

CHAPTER 5: A POLITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE IDEOLOGY OF THE PREDOMINANT ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALIST GROUP IN SUDAN

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The dialogic model of interpretation forms the theoretical framework for the political analysis of the ideology of the predominant Islamic fundamentalist group in Sudan, its ruling party. This party is still mostly referred to as the National Islamic Front (NIF), though it has officially changed its name to the National Congress Party (NC). For the sake of simplicity and to minimise confusion, NIF will be used throughout the dissertation when Sudan's ruling party is referred to. The focus in this chapter is on the ideology of the NIF, but also incorporates some of the useful elements of rationalist analysis. Structural factors (political, cultural and socio-economic conditions) are taken into account and an attempt is made to evaluate their impact on the ideological framework of the NIF, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Sudan, as well as the current situation in the country. The ideology of the NIF is thus discussed in detail within the overall political and economic context of the reportedly improving but still volatile relations between the Sudanese government and its long time opponent in Sudan's civil war, the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement / Army (SPLM/A). Attention is also paid to the disastrous situation in Sudan's Darfur region.

5.2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF SUDAN²⁰

In 1820 Egypt conquered and unified the northern part of Sudan into a collection of small independent states, but was unable to effectively control the southern part of the country. After a nationalist revolt in 1880, Sudan experienced a brief period of independent rule under the Mahdists, a movement that was initiated by Muhammad Ahmad ibn al-Sayyid abd Allah who claimed to be Islam's long-awaited Mahdi (Sudan Country Conditions, Background 2003). The Mahdists were eventually defeated by a combination of British and Egyptian troops in 1898 and a year later an Anglo-Egyptian Condominium or "joint domain" was set up, though it was really the British, rather than the Egyptians, who governed Sudan (Zwier 1999:

²⁰ Only the most central events and developments are pointed out here to give a general background picture of the situation in Sudan. The rest of the chapter provides a more in-depth analysis of political, economic and social factors contributing to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Sudan and characterising current developments. The ideology of the NIF is discussed in detail within the overall political and economic context of the relations between the Sudanese government and its long time opponent in Sudan's civil war, the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement / Army (SPLM/A). The focus is also on the disastrous situation in Sudan's Darfur region.

39). While Britain was in the process of handing over power to the northern Sudanese elite, southern elements in the army began a mutiny in 1955. This rebellion, which would culminate in Sudan's First Civil War (1956-1972), reflects Sudan's deepest social divide, between the dominant Arabic-speaking, predominantly Muslim population of the north, and the impoverished, black, largely animist or Christian population of the south (Sudan Country Conditions, Background 2003). During the war neither side was strong enough to defeat the other and the leadership of the southern forces was very much divided. In addition, the conflict was hardly ideologically articulated. Southern spokesmen vaguely talked of the legacy of the slave trade (northerners defended themselves against such notions by referring to European involvement in it) and the danger of Arab-Islamic domination (which northern liberals denied as they argued for Arabic as a neutral national language). "In sum, the southerners blamed the northerners, the latter the British" (O'Fahey 1996: 264). Sudan eventually gained independence on 19 December 1955 with Ismail al-Azhari of the National Unionist Party (NUP) as prime minister (Zwier 1999: 44).

This regime was not to last for very long and was overthrown in a military coup in November 1958. A Supreme Council of Armed Forces that would rule until October 1964 was consequently established (Europa World Year Book 2003: 3723). General Abboud became Sudan's new ruler and was supported by the north's conservative forces, who hoped to impose an Arabic and Islamic identity on the southern regions (Sayeed 1999: 116). Such aspirations culminated in policies that would bring southern discontent "to the boiling point". As from 1962, the government disallowed expressions of religious and cultural differences in the south and introduced measures aimed at arabising all of Sudan, such as forcing Christian missionaries to leave, and instructing teachers to only teach in Arabic, which most southerners could not speak. In addition, the government increased its military presence in the south. These policies led many southerners to join opposition groups and partake in Sudan's first civil war (Zwier 1999: 45-46). Apart from southern resistance, the military regime's moves and policies also provoked reactions from communists, the Muslim Brotherhood (to be discussed in greater detail later on) and students. Amidst guerrilla activity in the south and student demonstrations and railway strikes in the north, Abboud was forced to resign and the military regime gave way to a civilian government in 1964 (Sayeed 1999: 116).

Despite initial hopes that the new government would resolve the country's civil war, disillusionment soon set in. The Umma Party (UP) leader Muhammed Ahmad Mahjub, who led the parliament, sent troops to southern Sudan, shortly after taking power. By the late 1960s 500 000 Sudanese had reportedly died and

hundreds of thousands of others had fled into flooded refugee camps and neighbouring countries. Sudanese leadership under prime minister Sadiq al-Mahdi eventually crumbled when another military coup was staged in May 1969 and Colonel Jafaar Mohammed Nimeiri came to power (Zwier 1999: 47).

Under Nimeiri, who was proclaimed president in 1971, all existing political institutions and organisations were abolished and supreme authority was placed in the hands of the Sudanese Socialist Union (SSU). A peace agreement with the southern opposition South Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) was signed in Addis Ababa in March 1972, under which the three southern provinces (Bahr al-Ghazal, Equatoria and Upper Nile) were to be governed as a single unit and the southern region was given a degree of autonomy (Europa World Year Book 2003: 3723). Furthermore, it was agreed that rebel forces would gradually merge with the Sudanese army. The agreement succeeded in ensuring relative calm in Sudan for the next ten years (Sudan Country Conditions, Background 2003).

In the meantime, the establishment of a National Assembly broadened the government's power base, although the army continued to play an important role in the country's affairs. The Addis Ababa accord progressively collapsed as Nimeiri became increasingly autocratic. Apart from abolishing Sudan's democratic institutions, he weakened the southern regional government, started piping oil from the south to the north and neglected southern development (Sudan Country Conditions, Background 2003). In April 1983 Nimeiri was re-elected for a third six-year term and in a surprise move, he imposed *Sharia* law (an action which provoked anger in the non-Muslim south, was seen by many as an excuse to quell political dissent and strained relations between Sudan and its allies, Egypt and the USA) (Europa World Year Book 2003: 3723). In addition, imposing the *Sharia* on all of Sudanese society resulted in Sudan's second full-scale civil war breaking out in the south. The southern forces united under John Garang's Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), which managed "huge military operations" (Zwier 1999: 49-50).

In order to be in a better position to quell the unrest, Nimeiri divided the south into three smaller regions, each with its own assembly, (which constituted a violation of the Addis Ababa agreement according to which the south was to be governed as a single unit) and in April 1984 proclaimed a state of emergency (Europa World Year Book 2003: 3723). Nimeiri, in his shortsightedness, failed to see that the Sudanese population, with its heterogeneous make-up, would not be keen to embrace an Islamic national identity. In remaining oblivious to the country's political and socio-religious realities, he eventually paid the price

(Sayeed 1999: 121). Public protests began on 26 March 1985, a day before Nimeiri flew to the United States for consultations. Prices for bread, petrol and public transport had just doubled (most public schools in the capital had been closed as a result of this), a quarter of the population was affected directly by drought and thousands had died in the countryside, as a result of a lack of food and water. On 3 April a massive demonstration took place, during which people called for “bread and liberty”. The grand result was another military coup which took place on the night of 5-6 April 1985 and brought to power Suwar al-Dhabab (Lesch 1998: 62).

