

## Chapter 6

# **Ethno-religious Nationalism in Sudan: The Enduring Constraint on the Policy of National Identity**

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### **Introduction**

Attempts by the Sudanese administrations since 1956 to establish a workable and legitimate constitutional framework embracing the interests of the over 570 heterogeneous citizenry groups in Sudan have remained an elusive project. Instead, the country has been polarised into ethno-religious and territorial nationalisms, culminating into the war of attrition between the regimes in Sudan and the rebel movements since 1955. Whereas conflict in Sudan has acquired a multidimensional character over the years, the main belligerents have been the Arab-speaking Muslims of the north and the southern black Sudanese. At the core of the civil war are the inherently exclusive ethno-religious-centred policies, namely Islamisation and Arabisation pursued in various ways by successive Sudanese administrations since the 1950s. The persistent derogation of the linguistic and religio-cultural practices of the southerners and non-Muslims in general by the Arab-speaking Muslims, continues to impose limitations on the drive to establish a durable consensus on the Sudanese national identity.

The policies of Islamisation and Arabisation, with their cultural dimensions and implications, have remained the central mobilisation force and rallying point for the political survival of the Sudanese ruling *elite*. On the other side of the political spectrum is the transformation of Sudan into a theocratic state, which has forced the southern Sudanese to use ethnicity as the rallying point for their survival and security against authoritarianism

and oppression by the north. The southern Sudanese resent their marginalisation by the regimes in power.<sup>1</sup>

The marginalisation of the southern Sudanese and the Nuba is not a recent phenomenon. It was practiced by the British colonialists and thereafter maintained by the post-independence administrations in Sudan, and thirdly, there is the ongoing discrimination, oppression and repression of the black Sudanese.<sup>2</sup> History therefore constitutes one of the *prima facie* determinants of conflict and ethnic polarisation between the north and the south. This is not to argue, however, that the issues of self-preservation, autonomy, and ethnic identity by the south, as the core factors underlying conflict in Sudan, are not important. The south did not accept the Anglo-Egyptian colonialism in Sudan. Similarly the southerners have not accepted the post-independence Sudanese policies of Islamisation.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter focuses on conflict and ethnic identity in Sudan. Specifically, it examines the extent to which ethno-religious nationalism—centralised within the context of Islamisation—imposes limitations on a nationally oriented Sudanese identity. The first part of the discussion puts into proper perspective the meaning of Islamisation, whereas the second part examines the interplay between Islamisation and religious identification and mobilisation in the Sudanese conflict. Part three puts into proper perspective the extent to which oil production in Sudan imposes limitations on conflict resolution and undermines the possibility for the establishment of a consensus on national identity. Part four focuses on the impact of Islamisation and “Sudanese national” identity. Two issues need to be clarified at the outset. First, in this study I shall treat the Southern Sudanese and people of the Nuba Mountains as one entity fighting for their rights in the Sudan. Similarly, the Arabic-speaking peoples of the north will also be treated as a single entity influenced largely by their culture and religion, Islam.<sup>4</sup> We do recognise that such a sharp dichotomy is problematic, in the sense that there are some black African Sudanese who live in the north. However, this approach is adopted mainly for convenience and analytical purposes. Of the more than 32 million Sudanese, the black Africans, the Arabs, and the Beja constitute

52%, 39% and 6% of the population respectively. Over 70% and 10% of the population are respectively Muslims and Christians. This study does not attempt to offer a detailed analysis of Islam and *Sharia law, per se*.

### **Islamisation and Arabisation: A framework for analysis**

It is important that the meaning of Islamisation and Arabisation be put into their proper contexts, particularly with respect to the extent to which they have been applied by Sudanese regimes. This would provide a clear understanding of the implications the policies have had on the southern Sudanese who are advocating a secular state, that is, the separation of church and state.<sup>5</sup> In its broad context, Arabisation simply means the process of the integration and assimilation of individuals into the cultural values and beliefs of Muslims and Arabs in particular. As a result of Arabisation and, by extension, Islamisation, northern Sudanese ethnic groups tend to produce genealogies that have historically linked them to Arab origins.<sup>6</sup> It is for these reasons that the ruling *elites* in Sudan have persistently incorporated Arabic culture, language and religion into the legal and political structures of the state for their political survival.<sup>7</sup>

Different interpretations have been advanced with respect to the meaning of Islamisation. The traditionalist thesis stresses that Islamisation is nothing other than the reintroduction of the past Islamic institutions and traditional laws which deal with different forms of punishment. These laws are to be followed to the letter with the reservation of separate facilities for men and women, and a “protected” status for non-Muslims.<sup>8</sup> Non-Muslims are accommodated within the context of a recognition of diversity among Muslims and society as a whole. Traditionalists recognise that there is disagreement among Muslim *ikhtilaf*, that is Islamic law did not evolve as a monolithic corpus. Disagreement also extends between Muslims and non-Muslims, or the people of the book *ahl al-kitab*, Jews and Christians. Traditionalists see themselves as the custodians of the original and “Dynamic” Islamic faith.

The reformers (neo-traditionalists) conceptualise the process of Islamisation as a dynamic development of Islam. It involves the process of

interpretation and assimilation that characterise Islamic tradition, while at the same time incorporating foreign sources which do not contradict Islam.<sup>9</sup> This practice, according to the reformers, is not unique in Islamic law. The reformers stress that new ideas and problems can only be solved by the adoption and adaptation of new solutions prevailing at any given time. Without accepting Westernisation, the reformers, however, borrow from certain Western cultures. In Sudan, *Sadiq al-Mahdi* (Mahdism—a movement that believes in political struggle and in the establishment of an Islamic state) and *Hassan al-Turabi* (Muslim Brotherhood) represent this Islamic persuasion. The other Islamic movements that have had an influence in Sudan through their grassroots support, include the *Ansar* (followers of Mahdi), and *Khatmiyya*. The Sudanese Muslims share Sunni Islamic faith which believes “in an eschatological individual who will come in the future to deliver the community from oppression by the forces of evil and to restore true Islam and with it a reign of justice on earth”.<sup>10</sup> These views form part of their persistent belief in the necessity of establishing an Islamic state. Before dealing with Islamisation, a brief analysis of Ansar, Khatmiyya and Muslim Brotherhood would suffice.

