will be. The NIF cannot militarily create and Arabized, Islamized Sudan. The SPLA cannot militarily create a secular, democratic Sudan.

This explains the logic of the Torit Declaration. The SPLA argues that given the *manichean nature of Sudanese politics*, there *are four options which correspond to four military relations of power*. The first option is the winner takes all; he who routes and destroys the other can have his way; the NIF manichean victor can have his arabized and islamized Sudan if he can achieve the perfect and total destruction of his enemy; and the SPLA manichean victor can have his united, secular democratic Sudan, if he can achieve the total and perfect destruction of his enemy; neither side in the Sudan has achieved this military position; thus the *pragmatic disallowance* of this option by the effective reality on the ground.

A federal accommodation of world views is excluded inferentially because all federal

governments are based on federal control of state power and it is indeed the very federalness of control of state power that is given expression to by the *federalization* of government. The very manicheanness of the contesting worldviews drives the opposing sides towards the goal of monopoly control of state power. The military situation disallows the winner takes all option and the *ideologies* of the warring parties disallows the federal option.

17. Thus the logic of the war in Sudan throws up the next option viz, that of confederal democratic Sudan. The appearance of the secular ideal in the SPLA offer must make it abhorrent to the NIF, which is indeed the party of the Arabized Islamic Group in the Sudan. The real world options therefore for peace negotiation in the Sudan must be explored on the premises that allow for the *sovereign coexistence of world views*. Only a confederal secular Sudan or Secular Association of Sovereign States of the Sudan can avert a break up of the Sudan.

Secularity is essential for the accommodation of sectarianized religious *pluralism*. And because of the sectarianization of the Arabized Islamic community in the Sudan, the interests of a democratic party must be subjected to constitutional arrangements that are in consonance with sectarianism; and sectarian theocratism makes no allowance for the separation of the mosque and the state in such communities. A confederation of sectarian religious communities in the Sudan cannot amount to more than secular association of sovereign states in the Sudan.

This is what constitutes the political crisis in the Sudan viz: - that there are really three options:

- (i) the option of a united Sudan, theocratic *or* secular;
- (ii) the option of an association of secular sovereign states; and
- (iii) The option of break-up of the Sudan.

18. The Sudan that is available to the NIF is a Sudan of some 30 million people, categorized into 550 ethnic groups that speak 100 languages and hegemonically divided into a Northern Arab Islamized Sudanese and Southern Non-Arab Anti-Islam Sudanese. The policy of the NIF [inexorably drives] in the direction of militarization of the conflict. No other course can give it the control it needs to effect its vision. This apparently is the conclusion of Francis M. Deng, a Sudanese with intellectual pedigree that matches those of Al-Turabi. Deng concludes in his book titled *Conflict of Identities in the Sudan* as follows: " the starting point to any promising initiative for peace is to recognize that two parallel visions have emerged in the North and the South as a result of historical evolution. After decades of a debilitating civil war, the Sudanese are ready and eager for a solution." Calling for immediate interim measures to address the humanitarian needs of the people, Deng asserts that the forging of a long-term solution would require either "redefining the national identity so as to be genuinely uniting" or reluctantly recognizing that "obstacles to the national unity are perhaps insurmountable," and accepting the taboo option of partition. (Deng, 1995).

Again it bears repeating that Sudan is unique in the choice its government has made to base the transformation of Sudanese society upon Islam. This is why Sudan offers a

model in the same manner that Bolshevik Russia offered a model for parties who sought power to effect ideological transformation of society. Sudan is an example both to governments committed to Islamization of their societies and to governments such as those of Turkey seeking to protect the secular nature of their society. Toktamis Atis, a professor at the University of Istanbul, must have had the Sudan at the back of his mind when he gave this opinion on the present disposition of forces in Turkey. "The secular forces in Turkish society are strong enough to defend themselves" he asserted, " If Erbakan tried to challenge them directly, there would be great conflict in Turkey, maybe even civil war. He knows that. Maybe, in his heart, he really would like to wipe away that secular state, but he's not so stupid as to try." (Toktamis Atis, New York Times Magazine, Feb. 23, 1997) To parties seeking to reproduce the victories, power and authority of Al-Turabi and his National Islamic Front, Sudan is both an inspiration and a warning.

This is the importance of Sudan to Algeria and Nigeria, the two cases that complete the situation of Islamic Fundamentalist Movements on the African soil. Algeria is a case of the ongoing process to prevent the Sudanisation of Algeria. For Nigerian secularists, Algeria is a warning about the future. How are nascent Islamic state power interest groups to be prevented from evolving into Algeria's FIS and Sudan's NIF? Nigeria's case is one of containment and prevention. Algeria's is one of rejection of change. The chronology of the events defining the challenges posed to the secularists in both countries complete these narratives. The hopes of the African secularists are expressed by the joy of the Turkish generals as they succeeded in effecting the resignation of Necmettin Erbakan in June, 1997. The generals who consider themselves the guarantors of the secular state rejoiced, "congratulating themselves for saving the country from fundamentalism." No longer, they said, was Turkey in danger of becoming "another Iran" or "another Algeria." (New York Times, June 22, 1997 p16). Algerian generals are in a war process to frustrate the takeover of government by an Islamic fundamentalist party. The war is in progress and victory is not anywhere yet in sight.