The new regime suspended Nimeiri’s constitution and disbanded his political organisation, the SSU. After free elections prime minister Sadiq al-Mahdi and his Umma Party formed a government. Again, however, democracy was not to last. Over the years al-Mahdi’s government failed to resolve the civil war in the south as well as Sudan’s economic difficulties. The prime minister also proved unwilling to make Islam the prevailing law in the country. All of this seriously displeased the military which initiated yet another military coup on 30 June 1989 and established a Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), headed by General Omar Hassan al-Bashir. Immediately political parties were outlawed and Islamic law was re-imposed in the northern states (Sudan Country Conditions, Background 2003). It was widely understood that the Islamic fundamentalist intellectual and lawyer Hassan al-Turabi, whose National Islamic Front had co-operated closely with Nimeiri for much of the latter’s reign, but had distanced itself from him shortly before he was deposed, played the “king-maker” role and provided the ideological underpinnings of the government (Lobban 2001: 116).

In March 1991 the Criminal Act of 1991, a new penal code, instituted harsh punishments nationwide, including amputation and stoning. Although southern states were officially exempted from these Islamic prohibitions and penalties, the act nonetheless provided for the possible future application of Islamic law in the south (Sudan Country Conditions, Background 2003). In the meantime, the civil war had been continuing, despite abortive attempts at negotiations in 1990. In August 1991 the SPLM/A split into several factions due to disagreement over whether the southern opposition should fight for a united Sudan under secular leadership (which is what Garang’s faction was in favour of), or for an independent south (as proposed by Riek Machar’s faction, initially known as SPLA-Nasir) (Zwier 1999: 56). This schism benefited the regime as it was able to play off the two wings of the SPLM against each other. The government signed a ceasefire with SPLA-Nasir in January 1992, which enabled the government’s army to cross the area

controlled by the dissidents in Upper Nile in order to attack SPLA positions further south. Inter-tribal warfare also increasingly took place as Nuer adherents of Machar's faction launched raids on the Dinkas (largely in support of Garang) (Lesch 2001). The Khartoum government increasingly became convinced that military victory against the south, which had mysteriously eluded all Sudanese governments since 1956, was imminent. Garang, who was weakened by disaffection and desertions, had no choice but to negotiate with the government (Collins 1999: 114).

Nigeria hosted two rounds of talks in the summer of 1992 and the spring of 1993. These negotiations showed the key differences between the SPLM/A and the government. The government argued that the Muslim majority had the right to establish the constitutional system that it preferred. Religious diversity would be honoured by exempting the south from the severest of bodily punishments under the *Sharia*, the *hudud*. The government's version of a federation meant retaining the central government's authority over policymaking related to religion, education, and the economy, including natural resources. The SPLM/A differed from the government on every issue. It advocated secular democracy and equality before the law, opposing the proposed religious and racial assimilation and implied marginalisation of non-Muslims. The SPLM/A also argued that unity was possible and desirable if all citizens were given the same constitutional rights, but that the government's insistence on an Islamic state would force the SPLM/A to call for self-determination. The result might either be the south's secession or a loose confederation in which the north and the south would have different legal and political systems (Lesch 2001).

Despite Sudan's increasingly desperate situation as it was subjected to international isolation in the form of, for example, criticism by the US for its alleged involvement in terrorism and United Nations sanctions for human-rights violations, the major warring parties would not co-operate to resolve their differences. In 1994 The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), made up of Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan and Djibouti, arranged a meeting for the Sudanese regime and its opponents. A Declaration of Principles (DOP) was set up by the mediators which stipulated the separation of religion and politics and stated that the government should allow other political parties to be strong enough to offer some competition to the NIF in Sudan's political system. The SPLM/A was elated about these developments, while the Khartoum government rejected them. Again, both sides stood by their positions and would not budge (Zwier 1999: 59).

In March 1996 elections were held to appoint members to a 400 member national assembly (which had replaced the RCC). Members of the NIF won most of the seats (Sudan Country Conditions, Background 2003). Turabi, secretary-general of the NIF was made president of the national assembly and Bashir, who was reportedly opposed only by token candidates, obtained 75,7 percent of votes cast to become president. Both sets of elections took place among allegations of corruption (Europa World Year Book 2003: 3725).

In 1997 relations between the major players in the Sudanese civil war took an unexpected turn when the NIF government signed a peace agreement with Machar, Akol, and other southern warlords who opposed Garang's SPLM/A faction. This charter included a provision for self-determination, a concept which the signatories did not agree on. While the southern delegates interpreted it as allowing for secession, the government insisted that self-determination would have to take place within a geographically united country. When negotiations resumed in July 1997 under IGAD, Bashir felt obliged to sign the 1994 Declaration of Principles (DOP - mentioned earlier), since he had already conceded the right of self-determination in the Political Charter. Bashir, however, emphasised that the DOP was not legally binding and that the government would never accept secularism or a confederation. This was made clear in the 1998 constitution (discussed in more detail later on), which unambiguously states that Islamic law underpins Sudan's political and legal system. Further IGAD meetings from October 1997 through 2000 failed to achieve a consensus between the government and southern opposition points of view. One of the possible reasons for a lack of consensus is that each side felt that it had a hold over the other. The government believed that it could attain a military victory over the SPLM/A and rule the south through its southern allies (the signatories to the 1997 agreement), while the SPLM/A believed that its alliance with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the northern opponents of the government, and assistance from African governments could ward off defeat and perhaps even overthrow the regime (Lesch 2001).

On 13 December 1999 Bashir declared a state of emergency and suspended the legislature following a power struggle with Turabi and in June 2000 Bashir expelled Turabi from his duties as leader of the ruling National Congress Party (NC – formerly the NIF). Turabi reacted by forming a new party, the Popular National Congress (PNC) (Sudan Country Conditions, Background 2003). It is important to mention here that while a split has occurred between al-Bashir and Turabi, this was largely as a result of a power struggle. Ideologically speaking, Bashir's party has retained Turabi's political thought. In fact, the NC is nothing more than the NIF renamed, and is still very much in power, following the same ruthless policies as

beforehand, noticeably in Darfur (Turabi still powerful 2000: 13984). Presidential and legislative elections were held concurrently in December 2000 although they were boycotted by the main opposition parties. In the new 360 member National Assembly. In February 2001 Turabi and several other members of the PNC's leadership were arrested after it was announced that the PNC and SPLM/A had signed a memorandum of understanding in Switzerland which urged the Sudanese people to participate in "peaceful popular resistance" against the government (Europa World Year Book 2003: 3727).

In early July 2001 the government announced that it would accept a peace initiative put forward by Libya and Egypt that included provisions for an immediate cease-fire, the establishment of a transitional government and a number of constitutional reforms (Sudan Country Conditions, Background 2003). At the same time, however, Bashir adhered rigidly to his previous position, insisting that he would not support any proposals that would involve the separation of state and religion or the partition of the country. The NDA, the other party involved in this issue, concurrently reiterated that southern states should be granted the right to self-determination (Europa World Year Book 2003: 3728). Key positions of the main players involved in the conflict had thus still not changed.

In October 2001 US President Bush appointed former Senator John Danforth as special envoy to Sudan, which marked the start of a more direct US role in the Sudanese peace process. On 22 January 2002 the government and SPLM/A signed a limited cease-fire agreement to allow emergency food supplies to be delivered and the south-central Nuba region to be reconstructed. This move prompted the European Union (EU) to resume financial assistance to Sudan (Sudan Country Conditions, Background 2003). The cease-fire however did not last long, as the National Congress government launched a massive air and ground offensive in oil-rich Western Upper Nile, followed by an attack on Bieh village on 20 February, while the United Nations World Food Programme was delivering food. This prompted the US to abandon its mediation efforts in Sudan. Significantly, the same month saw a reconciliation between Garang and Machar, which would prove an additional challenge to the government (Oilfield, battlefield: the opposition regroup and threatens Khartoum's control of the oilfields 2002). In March 2002 Garang's meetings with US and EU officials resulted in US and Swiss mediators brokering another peace agreement which provided for a cease-fire in the Nuba Mountains, a halt to aerial bombardments and the creation of zones of tranquility to make possible the delivery of aid to civilians (Sudan Country Conditions, Background 2003).