Although the Sudanese Mahdi state had been destroyed by the Anglo-Egyptian conquest at the end of the nineteenth century, the religious movement itself did not end. It gained greater currency under the leadership of Mahdi’s son, Sayyid Abd al-Rahman, between 1885 and 1959. He organised the Mahdi followers, the Ansar, into a political force that gained influence during the Sudanese independence movement.<sup>11</sup> The Ansar established the Umma Party whose main objective was the unity of Sudan into an Islamic state. Khatmiyya finds its roots within the *Khatmiyya Tariqah movement*, founded by an Egyptian, Muhammad Uthman al-Mirghani (1793-1853), who travelled widely in Sudan during the period of Egyptian rule.<sup>12</sup> With its wide support during the drive for Sudanese independence, the movement advocated unification with Egypt. It became one of the centres of political parties in Sudan, with its platform focusing on Islamisation of the state. In 1956 Khatmiyya forces formed their own political party, the People’s Democratic Party, to advocate Sudanese independence. The Muslim Brotherhood also had its roots in

Egypt. Founded in Egypt in the early 1950s by Muslims who rejected the western secular path Egypt was taking at the time, they, instead, advocated a return to Arab culture, Islam and *sharia* laws.

Although influenced by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood is autonomous. The Brotherhood advocates the adoption of an Islamic socio-political system in which the Constitution is centred on the *Quran*, with *Sharia law* representing the basis of the Sudanese legal system. As with their Egyptian counterparts, the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood rejects the westernisation and secularisation of Sudan, and instead advocates a modern Islamic state. The movement became more prominent in the 1960s under the leadership of Hassan al-Turabi. Originally operating under the banner of the Islamic Charter Front Party, the Brotherhood participated in the establishment of the National Front—a conglomeration of the Umma (Ansar) Party, the Democratic Union Party (DUP), and the Islamic Charter Front (ICF)—with Sadiq al-Mahdi as its leader. All these movements-cum-political parties stressed the need to make Sudan an Islamic state. Islamisation, therefore, became a major theme in their pronouncements.

At the core of Islamisation lie the doctrines of Islamic culture and religion. According to this view, implementation of Arabic culture, language, and religion—*Sharia*—cannot be brought about in isolation and without the concomitant internal political realities. Islamisation (read, application of *Sharia* laws) is used as a tool for political power and legitimacy.<sup>13</sup> Implementation of *Sharia* means conforming to the will of God, who by extension, is the sole “legislator”. In this conception, human will is excluded from legislation. Thus, the law or God’s will, precedes the state. The central duty of the state, therefore, is to carry out God’s law.<sup>14</sup> To disobey the law constitutes an act which contravenes religious doctrine, and is subject to religious punishment. *Sharia*, therefore, controls and regulates socio-political and economic life which form the basis of political authority—“reinforced by the dogma of the divine guidance of the community”.<sup>15</sup> The incorporation of *Sharia* law in a constitution offers the basis for the promotion of Islamic principles. Islamisation is therefore

an important vehicle for promoting values associated with Islam and Arabic culture.

Irrespective of the fact that the *Quran* does not mention constitutionalism *per se*, constitutionalism is necessary for realising the just and good society prescribed by the *Quran*.<sup>16</sup> What is central here is that justification and legitimacy for the survival at the helm of the state is directly linked with prescriptions of Islamisation. In other words, Islam is *din wa dawla*, that is, Islam is “religion and state”.<sup>17</sup> This is not to argue, however, that Islam is static or monolithic. As I have explained, the debate on the conceptions of Islamisation by the traditionalists and reformers is a continuous process. The reformers under the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-I Islami, among others, advocate more participation in the political process in Muslim societies, while at the same time maintaining Islamic prescriptions. The reformers, therefore, emphasise the existence of a dual relationship between Islamisation and democratisation. The concepts of Islamisation and democratisation lie outside the scope of this discussion and will not be dealt with here.<sup>18</sup> One of the questions which arises, is the place of non-Muslims in a state pursuing the policy of Islamisation. I have demonstrated that there is a direct linkage, with some variants, between religion and the state, as conceived by both the traditionalists and reformers. Indeed, this linkage is necessitated because of its religious relevance and internal mass demand.

Islamisation has a number of implications for non-Muslims. In the early centuries of Islamic conquest, non-Muslims were subjugated to Muslim rule, with the *jihad* (holy war) being used as a means of controlling territory under Muslim jurisdiction, as well as to conquer more areas. The conquered people were not forced to convert to Islam because that is against *Sharia* laws. The use of *jihad* is not a common phenomenon in contemporary interstate relations. This is not to argue, however, that contemporary Muslim political leaders do not use it as a tool for mobilisation and propaganda if they are faced with internal or external threats.

In the pre-modern period, non-Muslims, particularly Christians and Jews who submitted to Muslim rule, were given the status of *dhimmis*.

These were contracts concluded between Muslims and non-Muslims which accorded the latter protection, provided that they accepted the domination of Islam. The non-Muslims (Jews and Christians) were to pay *jizya* (special tax) and were exempted from serving in the military, but were instead subject to *Sharia* law.<sup>19</sup> The *jizya* was regarded either as “compensation for being spared from death ... [or] for living in Muslim land.”<sup>20</sup> These contractual arrangements were not extended to communities regarded by Muslims as polytheist—those who were neither Jews nor Christians. Instead, the polytheists were given the “option” of either accepting Islam or choosing death.<sup>21</sup> However, Muslims were more tolerant in their treatment of religious minorities, compared with Christians. These premodern prescriptions constitute the centre of a debate in the contemporary Muslim world—comprising a population of over one billion. One of the central questions is the status of non-Muslims in a state which is pursuing Islamisation policies.