Despite IGAD-sponsored talks between the government and SPLM/A which commenced in June 2002 in Machakos, Kenya, fighting between the two sides continued, resulting in heavy civilian casualties. Nonetheless, the talks resulted in a breakthrough agreement, the Machakos Protocol, which was signed on 20 July 2002. The protocol makes provision for a six year period of autonomy for the south, to be followed by an internationally monitored referendum to determine whether or not the south wants to secede from Sudan. The protocol also stipulates that Sudan's Constitution is to be rewritten so as to ensure that *Sharia* law will not be applied to non-Muslim southerners (Europa World Year Book 2004: 3965). There has been considerable criticism regarding the content of this protocol, however. The NC appears to be determined to ensure that southerners do not vote for independence, "should referendum day ever dawn". Paradoxically, however, the protocol rejects the one thing that would possibly make southerners want to remain a part of Sudan – a secular constitution. While *Sharia* is not to be applied to non-Muslim southerners, it will be applied to the at least five million non-Muslims who live in the northern part of Sudan (Muddying Machakos: the gap widens between interpretations of last month's peace agreement 2002).

For the rest of the year discussions were periodically interrupted as the two sides accused each other of breaking the cease-fire which they had agreed to. A number of issues also remained unresolved. In May 2003 it became apparent that a final settlement would not be reached by June, as international mediators had hoped. A number of key issues, including that of wealth- and power sharing remained unresolved. In September a key security agreement was signed which specified that the SPLM/A's and government's armed forces were to be kept separate, but also provided for a joint force whose members would be deployed in various parts of the country. In December, talks resumed in Khartoum and discussions focused on the division of water and oil resources, the application of *Sharia* law in Khartoum, the distribution of ministerial and civil service posts and the boundary between the north and the south of the country. Reportedly, a preliminary agreement had also been reached on the distribution of tax revenues and the role of the new central bank. On 7 January the two sides signed an accord on wealth and revenue sharing, which also provided for the establishment of two separate banking systems for the north and the south, as well as a new national currency on the signing of a final peace agreement. Nonetheless, there was no progress on other matters and by mid-April the two sides had still not concluded a definitive peace agreement. There were also reports of renewed fighting in the south which had forced the UN to suspend relief operations (Europa World Year Book 2004: 3965). On 26 May 2004 The Naivasha peace deal was signed by the government and the SPLM/A. This consists of three protocols, entitled On Power Sharing, On the Resolution of Conflict –

in Abyei and On the Resolution of Conflict in Southern Kordofan/Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile States. Details of the implementation of the issues are yet to be agreed on and the rush in which the agreement has been concluded has obscured many of the crucial finer points (A good deal missing 2004). Turabi, who had been released in October 2003, was re-detained in March 2004 as the government accused the PNC of plotting a coup against the government and arming rebel movements in Sudan's troubled Darfur region. Mid-September 2004 saw more arrests of PNC members. The party denies all charges laid against it (Sudan coup plot evidence 'a lie' 2004).

Another crucial issue that has emerged in Sudan is the highly precarious situation in Darfur. Two rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) began attacking government targets in February 2003, claiming that the government is oppressing black (Muslim) Africans in favour of Arabs (Q & A: Sudan's Darfur Conflict 2004). The rebel groups furthermore demanded an end to chronic economic marginalisation, power sharing within the Arab ruled Sudanese state and government actions to end the abuses of their rivals, Arab pastoralists who had been driven onto African farmlands by drought and desertification, which led to conflict (Darfur destroyed: ethnic cleansing by government and militia forces in western Sudan 2004: 1). While Turabi's PNC reportedly agrees with the rebel movements' ideology in terms of the belief in the decentralisation of power and wealth, the party is not in favour of their armed resistance (Sudan coup plot evidence "a lie" 2004). Refugees from Darfur have reported that following air raids by government aircraft, the Arab Janjaweed militias, who are accused of trying to "cleanse" large pieces of land of black Africans, ride into villages on horses and camels, slaughtering men, raping women and stealing whatever they can find (Q & A: Sudan's Darfur Conflict 2004). This is apparently the way that the Khartoum government has chosen to deal with the problem, by targeting the civilian populations from which the rebels were drawn. The government's policy of dealing with the Darfur issue has resulted in up to 50 000 deaths and more than 1 000 000 civilians, mostly farmers, fleeing into camps and settlements in Darfur where they live on the very edge of survival and are hostage to Janjaweed abuses. More than 100 000 people have also fled to neighbouring Chad (Darfur destroyed: ethnic cleansing by government and militia forces in western Sudan 2004: 1). Peace talks held in September in Nigeria between the Sudanese government and the rebels have ended without agreement. The talks are to reconvene in October. The rebels refused to sign an accord on greater access for aid agencies, saying the pro-government militias must disarm first (Sudan talks break up with no deal 2004). A UN resolution was passed on 18 September 2004, calling for Secretary General Kofi Annan to set up a commission to investigate

whether the events in Darfur amount to genocide. The resolution also threatens measures against Sudan's oil industry if the government fails to fulfil its pledge of disarming pro-government militias. The Sudanese government has grudgingly accepted the conditions of the resolution, although it has labelled the threat of sanctions as "unfair" (Sudan grudgingly accepts UN vote 2004). To date though the Sudanese government has responded to international pressure to end the violence by sending in thousands of extra police officers to Darfur, and calls have been made by African Union (AU) president Obasanjo for funding to enlarge the AU's mediation force in Darfur, people are still felling attacks, which they blame on the Janjaweed (Sudan rebels hit outside Darfur 2004).

5.3 THE RISE OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM IN SUDAN

This section focuses on the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Sudan and the ways in which the NIF strove to consolidate its power before eventually becoming the force behind the military government of al-Bashir. The Muslim Brotherhood, which the NIF started out as, made use of its political clout and tactical ingenuity both to attract a mass following and to irrevocably infiltrate the social, economic and political structures of Sudan.

Even though Sudan is very close to the Arabian Peninsula, it was only from the 14th century onwards, and especially between the 16th and 18th centuries, that the generally peaceful Arabisation and Islamisation of northern Sudan took place. The impact of Islam on the inhabitants of the Nile Valley, living between Aswan and Khartoum, and those living in the Gezira between the Niles and to the east and west in the savannas, collectively known as the riverain northern Sudanese who would ultimately make up Sudan's Islamicised political elite, was complex. The dominant state of the region between 1500 and 1800 was the Funj Sultanate of Sinnar, which was considered as both an African "divine kingship" state, as well as an Islamic polity. Under its jurisdiction, specialised holy clans emerged, who mediated a Sufi-based Islam to the communities they served, and who increasingly usurped the functions of the state. The first colonial period (1820-1881) coincided with the spread throughout the northern Sudan of new Sufi brotherhoods which linked together the established holy families into supra-ethnic organisations and introduced a more "complex" form of Islam. These brotherhoods were also important in that they laid the basis for the Mahdist movement, which was simultaneously an anti-colonial rebellion and social revolution (O'Fahey 1996: 259-260).

The Mahdist movement would prove important for the legacy of Islamic fundamentalism in Sudan because of the strong influence that it would have on the NIF's national as well as international political aspirations. As discussed in more detail in Chapter three of the dissertation, Muhammad Ahmad ibn al-Sayyid abd Allah who claimed to be Islam's long-awaited Mahdi launched a revolution in 1880, in response to social decay, political oppression and economic decline, which resulted in the establishment of an independent Islamic state under his successor, the Khalifa Abdullahi (Woodward 1997: 95). Unlike Wahhabism, the Mahdi did not wish to eradicate Sufism, which, because of its openness and flexibility regarding indigenous African beliefs and practices had often been criticised for "opening the door to idolatrous superstition and an attitude of passive withdrawal which resulted from an otherworldly orientation". Instead, the idea was to reform Sufism in order to bring it more in line with Islamic law and place the emphasis on this-worldly activist Islam, rather than the otherworldly mysticism it originally represented. The socio-political dimension of Islam was reintroduced as African Islamic movements, one of these being that of the Mahdi, led by Sufi brotherhoods, fought to establish Islamic states. Prayer and political action thus joined forces in the earthly pursuit of God's will (Esposito 1991: 38).

This state survived until it was overthrown by the Anglo-Egyptian army at the Battle of Omdurman in 1898. The rise of the Mahdist state then saw the adoption of the *Sharia* and perceived itself as a force to cleanse the Islamic world and tried, without succeeding, to invade Egypt as well as to fight its Christian neighbour, Abyssinia. It is this legacy which the NIF backed government has appropriated for itself, though not without criticism from its numerous Sudanese opponents (Woodward 1997: 95-97).

A consciously Islamic polity in Sudan, however, did not automatically evolve from the days of the Mahdist state onwards, but is in fact a British invention. The British were obsessed by the fear of a rerun of Islamic messianism in a country whose conquest had taken them three years (1896-1899), in contrast to their effective and swift annexation of Egypt in 1882. They thus lent their support to either one or another group of Sudanese Muslim leaders, depending on the political situation at a given time. In the early years of colonial rule, the Mahdists, under Sayyid Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi (a son of the original Sudanese Mahdi), were seen as suspect and thus received little support from the British, who instead turned their attention to another group of Sufi leaders, the Khatmiyya.

In later years, however, the situation changed, as the Khatmiyya turned to Egypt in order to provide a counter-balance against both the Mahdists and the British. This led the colonialists to shift their support to

the Mahdists. In order to consolidate their control, the British also institutionalised a particular legal system in Sudan. This stipulated that when it came to Muslims in terms of personal matters, pertaining to marriage, divorce, inheritance etc. the *Sharia* would be applied, while criminal matters were subject to state or secular law. The implementation and institutionalisation of Islamic law in Sudan thus has a number of precedents in Sudanese history, which proved all the more important when one takes into consideration the fact that the Islamicised and Arabicised northern Sudanese considered their culture and way of life to be the “norm” for a combined Sudanese identity which they were determined to spread throughout Sudan. Furthermore, since independence, Sudan’s political actors, whether part of a civilian or military regime, have almost all been members of the western-educated riverain elite, comprising various ruling groups. This of course has proved to be very unpopular with the southern Sudanese and was also the reason for the eruption of Sudan’s First Civil War in 1956 (O’Fahey 1996: 261-262).

It is important to elaborate on the position and attitude of the southern Sudanese here with regard to the growing prominence of the northern elite. Until the establishment of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, southern Sudan had never been an integral part of the north, in terms of the extent to which effective government control was established over its territory. In reality, neither the Turco-Egyptian (1820-1881) nor the Mahdiyya (1881-1898) regimes were able to substantially infiltrate southern Sudan, which remained a hostile environment to foreign explorers and intruders. The non-unification between the north and the south was reinforced by the fact that the British decided to treat the northern and southern regions of Sudan completely differently in terms of administrative policies, thereby becoming the main culprit in terms of the inherent divisiveness between the two regions. The northern Sudanese elite generally condemns the British for having created the cultural, religious and political division between the south and the north in the first place. However, at the same time they maintain that because the British handed Sudan to the northern political elite as a united territory, this unity now has to be maintained at all costs. In addition, Arab culture and Islamic religion, which were once curbed from the south by the British, must now be imposed on southerners by all available means. On the other hand, southerners accuse the British of lumping them together with the northerners without allowing for any political or economic guarantees when the British themselves had purposefully sheltered the south from northern Arab-Islamic exploitation for 57 years. The basic view of the southern Sudanese then is that the unity that was imposed on the Sudan is artificial and that it urgently needs to be transformed to accommodate the interests of the southerners as well. If this is not possible, the south should be allowed to separate from the rest of the country. Both sides have rigorously

adhered to their respective positions, thereby proving a massive obstacle to the fundamental issue of nation-building (Wakoson 1998: 51-52).

During the 1930s and 1940s a number of political movements appeared among the northern Sudanese, which were based on supra-ethnic avowedly Islamic organisations. Although these movements derived their strength from Islamic sentiments of solidarity, they did not put forward specifically Islamic-inspired political programmes, but articulated basically secular nationalist positions instead. The resultant discontinuity between mobilisation at grass-roots level and the policies that were articulated by the leadership was to provide an opening for the Muslim Brotherhood, which would later become the NIF (O'Fahey 1996: 261). The Muslim Brotherhood's influence started growing considerably after World War Two. Hassan al-Turabi in particular played an important part in promoting its political character. Initially, however, the Muslim Brothers stayed on the periphery of the political system and their influence remained confined mainly to the student sector. They did, however, simultaneously start becoming more vocal in their highly emotive and ultimately successful campaign to ban the Communist Party of Sudan and afterwards became even more controversial when they started promoting the adoption of an Islamic constitution – an issue that was to remain at the core of Sudanese politics for many decades to come (Sidahmed 1996: 181).

Nimeiri's military coup in 1969 put a temporary end to such aspirations, however, and caused many of the Brotherhood's leaders to seek refuge abroad, from where they tried to destabilise the regime (Woodward 1997: 99). Initially, the Muslim Brotherhood formed part of the National Front, a group of opposition parties with the common goal of ousting Nimeiri. The general understanding was that if and when these groups had achieved their aim, there would be a policy of power-sharing on the basis of a political programme based on Islam. The Muslim Brotherhood, however, soon realised that once Nimeiri's government had been defeated, it was likely that they would be reduced to a negligible minority in any emergent power arrangement, or even completely excluded. It therefore decided that it wanted to adopt a strategy which would allow it to grow as an independent and influential political force competing for power in its own right. This would necessitate better relations with Nimeiri's government, however, so as to enable it to function normally without restrictions. The result was that the Muslim Brotherhood was able to turn itself into a formidable force by the end of the Nimeiri era in 1985 in a number of ways. On a purely political level, its new-found freedom of action and participation in power enabled it to expand its ranks by means of engaging in unhampered propagation and discreet political activity. Furthermore, Muslim Brotherhood members started

infiltrating the political system as ministers, members of parliament and members of the ruling political organisation, the SSU, thereby providing the movement with experience on how to govern and enabling it to penetrate two of the most crucial state structures: the army and the security bodies (Sidahmed 1996: 183).