The central argument of those who subscribe to the traditional thesis is that there is no equality between Muslims and non-Muslims within and under *Sharia* law. The underlying perspective of the traditionalists is that Islamisation is therefore essential for the *ahl al-kitab*:

Since their faith has not reached the highest level of spirituality, but obeys commands which we believe to have been abrogated, and puts other laws in place of those revealed through Islam by the means of the Prophet and most righteous Judge, therefore [the *Sharia*] makes certain differences between them and Muslims, treating them as not on the same level.<sup>22</sup>

This interpretation of *Sharia* is in conformity with the pre-modern perspectives. Tabandeh argues that those who have not accepted one God, are “outside the pale of humanity”, and are to be treated as non-persons.<sup>23</sup> It is important to note here that non-Muslims, according to this viewpoint, are not accorded political rights and freedoms.<sup>24</sup>

The reformers’ perspective regarding non-Muslims in relation to Muslims, is also generally tailored on *Sharia* law, with little variation.

However, non-Muslims today do not accept the second class status enshrined in the traditional conceptions of Islamisation. Whereas the issues of equality in citizenship and opportunity are stipulated in some constitutions in Islamic states, restrictions for non-Muslims still prevail because of these inherent internal pressures. Non-Muslims are not accorded the opportunity to hold key government positions because they are not fully committed to Islamic ideology.<sup>25</sup> Islamisation policies pursued by those who subscribe to the modernistic thesis are couched within this perspective. Control of state apparatus is therefore central both for the traditionalists *and* reformers.

A number of points need to be reiterated here to conclude this section. Firstly, both the traditionalists and reformers support policies of Islamisation, with the state functioning as a means of promoting *Sharia* law and as a source of power. In such a society, church and state have complementary and overlapping responsibilities and functions. Secondly, both perspectives disagree, for example, on some of the implications of the law *vis-à-vis* non-Muslims. Various disagreements with respect to the interpretations of *Sharia* law have existed for centuries, hence the conflicting viewpoints on Islamisation programmes.

### **Implications of Islamisation for religious identification, mobilisation and conflict**

Sudan's stability, unity and sovereignty have been persistently threatened by its internal civil war since independence in 1956. Whereas intra-factional disagreements and conflict dating back to the 1950s occurred, the centre of the civil war has been between the Arab-speaking Muslims of the north and black Sudanese of the south. It is important first of all to underpin the aetiology and rationale of the southern Sudanese in relation to their search for a separate legitimacy and identity from the rest of Sudan. The objective here is not to give a detailed historical analysis.<sup>26</sup> The problem centres on the historical, socio-economic, cultural, religious, and political situation in Sudan.

The British administered the two regions as separate entities, with little economic, political and infrastructural development in the south. This



evoked and enhanced southern aspirations and consciousness.<sup>27</sup> The formation of the Sudan African Closed Districts National Union (SACDNU) later changed to Sudan African National Union (SANU), and the Southern Front Party (SFP), changed the political scenario in Sudan. The two movements promoted and cemented southern opinion on their relations with the north. The other important factor which prompted the south to demand autonomy and identification is religion. The majority of the southerners are animists, as well as Catholics and Protestants. The central contentious question has been the attempt by the post-independence Sudanese leaders to introduce *Sharia* laws, a move centred within Islamisation and Arabisation.<sup>28</sup> Islamisation and Arabisation in Sudan go back many centuries, but intensified during the 19<sup>th</sup> century slave trade. These are some of the main causes which have led to conflict in Sudan.

As we have seen, the north is dominated by Arab-speaking Sudanese—with culture, language and religion at the core of their identity. Sudan, with a rich history of Islamic nationalism (Funj sultanate, 1504-1820; and Mahdist state, 1885-1899), turned to religion as a source of strength and national image. Central to this image has been the perception by the Sudanese leaders that Islamisation performs two major objectives, namely mobilisation and identification. Though applied at variance, Islamisation still constitutes the *modus operandi* for the Sudanese administrations. The Administration of Ismail al-Azhari (1956-1958), declared “Islam the state religion and the *Sharia* a basic source of law”.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Gen-Ibrahim Abboud (1958-64), stressed that his policy towards the south was to be based on a “single language and a single religion for a single country”.<sup>30</sup> The war efforts against the Anya Nya (snake poison), which were conducted until the 1972 Addis Ababa Accords were signed, were premised on this context and rationale.

In Phase One of his administration, President Gaafar al Numeiri was conciliatory and accommodating with regard to the Southern question. This is what paved the way for the Addis Ababa agreement. For the first time, the north not only recognised the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM)—the Anya Nya political wing—as the main represen-

tative of the south, but the agreement provided for autonomy for the southern Sudanese. When he took over the leadership through a military *coup* in 1969, he was supported mainly by the left-oriented elements in Sudan, particularly the Sudan Communist Party (SCP). His *coup* was therefore dubbed a “Socialist Revolution”, with an openly anti-imperialist policy stance, and support from Egypt, Libya, and the Arab countries of the Middle East.<sup>31</sup> Influenced by some internal developments in Sudan, Numeiri took a more radical stance *vis-à-vis* the situation in the south during Phase Two of his administration. Before dealing with Numeiri’s *volte face*, it is necessary to identify the underlying causal factors.