It was not only on the political front that the Muslim Brotherhood had strengthened its position, however. It was now also able to build its support behind the scenes. A growing constituency was small business. The establishment of Islamic banks, which the Muslim Brotherhood supported, created the idea that there was an Islamic alternative to the existing, only marginally successful economic order (Woodward 1997: 99). Furthermore, the growth and proliferation of Islamic financial institutions gave the Muslim Brotherhood substantial access to financial and economic resources. This proved especially important for its thus far most substantial group of supporters: northern Sudanese students. They had initially been attracted to the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood, partly as many of them were bitter about the fact that it was increasingly difficult for them to find employment in a declining economy (Woodward 1997: 98). As a result of the expanding influence of the Muslim Brotherhood, they could now progressively be employed in Islamic institutions and private enterprises. In this way, Turabi was able to cement the credibility of his movement, particularly among its younger support base. The Muslim Brotherhood's increased freedom of action and participation of power coupled with its enhanced financial resources also enabled it to penetrate other sections of society. Islamic missionary and relief organisations were created to come to the aid of and simultaneously influence the multiplying groups of rural people who had moved to urban areas and use was made of the local student unions to advance the Muslim Brotherhood's influence in the rural areas via student tours and other forms of extra-campus activities (Sidahmed 1996: 183). The Muslim Brotherhood also prepared the important political role that it would take on as the NIF by means of a variety of other strategies. It infiltrated cultural associations with great success and was also able to make use of the mass media to manipulate a variety of newspapers in order to support its agenda (Ali 1995: 198).

An additional reason for the success of the Muslim Brotherhood in Sudan is the fact that it managed to evolve into an open, popular and comprehensive national front which comprised many Sudanese Islamic trends and ethnic groups. Furthermore, it deliberately focused on tackling new social and political issues in Sudan; in sum, it ended up being more "pragmatic than dogmatic or scripturalist, and more activist and practical than intellectualist or theoretical", a characteristic that ultimately proved to be of considerable advantage in terms of its political evolution (Ali 1995: 191).

Very importantly too, the Muslim Brotherhood's cooperation with the Nimeiri government resulted in the latter's gradual reliance on Islam as a source of ideology and inspiration. The peak moment of this development came in September 1983 when Nimeiri suddenly announced that the *Sharia* was to be implemented in the whole of Sudan in an effort to outmanoeuvre the Brotherhood. Turabi's movement, however, decided to treat the implementation of Islamic law as a reward and fully supported the move. Nimeiri started realising that the Brotherhood had become too politically powerful to be retained as a minor partner in government and therefore in early March 1985 imprisoned most of its leaders amid accusations that they had plotted to overthrow the regime. Ironically, a military coup, deposing Nimeiri, followed shortly afterwards, and the Brotherhood, because of having split with Nimeiri, was able to distance itself from the Nimeiri government's dubious legacy. It transformed itself into the NIF and did very well in the general elections of April 1986, presenting the official opposition to the coalition government which was made up of the Umma Party and the DUP. The NIF tried its utmost to consolidate the gains it had made during its collaboration with the Nimeiri regime by means of emphasising the preservation of the *Sharia* laws or their replacement with yet another "Islamic alternative". It also advocated a tough militarist stance against the southern opposition (the civil war had by this time broken out again) in an attempt to promote itself as the only authentic representative of Arabo-Islamic culture in Sudan. This policy paid off and in early 1988, after barely two years in opposition, the NIF was called to join the Umma Party and the DUP in the government's coalition. One immediate result of this was the production of a Criminal Law Bill based on the *Sharia* to replace Nimeiri's 1983 laws. This, however, only led to an intensification of the civil war in the south. After a number of government reshuffles, the NIF found itself in opposition again in 1989, while the Umma Party led Sudanese government had by this time agreed to seriously negotiate with the south (Sidahmed 1996: 184-186). As speculation grew that Sadiq al-Mahdi's government would abandon the *Sharia* in favour of peace with the south, the NIF quietly started planning the coup of 1989 that was to irrevocably change Sudanese history. This crucial move was made possible by the NIF's careful planning over the years and the fact that it had for a long time encouraged its supporters to infiltrate various arms of the state, where they were largely "sleepers", waiting for their moment to act (Woodward 1997: 100). This moment was the 1989 coup.

5.4 THE IDEOLOGY OF THE NATIONAL ISLAMIC FRONT

It now becomes important to look at some of the ideas expounded by Hassan al-Turabi, which have shaped (and continue to shape despite his split with the party in 1999) the NIF's ideology. These ideas are reflected in Sudan's 1998 Constitution, which is looked at here as well. The aim is to come to a better understanding of the ideology underpinning the NIF dominated government. This is followed by an analysis of the NIF backed regime's actions since its ascendance to power, in order to determine how said ideology has been implemented in practice. In terms of the analysis of Turabi's ideology, use is again made of the dialogic model of interpretation, while the sections on the respective conflicts also include an analysis of structural factors.

When it comes to Turabi's political thought, the most basic and universal idea underpinning the concept of an Islamic state is the metaphysical principle of *tahwid* or unity of God and human life. Many 20th century Islamic thinkers have interpreted *tahwid* as being the unifying force among various aspects of human life, such as the social, religious and the political. A unification of the political and the religious implies that public (or political) life and religious life cannot be separated and from this it follows that secularism denies the rightful role of religious faith and God in the governing of human affairs. According to Turabi, *tahwid* in the political realm means the ascendancy of Islamic law over the rulers. Thus, God is considered supreme or sovereign, while the *Sharia* provides connections between God's followers and the will of God and preserves His sovereignty (Morrison 2001: 153-154).

An Islamic state necessarily has to cater for a combination of the political and ethical aspects of *tahwid*. Politically speaking, the state may have to provide education, health and other social services, as well as to collect taxes and to maintain internal and external order and stability. This is not where its responsibility ends, however. When it comes to the ethical side of things, it is expected of the state to provide the conditions under which its citizens can lead faithful and pious Muslim lives. Turabi argues that the extent of government intervention will differ from society to society, but that in all cases the ultimate aim is to secure certain rights for the individual, who "has the right to his physical existence, general social well being, reputation, peace, privacy, to education and a decent life". *Tahwid* also influences which kinds of political forms Turabi deems acceptable. While Turabi rejects the concept of nationalism *per se*, on the basis that allegiance is to be owed to God and not the state, he nonetheless accepts the notion of the state as a territorial

national entity as a given fact (Morrison 2001: 154). In fact, Turabi argues that it is crucial that Muslims let go of their historical negativity towards the state if they are to cope with the contemporary challenges of modernity. He believes that the modern state has become so enmeshed in society that it has taken over certain responsibilities that once belonged to the family, such as transmitting culture and education to younger generations. The state's responsibilities, which furthermore include protecting its citizens against intruders and being accountable both to the people and ultimately to God, therefore, according to Turabi, are too important to be left to secularists. Islamic fundamentalists reclaiming the state would be equal to their reclaiming an educational institution – an imperative measure (Ibrahim 1999: 205).

Turabi thus conforms to general Islamic fundamentalist doctrine in terms of his adherence to the concept of *tawhid*, as well as his rejection of the doctrine of nationalism. It is important to note, however, that unlike some other Islamic fundamentalists, noticeably those who adhere to the Wahhabi doctrine, Turabi adopts a pragmatic rather than perfectionist approach. This is evident in the interpretive method which Turabi employs. As already mentioned in Chapter three of this dissertation, the respective ideologies of Wahhabism and Qutb both aim to purify Islam by returning to the fundamentals of religion – the *Quran* and the *Sunna*. This is done by means of following a very strict line of thinking in an attempt to reconstruct society and government along the lines of returning to the simplicity, austerity, purity and piety of Islam's classical period on the basis of *tawhid* and the doctrine of *al-Salaf al-Salih* (good ancestors). Wahhabis believe in adhering rigidly to the fundamental religious texts, without any major effort to reinterpret the principles of Islam. They thus focus more on the spiritual and ethical aspects of Islam, while leaving political matters to politicians and traditional elites (Moussalli 1999: 113). A certain amount of freedom in the form of the right to an individual interpretation of the text is allowed, yet ultimately the doctrine reverts to a stringent and puritanical interpretation of Islam, where the adherence to *tawhid* is, according to Husain (1995: 46), carried so far as to denounce all ceremonies, rituals and customary traditions that were absent during the classical period of Islam, considering them to be additions that defile the purity of the faith and contribute to the decline of Islam and of Muslim societies.