First, the introduction of socialist policies by Numeiri’s regime was opposed by the advocates of pro-Islamisation, particularly by reformers such as the Muslim Brotherhood. The followers of Muslim Brotherhood are opposed to the notion of separation of church and state, because it is not consistent with *Sharia* law and is deemed inherently destabilising. The policies were also opposed by the influential Ansar and Khatmiyya religio-political traditionalist movements, particularly their political wings, the Umma Party and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) respectively. Secondly, the 1971 attempted military *coup* by leftist officers influenced his decision to clamp down on SCP, his allies. Thirdly, he revoked the special status of the south which was provided for in the 1972 Addis Ababa Accords, thus distancing himself from the southerners as well. The central point to stress is that Numeiri needed a policy framework which would remove him from a political quagmire and enable him to remain at the helm of the presidency. He also needed to establish policies which were consonant with Sudan’s political history and social culture, which includes the over 70% Muslim population.<sup>32</sup>

Numeiri therefore introduced an Islamisation policy which once again polarised the Sudanese historical political divide between the north and south. *Sharia* was incorporated in politics, law and society in general. In this case, religion—Islam—through the policy of Islamisation, was used as an instrument to unify the country and to promote the war efforts against the south, rendering his policy of “Sudanese national” identity more of a fallacy than a reality. The southern Sudanese people established the Anya

Nya II, and the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), to liberate the people of the region from Islamisation and Arabisation policies. Under the direction of the Southern Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SSPLM) and Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), the political wings of Anya Nya II and SPLA respectively, the demand of the South henceforth focused on total liberation. Irrespective of the intra-liberation movements' conflict and the subsequent disintegration of the SSLM, the SPLA still remains the dominant military broker in the south and the major challenger to successive regimes in Khartoum. Numeiri's Islamisation policies were used as a means to promote Muslim identification and mobilisation.

Islamisation policy was introduced to conform with "a legacy left by the Mahdist movement not only of Islamic identification with the state but also of Islam's role as an anticolonialist force and an integral component of Sudanese nationalism."<sup>33</sup> Numeiri was originally anti-Mahdist, -Khatimiyya, and -Muslim Brothers. He stressed that Sudan was to be purified from western cultural infidelity and that backwardness in Sudan was a consequence of non-Muslim practices. Indeed, this was Numeiri's clear *volte face* if compared with his policies of the 1970s.<sup>34</sup> Islamisation policies solidified his authoritarian rule and legitimacy, at least initially. In this context, the state became an important instrument for the promotion of Islamisation. Specifically, Numeiri used Islamisation as a political instrument to diffuse the *elite* and students who were discontented with his policies. He also used it as a tool to mobilise the public on his side. Indeed, Islamisation was also used as a means to respond to critiques of him, such as issued from the National Front, National Islamic Front (NIF) led by Sadiq al-Mahdi, and the Muslim Brotherhood-led Islamic Charter Front Party (ICFP) of Hassan al-Turabi.

Numeiri's 1983 "Islamic Revolution" was a shift from his 1969 "Socialist revolution". Yet, his behavioural pattern reflected "Numeiri's Islam" as opposed to the envisaged "Islamic Revolution". His detractors were either sidelined or imprisoned. Institutions responsible for the implementation of *Sharia* law—"decisive justice courts" as they were called—were centralised within his office, functioning outside the

framework of established state institutions. However, “the Ansar, Republican Brothers, Khatimiyya, secularists, and southern opposition leaders continued to oppose Numeiri’s Islamisation program”.<sup>35</sup>

President Numeiri was overthrown by Gen. Siwar al-Dhahad in 1985, and a year later, in 1986, elections were held. Sadiq al-Mahdi’s government neither opposed nor implemented Numeiri’s Islamisation programmes. He, however, emphasised that his government would implement Islamisation based on “true Islamic values”.<sup>36</sup> Sadiq stressed that Islamisation should incorporate true Islamic values which separate modernisation from westernisation, but concurrently synthesises Islam with modern conditions. In some of his writings, Turabi, a reformist, also expressed views which were consistent with these of Sadiq. He stresses that the process of Islamisation is not static but dynamic and flexible. It is within this context, he argues, that an Islamic state must appreciate *Sharia* values and norms, and integrate them “into the Islamic framework of government”.<sup>37</sup> Under the leadership of Hassan Ahmed Bashir who took over power through a *coup* in 1989, Islamisation as a policy framework still constitutes his government’s *modus operandi*, with NIF of the Muslim Brotherhood playing an important role.<sup>38</sup>

These differences in the interpretation and application notwithstanding, the post-independence civilian and military leaderships in Sudan have consistently pursued the policy of Islamisation. This policy framework has persistently polarised Sudan into a dichotomised conflict between the north and south, or Muslims versus non-Muslims. The application of *Sharia* law is inherently “exclusive”, with the non-Muslims viewed as incapable of holding a position of authority over Muslims.<sup>39</sup> The main stumbling block to *rapprochement* between the two regions is the domination associated with the imposition of Islamisation.<sup>40</sup> Inclusion of Islamisation in the policies in Sudan, implies that the non-Muslim areas exist in a religious and cultural vacuum. The policies of the leaderships in Sudan have therefore undermined the objective of national identity, a subject to which we will return in due course. In order to remain in leadership control, and in an effort to maintain the Sudanese national sovereignty, the regimes have spent millions of dollars to sustain one of

Sub-Saharan Africa's largest armies. Sudan spends more than \$2 million a day to maintain its armed forces.

Apart from the regular Sudan People's Armed Forces (SPAF), the Government also maintains an Islamic militia called the Popular Defence Forces (PDF).<sup>41</sup> Table 1 clearly indicates the extent to which Sudan has mobilised and increased its armed forces and military spending in its war efforts against the liberation movements in the south, particularly since the 1980s. The escalation of conflict between the SPAF and the SPLA in the early 1980s coincided with the introduction of Islamisation policies by President Numeiri. It was during his rule that Sudan had a written Constitution for the first time. The armed forces were increased from 50 000 in 1975, to 65 000 in 1983. Excluding the PDF, the total number of the SPAF between 1992-1994, 1995-1998, and in 1999, was increased to over 80 000, 90 000 and 100 000 respectively.