Similarly, according to Qutb, the *Quran* is the only source, which can answer questions pertaining to political authority and the “just” community. Because faith consists of belief in the unity (*tawhid*) and sole authority of God, any compromise to man-made authority becomes simply unacceptable, illegitimate and indistinguishable from tyranny. If God is the sole sovereign of an Islamic society, the *Sharia* is its sole legal

system. (Euben 1999: 61-62). Nonetheless, Qutb did develop a way to present his particular view of the *Quran* as the most valid. He made use of the concept '*aqidah* (doctrine) to denote an emancipatory and evolutionary vision of the text, which, according to him, bypassed the body of interpretations that existed in the tradition. Though this may make Qutb look like an enlightened interpreter, it similarly opens up the possibility of enforcing one particular interpretation of the *Quran* on others, justified by means of "claims based on visionary access to truth" (Ismail 2003: 589).

Turabi, while also advocating a return to Islam's fundamental texts, does not believe that it is useful to adhere to a literal interpretation of them, as they may be anachronistic, incomplete and ambiguous. Rather, it is necessary to develop a way in which they can be applied to the conditions and circumstances found in a modern state. Turabi's interpretive method also entails a rejection of all former interpretations of and commentary on Islam's core texts, partly because of the use that was made of the Greek formal logical and philosophical method, which, according to him, has resulted in importing foreign and corrupting influences into Islam. The two core concepts that thus tie in with Turabi's call for a new interpretive method are those of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) and *tajdid* (renewal or revival). In a nutshell then, new issues that arise "have to be tackled with new thinking and fresh expression of religious rules and principles, appropriate to the new situation" (Morrison 2001: 155).

A specific area where Turabi's call for *ijtihad* and *tajdid* is of great importance is when it comes to the concept of *ibtala*, which means "experiencing life as a perpetual challenge posed by God to test a Muslim's faith". Turabi equates this concept with modernity, which he sees as a test for contemporary Muslims, and, more significantly, as a corridor to God. Urbanisation, for example, urges Muslims to humanise the conditions in cities through "recognising difference, imparting civility to the madding crowd, and soothing loneliness with peace of mind". Rather than distancing themselves from modernity because of its evils, lure and materialism, and nostalgically looking back on a familiar rustic rural life, Muslims are told to embrace modern life as a challenge, which God has sent to them so as to test their love for him (Ibrahim 1999: 202).

Turabi's adherence to these two concepts has particular consequences for the political doctrine he advocates. The Quranic expression which Turabi makes use of here is the notion of *shura* (which he defines as the selection of and consultation with the government) and, linked to this, that of *ijima* (consensus). The basic difference between democracy and *shura* is the locus of sovereignty. Whereas in a democratic set-up the

sovereignty lies with the population of a country, Turabi argues that if one adheres to the notion of *tahwid*, God is the only possible sovereign. Furthermore, Turabi points out that there is no conflict between *shura* and the *Sharia*, as the latter “represents the convictions of the people and, therefore, their direct will”. *Shura*, then, for Turabi, is an indication of “the equality of people before God, and provides the basis for or rather the requirement of respect for their political freedom. In principle, all believers, rich or poor, noble or humble, learned or ignorant, men or women, are equal before God, and they are his viceregents on earth and the holders of his trust”. The egalitarianism that Turabi imputes to *shura* also implies that he sees the minority/majority character of Western democracy as undesirable. Similarly, the conflictual, fractious nature of the Western party system to him represents the failure to satisfy the responsibility that individual Muslims have to God and the *umma* (Morrison 2001: 154-156).

In his political scheme Turabi sees no place for the figure of a Mahdi. One of the objections that he levies against Mahdism is that in seeking legitimacy, a Mahdi would have to claim to be in direct communication with the Prophet. This, Turabi sees as untruthful and unnecessary for renewing religion in our day and age. In addition, Turabi perceives Mahdism as cultural procrastination licensed by tradition, a luxury which Muslims cannot afford when faced by the current challenge of *ibtala*. Similarly, Turabi objects to the authority of clerics as worthy leaders to confront the challenges of modernity. Rather, the fact that they have been shying away from and ignoring *ibtala* has resulted in an almost unbridgeable gap between the usable *fiqh* and the mounting challenges of modern life. According to Turabi, the clerical class usurped the right to monopolise decisions about what is “good religion”, by taking advantage of the historically decadent nature of the Islamic state and the fact that over the centuries, Muslims have been subjected to oppressive dynasties and regimes. He also argues that restricting the duty of thinking and practising religion to an elite class runs counter to the principles of Islam, which state that each Muslim has the right to participate in bringing religion to life, share his or her experiences by “interacting with the least as well as the most knowledgeable, in the spirit of advisement shorn of elitism or rif-raffing”. In order to eliminate the power of the clerics, Turabi, significantly, calls into question the existence of the golden age in which they anchor their authority. He argues that looking back on the time of the Prophet and his companions as a Muslim golden age is the result of generations of Muslims skirting *ibtala* by means of taking this pious detour to an original time in the past after which, they believe, all the good and noble in Muslims has been exhausted. This has led to a belief that Islam devolves over time and an excuse to turn away from the challenges of *ibtala* and contemporary realities under the pretext that it is more important to protect the *baqyat al-din* (the remnants of Islam) from

the ravages of time (Ibrahim 1999: 206-209). Thus, though Turabi's thought is grounded in Islamic fundamentalism (as he believes in returning to an analysis of the fundamental texts of the *Quran* and the *Sunna*, adhering to the notion of *tahwid* and rejecting the idea of secularism and nationalism), he nonetheless in several respects reflects elements of general Islamic modernist ideology. This is evident in his attempts to harmonise Western ideals concerning democracy and human rights with Islamic concepts such as *shura* and a desire to critically re-examine political and legal history and received wisdom in light of modern developments and values (Morrison 2001: 156). Turabi's approach, while staying true to the basic precepts of Islamic fundamentalist thought, thus also ties in with the primary goal of Islamic modernists which, according to Fuller (2003: 54), is to create a modern understanding of Islam compatible with most contemporary political values based on the importance of advocating intellectual freedom.

Morrison (2001: 156-158) levies a number of criticisms against Turabi's political ideas. While he agrees that these are attractive, because of their ability to adopt democratic methods while still retaining the capacity to legitimise such methods and ideals by means of an Islamic discourse, they are by no means faultless. Firstly, Turabi is said to underestimate the urgency of finding at least provisional agreement by means of which the *Sharia* can be adapted and applied to the requirements of an Islamic state. The problem is not only the scope of the *Sharia*, but also its multifarious quality which calls for an interpretation that needs to be consistent with the notions of *shura* and political participation, both of which are advocated by Turabi. Thus far, he has not advanced any such method of interpretation. In addition, the *Sharia* has only been accorded a rather vague and indefinite meaning, which generalises its importance to the political system as a whole. This lack of clarity makes it virtually impossible to differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate government actions. Secondly, there is the problem of imposing the *Sharia* on non-Muslims. This policy has had disastrous consequences in Sudan, notably the continuation of the civil war. From a constitutional perspective applying the *Sharia* to religious minorities is unacceptable, as this could easily result in the denial of basic liberties to non-Muslims. Related to this is the problem of wanting to impose an Islamic identity on the whole of Sudan, irrespective of the country's minority groups. Instead, it is necessary to at least attempt to come up with an alternative identity, or, if this proves to be impossible, to make an effort to address the specific concerns and complaints of minority groups, rather than making sweeping statements about commitments to freedom and liberal values. If this is not done, scepticism and hatred towards the ruling group will prevail. Thirdly, it can be argued that Turabi's political theory fails because he does not present a sufficiently developed institutional framework that is to realise his suggestions about Islamic

thought to present circumstances. For instance, the *Sharia* is taken to be accepted by the people and, even more extravagantly, to embody their collective will. While some part of Sudan's population may support the *Sharia* in principle, this is a long way away from all of the population supporting all of the particularities which the *Sharia* entails. It is therefore imperative that some means of revising and re-examining the *Sharia* be developed to make provision for the kinds of deliberation, compromises and resolutions which collective decision-making would require.