Following the 1972 Addis Ababa Accords, Sudan's military expenditure reached \$170 million and \$150 million in 1974 and 1975 respectively. These figures increased to more than \$450 million and \$600 million in 1981 and 1982 respectively.

This increase in military spending coincided with the institutionalisation and politicisation of Islamisation programmes introduced a year later by Numeiri. The aim of Numeiri was to draw support from Muslims, internally and internationally, for his war efforts against the south, which by extension was to legitimise his leadership. Over the years the Sudanese civil war became increasingly internationalised, with Sudan and the liberation movements receiving material help from a number of countries.<sup>42</sup>

**Table 6.1: Sudan: Armed forces and military expenditures 1985-1999**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Armed forces (thousands)</b>	<b>Military expenditure (US \$ millions)</b>
1985	65	146
1986	59	128
1987	59	197
1988	65	245
1989	65	280
1990	65	204
1991	65	531
1992	82	766
1993	82	304
1994	89	426
1995	90	389
1996	90	405
1997	93	413
1998	94	550
1999	110	610

Sources: US, 1995. *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1990-1994* (Washington, D.C.: Arms Control and Disarmament Agency); and US, 2000. *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1996-1999*, (Washington, D.C.: Arms Control and Disarmament Agency).

Table 6.1 also shows a marked increase in defence procurement by Sudan, particularly since 1989. Between 1991, 1992, and 1993, for example, Sudan's military expenditure amounted to \$531 million, \$766 million, and \$304 million respectively. It was increased to \$550 million and \$610 million in 1998 and 1999 respectively. The introduction of the Islamic militia, the PDF by the leadership of Bashir, was to augment the SPAF military campaigns against the combined forces of the SPLA and the Beja Congress Armed Forces (BCAF), among others. The aim of the Sudanese government is to increase the total number of its SPAF and PDF to more than 655 000, to pursue the objective of what Bashir calls "Islamic holy" war.<sup>43</sup> The formation of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), a

conglomeration of Umma Party, DUP, SPLA-Mainstream, SCP, BCAF, and Sudanese Allied Forces (SAF), among others, has divided the northern ranks. The BCAF and the SAF operate along the Sudo-Eritrean and Sudo-Ethiopian borders respectively. The SPLA, however, still controls most of the south.<sup>44</sup> What needs to be stressed here is that since its establishment in 1995, the NDA has added a new military dimension to the Sudanese civil war. The northern opposition movements have joined hands with the SPLA to remove the NIF-led government of Bashir. This means that Muslims are fighting alongside non-Muslims against the Islamic regime of Bashir. Whereas the NDA groups of the north and the SPLA have the same objectives, the Umma Party and DUP are reluctant to renounce the idea of incorporating Islamic laws in the Constitution. What is also important is that there is a clear correlation between oil production and military spending by the Sudanese ruling *elite*. To a large extent the countries and oil companies involved in the production of oil in Sudan (see Table 6.2) are undermining conflict resolution efforts in the country.

### **Oil production and the Sudanese civil war**

As in the case of Angola and other conflict-prone countries in Africa, mineral and oil production provide needed foreign revenue incentives for the belligerents of civil wars. In Sudan, where the debt burden accounts for 250% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the production of minerals and oil by foreign private and state-owned companies provide consumption, needs and revenue earnings for the country's war efforts against the rebel movements.

Whereas Sudan consumes about 30 000 barrels per day, its production is estimated to have increased from about 12 000 in 1999, to 200 000 barrels per day in early 2000.<sup>45</sup> Sudan completed its 1 610 km oil pipeline, financed mainly by Talisman, connecting Heglig oilfields (Southern Darfur and Southern Kordofan) and Baishir, South of Port Sudan, as well as al-Jayli oil refinery (70 km north of Khartoum) in 1999, at a cost of \$1 billion and \$600 million respectively.<sup>46</sup> As Table 6.2 indicates, there are a number of national and international companies involved in oil production in Sudan. The companies involved in funding,

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building and maintaining the pipelines include, among others, Denim Pipeline Construction (Canada), Roll'n Oil Field Industries (Canada), Mannesmann (Germany), the Europipe Consortium, Weir Pumps (United Kingdom), Techint (Argentina), Allen Power Engineering (United Kingdom), and the Chinese Government. The other major oil fields include Adar (western Upper Nile) and Unity (in Bentiu area in Unity State).<sup>47</sup>

The oil exploration and exploitation companies operate under the auspices of the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company (GNPOC), a consortium of, among others, Chinese, Malaysian, Canadian, and Sudanese companies. These companies have concessions in the Adar, Heglig and Unity oilfields, all of which are located in Southern Sudan. Chevron, one of the first companies to engage in extensive petroleum production in Sudan since the 1960s, abandoned its \$800 million investments due to the attacks by the SPLA. The other oil companies involved in the exploration of oil in Sudan in the 1960s and 1970s, included Agip, Texas Eastern, Sun Oil and Union Texas. After the withdrawal of Chevron from its Suakin Basin oilfields, 40 kilometres from the Red Sea, the government of Sudan signed an agreement with the Saudi Arabian businessman, Adnan Khashoggi, to establish the National Oil Company of Sudan (NOCS), to resume the production of oil in exchange for a 50% interest in the venture and related assets. Chevron sold its assets at the Abu Jarra oilfields to Concorp of Sudan, which by 1992 began the production of petroleum.<sup>48</sup> Sudan's oil and gas reserves are estimated at 700 million barrels, and 86 billion cubic metres (or 0,06% of the world's reserves), respectively. The oil revenue spent by the government of Sudan totals \$1 million per day, equal to the amount which the government of Sudan spends on arms per day.<sup>49</sup>