To sum up, Turabi's ideas are certainly promising in that they reflect a willingness to adapt Islamic political thought to the realities of the modern world without compromising the importance that religion holds for Muslim people, especially in contemporary times, fraught with insecurity and change. Mechanisms to facilitate the realisation of these ideas, however, have not yet been fully developed, which evidently undermines their feasibility. In addition, it is important to keep in mind that Turabi's political framework is aimed at the whole of Sudan, even though almost 30 percent of its citizens are non-Muslims, and historically violently opposed to being subjected to the imposition of political Islam.

In order to come to an even deeper understanding of the ideology espoused by Turabi, one can consider what he himself has to say in defense of certain elements of his doctrine. In an interview conducted with Turabi in Khartoum in the summer of 1994, the latter was asked various questions pertaining to the topic of "renewal and reform in Muslim thought and societies". At the time of the interview, Turabi emphasised the international attention that Islam had been getting, which he attributed to God's will. Furthermore, he stated that he was very pleased that God had allowed him to operate at an international level and that his ideas and opinions had found favour with a number of Muslims around the world. It also seemed to be of particular significance to Turabi that his movement had evolved into a "fully-fledged programme for the whole of the Sudan as a state, with evident international implications"(Turabi in Hamdi 1996: 36). The mood here seems to be one of exhilaration and enthusiasm about the attention that the NIF had gotten, both locally and internationally. Somewhat more questionable, as is examined in greater detail later on, is whether this attention has been the result of Turabi's modernist and liberal ideology, or the dubious human rights record exhibited by the Sudanese regime since its take over of power in 1989.

On the question of Turabi's attitude towards the various criticisms levied against his calls for reform of Muslim thought (both from Islamic fundamentalists who viewed him as too liberal and Western analysts

who viewed him as militant), he re-emphasised the need for “comprehensive, far-reaching and total” reform in the face of religion’s unprecedented decline and loss of appeal and influence in the contemporary world. While adherence to religion is to remain constant, it is nonetheless imperative that when new issues arise, these are to be “tackled with new thinking and fresh expression of religious rules and principles, appropriate to the new situation” (Turabi in Hamdi 1996: 37). This underlines Turabi’s attitude towards *ibtila* and the crucial role he attributes to the adaptability of religion in confronting the challenges of modern life. Such reform, Turabi then continued to argue in the interview, should not take place by violent revolutionary means. Revolutions, according to him, happen “when change and freedom of expression are totally suppressed”, dissatisfaction rises and pressure builds up underneath the surface “until the old is no longer able to sustain it and revolutions explode”. Instead of violent change, in the interview Turabi advocated a peaceful invitation toward reform, which might “be a slow process and take longer to get us where we want to go”, but which simultaneously is “more profound and enduring”. If during such peaceful reform initiatives one is attacked and deprived of one’s freedom of expression or contact with the public, then, and only then, one has the right to resist and defend oneself. In terms of the real meaning of Islamic revival required in the modern world, Turabi gave a rather idealistic response, which may be summarised as the aim to unite humanity, thereby eliminating the borders set by nationalism.

Our present objective is, therefore, to spread Islam and bring people closer together. Our firm belief is that mankind is one community, and people can co-operate in the field of science and knowledge, and exchange ideas and achievements. National resources of different countries and regions of the world should be pooled, and co-operation and sharing between the wealthy North and the poor South – the former with its financial wherewithal and the latter with its manpower – everyone will benefit. The West cannot continue to subjugate the rest of the world and exploit it for its own prosperity (Turabi in Hamdi 1996: 44).

Though beautiful, this vision is rather vague in terms of how the spread of Islam is meant to take place and furthermore by means of which mechanisms humanity is meant to ultimately co-operate and share its resources, whether material or intellectual, in an open and unselfish manner. The final point to be discussed here is the question posed to Turabi in terms of the possible pitfalls of implementing Islamic political doctrine, particularly as “Muslim groups tend to be closer to claiming a monopoly in the sacred truth”. Here Turabi again emphasised the need for moderation and toleration, in terms of, for example, the point of view that politics should take place by means of consultation rather than the Western concept of majority rule. The dangers of an abuse of power, he admitted, are real enough and need to be carefully guarded against (Turabi in Hamdi 1996: 46).

Turabi, then, in the above-mentioned interview basically restated his ideology of moderation, gradual reform and tolerance. To what extent this has or has not been realised in Sudan is discussed in detail later on. First, however, it is necessary to take a look at parts of the 1998 Constitution of the Republic of Sudan in order to determine how this fits in with the NIF rhetoric in general.

Predictably, the Constitution states that God is the guiding legislator of society. This conforms to Turabi's adherence to *tahwid* and related rejection of secularism and nationalism. Part one of the Constitution is remarkably liberal and supportive of the rights of all of Sudan's ethnic and religious groups. Article 1 emphasises the State of Sudan's focus on racial and cultural harmony as well as religious tolerance and acknowledges the fact that while Islam is the religion of the majority of Sudanese people, Christianity and traditional religions also have a large following. In Article 2 the government of the Federal Republic is given the responsibilities of ensuring participation, consultation (*shura*), mobilisation and respect for justice in the division of power and wealth (Constitution of the Republic of Sudan 1998). Again here, this gives the impression of what should be (judging from the Constitution) a remarkably free and just society. Whether or not the Federal Republic would be able to fulfil its responsibilities would of course depend on the presence of adequate and efficient institutions. Article 4 again reflects Turabi's thought in that here supremacy and sovereignty are said to lie with God (Constitution of the Republic of Sudan 1998). The inevitable question of course is whether this means that Islamic law is to apply to Muslims as well as non-Muslims, assuming that the Sudanese state functions according to an Islamic political framework. In terms of economic issues, the Constitution states in Article 8 that it is essential to provide for the well-being of the Sudanese by means of providing work, promoting a free-market system in order to prevent monopoly, usury, cheating and also to ensure national self-sufficiency, abundance, blessing and establish justice among Sudan's various states and regions. Similarly, Article 11 advocates justice and social solidarity in order to provide the highest standard of living for everybody and also to ensure a fair distribution of national income. Social issues are dealt with in Articles 12, 14 and 15 which focus on education and the promotion of scientific research and co-operation, as well as the care of children and the youth, and the family and women respectively. Particular attention is paid to the rights of pregnant women, to the need to alleviate injustice against women and to the promotion of the roles of women in family and public life (Constitution of the Republic of Sudan 1998). This again suggests that this is the legal framework of a state whose government is keen to facilitate and promote research, thereby embracing those aspects of modernity which are useful and important to the

social, political and economic development of Sudan, but also which is concerned about the well-being of its citizens.