**Table 6.2: Oil prospectors in Sudan\***

<b>Country</b>	<b>State/private-owned companies</b>	<b>Concession</b>
Austria	OMV-GmbH	Heglig
Canada	Arakis Energy	Heglig
Canada	State Petroleum Corporation	Heglig
Canada	Talisman	Heglig
China	China National Petroleum Company	Heglig
China	Petrochina	Heglig
France	ELF-Aquitane	Heglig
France	Totalfina	Unity
Iran	National Iranian Gas Company	Unity
Italy	AGIP	Heglig
Italy	ENI	Heglig
Malaysia	Petroliam Nasional Berhad	Heglig
Mauritius	GAPCO	Heglig
Netherlands	Royal Dutch Shell	Heglig
Nigeria	Amni International Petroleum	Suakin
Qatar	Gulf Petroleum Corporation	Adar
Qatar	Gulf International	Adar
Russia	YUKOS	Adar
Russia	Zarubezh-Neftegasstroi	Adar
Saudi Arabia	Arab Group International	Heglig
Sudan	Al-Ghanawa	Melut
Sudan	CONCORP	Adar
Sudan	Sudan's National Oil Company	Heglig
Sudan	SUDAPET	Heglig
Sweden	International Petroleum Corporation	Heglig
United States	Chevron**	Unity
United States	Occidental Petroleum Corporation**	Unity
United States	Texas Eastern**	Unity
United States	Union Eastern**	Unity

\* Compiled from numerous sources including, S. Field, *The civil war in Sudan: The role of the oil industry* (Johannesburg: IGD Occasional Paper No. 23, February 2000). Some of the state and privately owned companies are engaged in the production of oil in more than one concession, that is, in the Adar, Heglig and Unity oilfields.

\*\* These companies have withdrawn from oil production in Sudan .

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Within the GNPOC in Heglig, the Chinese state-controlled company, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), owns over 40% of the shares. The CNPC, under the name of PetroChina, is also privately owned by other companies worldwide, with BP Amoco's investments alone reaching more than \$576 million.<sup>50</sup> Whereas the Malaysian state-owned company Petroliam Nasional Berhad (Petronas) holds 30% of the shares, Talisman Energy, a Canadian private company and Sudan's state-owned company, Sudapet, hold 25% and 5% of the shares respectively.<sup>51</sup>

There are many other state and privately owned companies that are involved in the exploitation of petroleum. In Block 5A concession, for example, the International Petroleum Corporation (IPC) which is owned by Lundin Oil AB, a private Swedish company, owns over 40% of the shares. Petronas, OMV-GmbH of Austria, and Sudapet, own over 29%, 26% and 5% of the shares respectively. It is important to note that apart from the use of oil revenues for military procurement by Sudan, the oil exploration and exploitation companies are also concerned about security. Indeed, apart from the Sudanese soldiers and the pro-government militia deployed to protect oilfields, Chinese soldiers, mercenaries from Malaysia and Branch Heritage of the South African Executive Outcomes (EO), are also reported to be operating in the area. Executive Outcomes has links in countries in Africa, South America and the Far East, with 70% of its operations based in Africa. Whereas in Kenya the EO is reported to have established security consulting companies with Raymond Moi (Pres. Moi's son) in Sudan, the EO also provides security to the Canadian oil firm, Talisman.<sup>52</sup> As in the case of other interlocking conflict entanglements in Africa, the involvement of the oil-producing companies not only perpetuates the civil war, but many people have been killed and forcefully displaced from the areas surrounding the oilfields.<sup>53</sup>

With an estimated 12,5 billion barrels of "undiscovered" oil, Sudan is likely to be one of the world's largest oil producers. Sudan, therefore, continues to attract oil prospectors who are willing to invest in the oil industry, irrespective of the security risks involved. The marketing of Sudanese oil has recently attracted a number of competitors, with Trafigura Beheer BV of the Netherlands winning the contracts against

Vitol SA (Switzerland), Arcadia Group PLC (United Kingdom), and Glencore International AC (Switzerland).<sup>54</sup> As already explained, the National Islamic Front (NIF)-led government of Omar al-Bashir, or any other future regime in Khartoum for that matter, is likely to harden its position on the question of southern Sudan. An increase in the production and export of oil will not only continue to provide Sudan with the badly needed revenues for military procurement, but prospects for the establishment of a consensus on national identity will continue to be a distant dream.

It is therefore fair to argue that the countries involved in this oil exploration and exploitation, either directly or indirectly through their privately owned companies, are perpetuating the civil war and undermining the attempts by Sudan to establish a unified society based on national identity. Except for the United States whose companies have withdrawn because of the sanctions imposed by Congress, most of the countries in Europe as well as Canada, China, Russia and some third-world countries, are involved in promoting and perpetuating the forgotten tragedy in Sudan. The state and privately owned companies from China and Canada enjoy the largest share of oil production in Sudan, with the Canadian companies providing the needed technology. Some of the top executives of the oil companies have close relations with the NIF leadership. For example, the chairperson of the Board of Arakis Energy, Lutfur Khan, had close relations with the Sudanese Minister for External Security, Qutbi Mahdi. The Khan-Mahdi personal relationship paved the way for better understanding between Arakis Energy and the Sudanese government. Lutfur Khan also played an important role in encouraging Petronas to become involved in oil production in Sudan.<sup>55</sup> Prior to its oil prospecting and production being taken over by Talisman, Arakis was also engaged in servicing the broken SPAF trucks, as well as providing electricity and water to the army camps close to the oilfields.<sup>56</sup>

## **Islamisation and the question of “Sudanese national” identity**

The 1998 new Sudanese constitution stipulates that Sudan is a unitary state in which people coexist with their cultural diversity, Islam being the religion of the majority. Christianity and other religions and doctrines are given consideration without any form of compulsion. The constitution further provides, *inter alia*, that the Islamic *Sharia*, customary law *al-urf*, and national consensus *ijma al-ummah*, constitute the basis for legislation.<sup>57</sup> The main issue here is the institutionalisation of religious, *Sharia* doctrines within the state apparatus. As has been explained, President Numeiri instituted separate courts to carry out judicial functions. The establishment of extra-judicial courts was done with the objective of implementing Islamisation programmes. Numeiri’s Islamisation programmes contravened individual rights enshrined in the Constitution.<sup>58</sup> In essence, therefore, his policies were meant to promote his own political agenda and legitimacy. The courts were used to silence his critics in the name of the “violation” of Islamisation. What has been the impact of Islamisation processes on “Sudanese national” identity? The institutionalisation of Islamisation programmes, it is argued, makes “Sudan ... the only state in our age that has formally opted for Islam as its system of government”.<sup>59</sup>

With a population of close to 30 million people, and over 500 ethnic groups speaking more than 100 languages, Sudan faces a major challenge to nation building. The decision by the leaders and Arabic-speaking Muslims to use Islam as a unifying element in the country, has met with objections in the south. Turabi, one of the influential Sudanese leaders, has emphasised that without Islam, “Sudan has no identity, no direction”.<sup>60</sup> It is Islam, according to Turabi, which can lead Sudan to a national consensus. His view is generally in conformity with those of Sadiq who stresses that in an Islamic state like Sudan, there should be no separation of church and state, with *Sharia* protecting the rights of non-Muslims.<sup>61</sup> Turabi’s view of an Islamic state is central to the doctrine of *tawhid* (oneness, unification, monotheism), whose function it is to carry out God’s

duties through *Sharia* and to act as a restraint on autocratic rule.<sup>62</sup> The central point to emphasise is that there are two main conflicting viewpoints which have negated the process of “Sudanese national” identity. The contradictions are centred on the dichotomy between the advocates of an Islamic state and those who are pro-secular state.

Figure 6.1 summarises the competing conceptions of a “Sudanese national” identity by the leaders of Sudan since 1956. It clearly shows consistency on the part of the administrations on the question of the institutionalisation of an Islamic state, a policy which is, however, persistently opposed by the southern movements.

**Figure 6.1: A schematic model of variables inhibiting Sudanese national identity**

1956-1969	Six administrations	Different political parties Military/civilian administrations Islamic state Islamisation policy Militant
1969-1985	Numeiri	SSU Islamic state Islamisation policy Moderate/militant
1985-1989	Mahdi	Umma Party/NIF Militant Islamic state Islamisation policy
1989-	Bashir	NIF Militant Islamic state Islamisation policy
1956-	Southern movements	Anya Nya I & II/Others SPLA/SPLM Militant Self-determination/secession Secular state

In the formative years of the 1950s to 1970s, the Islamic movements and more so the Islamic Charter Front—created in 1964—insisted on its advocacy for identifying the state as Islamic. In this context “the state was to be democratic and centralised”, with the rights of “non-Muslims ... protected by the traditional Islamic ... roles of the people of the book (*ahl al-kitab*)”.<sup>63</sup> This implies that Islam is a superior religion and the other religious organisations are to be protected by it. The conception is inherently exclusive and by extension inhibits conflict resolution geared towards the establishment of a “Sudanese national” identity.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, it was as a result of the movement towards reconciliation (*musalaha*) by Numeiri in the early 1970s, *vis-à-vis* the south, that he was vehemently opposed by those advocating Islamisation. In the same vein, Turabi stressed at the time, that as the issue of Islamisation increasingly became part and parcel of state and society, it “established a positive strategy toward the south, calling for its inclusion in the Sudanese Islamic project rather than ignoring or separating from it”.<sup>65</sup>

For Turabi, “Sudanese national” identity was a clear reflection of his cognitive behaviouralism, practically demonstrated by his direct involvement in organising programmes in the south and supporting Muslims residing in the region. Under the leadership of Mahdi, non-Muslim regions were given the right to practice their customs and religious faiths, provided that they recognised the special place of Islam as the modal determinant of the Sudanese state.<sup>66</sup> For President Bashir, the issue of a federal system of government with an option of special regional autonomy for the south is being advanced, but still with Sudan viewed as an *ipso facto* Islamic state. Thus, according to this view, it is Islam which gives Sudan its *raison d’être* as a unified entity.<sup>67</sup> Strictly speaking the incorporation of Islamic laws in the Sudanese constitutions since 1973 has been an attempt to legislate for religious communities and not for individuals. This policy is “virtually indistinguishable from the old Ottoman *millet* system, where *dhimmi*s, or non-Muslim subjects of the Islamic state, enjoyed a measure of local autonomy according to their religious law, under what was nonetheless a clear Islamic hegemony”.<sup>68</sup>

The Southern ethnic groups have, however, demanded (*inter alia*) a secular constitution and secular laws for Sudan, freedom of religion, as well as non-discrimination on ethnic and religious grounds. What exists in Sudan is a clash of perceptions as to “Sudanese national” identity. What we have analysed thus far in this section, requires further elaboration and focus.

I maintain that the situation in Sudan concerns two distinct and persistently competing “isms”. First, there exists what might be called *Arabic-speaking Sudanese nationalism*. This form of nationalism is influenced mainly by the religio-linguistic and cultural patterns which bring together Muslims in Sudan. Over 70% of the population are Muslims. It is important to note that most of the Arab-speaking Sudanese are not Arabs *per se*. They have African blood, hence their dark skin. However, it is because of Islamic faith and Arab culture and language that Arabism becomes a sense of pride and *a fortiori* unifying factor. Islam therefore functions beyond the expected boundaries of religion. It is the embodiment of the societal pillars cherished by Muslims, namely “prayer, witness, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage to Mecca; hence it embodies a complete culture which must be adopted *in toto*”.<sup>69</sup> Apart from the dark-skinned Baggara Arabs, there are other Islamised ethnic peoples such as the Fur, Masalit, Zaghawa, the Beja, and the Arab Sudanese of the North Central. The spread of Islamic faith in Sudan occurred over centuries and was encouraged by both the Egyptians and the British.<sup>70</sup>

It is therefore important to stress that Islam functions as an important intervening variable which explains the consistency in Islamisation policies pursued by the civilian and military administrations in Sudan. Political power is conceptualised within this context. Islam is used to promote a religiously oriented nationalism in Sudan. It encourages a form of Islamic “ecumenicalism” (Pan-Arabism). Sudan is not only a member of the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Countries, but it has materially supported the Arab countries during the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars. Sudan was also the only African country in Sub-Saharan Africa that supported Iraq in the 1991-92 Gulf War.<sup>71</sup> It is this Islamic theocracy which explains unity of Muslims on the one hand and division

between non-Muslims and Muslims on the other—traditionally categorised as the south and north respectively. It is also the policy of Islamisation which explains the unity of the southern non-Muslims in general. For the non-Muslims, the incorporation of Islamisation implies a core-periphery relationship, a situation which is resented by the south. Control of the state apparatus thus becomes an important ingredient for group survival. “Sudanese national identity”, for the Muslims, is therefore conceived in this context.

The second “*ism*” is about what might be called *African Sudanese nationalism* or better still, *secular nationalism*. This perspective embraces southern black Sudanese or non-Muslims in general. The south views the persistence of the Islamisation programme as implying that there is a religious and cultural vacuum which the north has to fill. In other words there cannot be a unified “Sudanese national” identity without Islam as the guiding religion. The south, therefore, perceives a “Sudanese national” identity within the context of *secular nationalism*, accommodating the Sudanese people irrespective of their religio-cultural values. The idea is to remove any form of religion from state apparatus. This, the south believes, would eliminate the tendency toward dominance associated with Islamisation programmes. This perspective draws our attention to the fact that a real “Sudanese national identity” must move away from policies which only “permit” other groups to exercise their religious rights, as is inherently inscribed in Islamisation. The main objective of Islamisation is to assimilate the south (non-Muslims) into an Islamic culture.

## **Summary and conclusion**

This discussion set out to examine the issues which relate to the interplay between Islamisation and religious identification and mobilisation—and the impact of Islamisation, Arabisation and oil production on “Sudanese national identity”. A number of issue areas have been clearly articulated. Firstly, the civilian and military administrations in Sudan have consistently pursued the policy of Islamisation since the independence of Sudan in 1956. Islamisation is used as a religio-political tool to promote unity in Sudan, while it is concurrently used as a means for *elite* and



leadership survival by the north. It therefore becomes an important rallying point or mobilisation tool for the north *and* the south. Secondly, the policy of Islamisation hinders conflict resolution in Sudan, with the south rejecting its implied religious and political superiority and domination. Third, the involvement of state and privately owned oil companies in Sudan continues to hamper progress towards reaching a consensus on national identity. As we have indicated, oil production also plays a negative role in conflict resolution in Sudan.

The divergent perspectives of the north and south have prevented the meaningful establishment of a “Sudanese national identity”. Whereas the north and south accept the politically based entity called “Sudan”, and that it is only through “unity in diversity” that “Sudan” can remain a unified whole, they still differ on the process and modalities which can lead to its achievement. Thus the south has persistently rejected the policy of Islamisation because it is exclusionary and inherently discriminatory. Pursuit of the policy of Islamisation, whether formally institutionalised or otherwise, therefore defeats the purpose of “Sudanese national” identity. The policy is a fallacy in that it renders the process of unity of the north and the south nugatory. It is important to stress that Sudan has failed to achieve the objective of “national identity”, not because of group identification *per se*, but through how the “national identity” framework is defined, and therefore the impact it has on the different groups in the country.<sup>72</sup> As I have explained, the core of the problem, which negates the Sudanese “national identity”, is found in the Islamisation programmes pursued by the civilian and military administrations. Islamic identity is “the problem”, with the south resisting religio-cultural assimilation and its corollary, racial discrimination. I have also explained that the south does not simply reject a unified Sudan as such, but rather the political domination inherent in the transformation of Sudan into an Islamic state. As a means for the control of economic resources and political power, the state, therefore, has become the centre of contestation between the south and the north, leading to what has been called a “zero-sum confrontation”.<sup>73</sup>

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- <sup>67</sup> See Ayubi, *Political Islam*. pp. 104-113; Cudsi, "Islam and Politics in Sudan", in Piscatori (Ed.), *Islam in the Political Process*. pp. 36-551; and Mervyn Hiskett, 1994. *The Course of Islam in Africa*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Chapter 3.
- <sup>68</sup> Hiskett, *The Course of Islam in Africa*, p. 90. See also Affendi, *Turabi's Revolution*. pp. 170-183.
- <sup>69</sup> See Abd al-Rahim, "Arabism, Africanism, and Self-Identification". p. 2441; and generally, Aguda, "Arabism and Pan-Africanism in Sudanese Politics"; Bezirgan, "Islam and Arab Nationalism"; and Leiden, "Arab Nationalism Today".
- <sup>70</sup> For a detailed analysis of the development of Islamic faith in Sudan, see Mohamed Omer Beshir, 1969. *Educational Development in the Sudan, 1985 - 1956*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; and Yousif Fodl Hassan, 1967. *The Arabs and the Sudanese*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- <sup>71</sup> Adar, "A State Under Siege". p. 46.



<sup>72</sup> Francis M. Deng, et al. 1996. *Sovereignty as Responsibility: Conflict Management in Africa*. Washington, D. C.: Brookings Institution. p. 87.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. p. 89.