When it comes to the kind of moral conduct which the Constitution views as desirable, some ambiguity is present, especially in terms of how such behaviour is to be realised. So, for instance, according to Article 16, the state “will seek by laws and directive policies to purge society from corruption, crime, delinquency and consumption of alcohol by Muslims” (Constitution of the Republic of Sudan 1998). These sound like fair prerogatives, though the last point is debatable, in terms of the extent to which Muslims should be allowed to diverge from traditional religious customs, seeing as, according to the Constitution as is discussed later on, they have the right to freedom of religion. The ambiguity is really evident in the following part of the Article, according to which the state is to encourage its citizens to “adopt good customs, noble traditions, righteous manners, protect the unity of the country, the stability of the government”, as well as to develop Sudanese civilisation in conformity with “admirable ideals” (Constitution of the Republic of Sudan 1998). These moral prerogatives are open to several interpretations and could easily amount to one particular point of view of what constitutes “admirable ideals”, for instance, being enforced on Sudan’s heterogeneous population. In addition, protecting “the unity of the country” is rather a delicate issue, in view of Sudan’s long-standing and deeply entrenched differences between the northern elite and its southern opponents. Article 18 focuses on the Constitution’s prerogative that people should worship God in their daily lives, that Muslims, in particular, should adhere to the *Quran* and the ways of the Prophet, and that Sudanese citizens, in general, should preserve the principles of religion. This policy of respecting and adhering to religion should be reflected in various areas ranging from laws and policies to political, economic, social and cultural actions with the ultimate aim of achieving justice and righteousness and the salvation of the kingdom of God (Constitution of the Republic of Sudan 1998). Such a strongly religious discourse is problematic in a society in which a multitude of spiritual beliefs makes it unfeasible to prescribe one particular religion which should be adhered to. Here too the possibility of enforcing one particular interpretation of life, possibly Turabi’s and by implication that of the NIF, on the entire Sudanese population visibly exists.

Seemingly in an effort to counter the very objection made above, the Constitution continues with a number of articles which adamantly express various freedoms which Sudanese people are guaranteed of. These include the right to liberty and life which implies that no one shall be held in slavery, servitude, be degraded or tortured (Article 20); the right to equality before the law (Article 21) and, importantly, Articles 24 and 25

which refer to the right to religion or conscience and freedom of opinion and expression respectively. In terms of Article 24, everyone has the right to disseminate and manifest their religious belief in a number of ways provided that these coincide with the law and do not harm the public order or others' feelings. Simultaneously, no one is to be coerced to profess a faith or believe or perform rituals or a certain kind of worship that he or she does not voluntarily accept (Constitution of the Republic of Sudan 1998). On the surface of things, this seems to cancel out the danger of imposing one particular religion or way of life on the Sudanese population. In a similar vein, Article 25 focuses on people's rights to seek any knowledge or adopt any faith in opinion or thought without being coerced by the authorities. This goes hand-in-hand with a policy of freedom of expression and freedom of the press, interestingly, with the understanding that these are subject to restrictions necessary to security, public order, public safety and public morals and in accordance with the law (Constitution of the Republic of Sudan 1998). These restrictions could again be rather easily manipulated by the government if and when it seeks to curb potential popular resistance or criticism.

Finally, two articles which are of particular interest are Articles 27 and 30. The first of these guarantees minority and cultural rights and allows every sect or group in Sudan the right to keep its particular culture, language and religion (Constitution of the Republic of Sudan 1998). Such a provision seems to cater for minority groups and seems to ensure that they are protected against any potential domination or enforcement of one particular culture. Article 30 ensures that no one is to be arrested, detained or imprisoned except in accordance with the law that will prescribe a charge, the maximum time limit for which someone could be held without having been charged, and the conditions for treatment while in detention (Constitution of the Republic of Sudan 1998). This suggests respect for and adherence to one of the most fundamental human rights.

Now that the original, tolerant and moderate (though by no means perfectly developed) ideas of Turabi and the way that they are reflected in the 1998 Constitution have been examined, it is necessary to see how this ideology has been applied in practice since the NIF-backed regime's ascendance to power in 1989.

5.5 GOVERNMENT POLICY AFTER 1989 – DISCREPANCIES WHEN COMPARED TO ITS MODERATE IDEOLOGY

Among the key concepts put forward by the Sudanese government have been those of “Islamic social planning” and “the comprehensive call to God”. Islamic Social Planning “means a continuing revolution for the remoulding of the human being and the institutions in society in accordance with Quranic guidance”. Its aims closely resemble those stated in the Constitution and are also similar to the views expressed by Turabi. They are:

1. A complete and comprehensive remoulding of the Islamic personality, simultaneously envisioning a living, honest and conscious characterisation of Islamic concepts, values and teachings.
2. Building and reconstructing all state institutions on principles derived from the *Quran*.
3. Establishing an Islamic society on the basis of Islamic principles and rules without coercion.
4. Establishing an Islamic state to promote right, justice, spread peace and security in all fields and actualise solidarity, compassion and support among all people, especially Muslims.
5. Establishing an international civilisation and a new international order based on justice and fairness and the recognition of the cultures of others and their cultural, religious and ethnic distinctions.

While such an alternative project is attractive in many ways to Muslims who have experienced the failures of Western political and economic models first hand in Africa and the Arab world, it is nonetheless problematic to apply these particular ideas to Sudan. “Islamic social planning” presupposes an idea of “community” or “society” that assumes no diversity and that requires consensus around a wide set of values. Sudan does not conform to these prerequisites, as it has a highly heterogeneous population with a number of different religions, including different varieties of Islamic belief, such as Sufi traditions. The project of an Islamic state and its implications, such as Islamic social planning, suggest at best the promotion of a particular point at the expense of others, and at worst the imposition of a politicised, extremist ideology. Sudanese society has experienced the latter, where the Islamic fundamentalist project has become a charter for war, repression

and human rights abuses, whereby the lofty principles of the enterprise itself have become discredited (de Waal 2001: 121-122). This point of view has been backed up by a number of analysts who have studied the situation in Sudan and who have concluded that the Sudanese government's policies, while geared towards the aim of realising an Islamic state which is to function according to reportedly noble principles, have constituted a great deal of human rights violations and, significantly, behaviour that runs contrary to the precepts of the largely peaceful religion of Islam. These policies started after the Sudanese government had gained power in 1989, have continued throughout the civil war and still persist, specifically in the context of the crisis in the Darfur region, even though the government and the SPLM/A signed a peace deal in May 2004, which, though it is by no means exhaustive, still deals with a number of crucial issues.

The NIF-backed military rulers have been practising a form of vanguardism since coming to power in 1989 that has a number of dimensions. The first of these has been the takeover of the state. The army itself has been extensively purged and attempted coups have been ruthlessly crushed, while simultaneously a number of security networks have been established and an atmosphere of suspicion and repression has developed. Arbitrary detention and torture leading to mutilation and death have been authoritatively recorded by Sudanese and international human rights organisations. In addition, the regime has established its own Islamic force, the Popular Defense Force, numbering up to 150 000, to defend the National Salvation Revolution, while the judiciary, the civil service and education have seen extensive resignations and purges (Woodward 1997: 101). These actions are completely opposed to the spirit of the Sudanese Constitution and the vision expressed by Turabi. Instead of promoting equality and a recognition of the diversity of the Sudanese people, as the government's ideology officially advocates, it appears that a policy of repression has been used to attempt to forcibly introduce an Islamic culture on the whole of Sudanese society.

In terms of civil society, sustained attacks have taken place on those referred to in Sudan as "modern forces". These include professional organisations and trade unions, which have long managed to contribute to a relatively free, pluralistic and tolerant atmosphere in the country. In addition to a number of dismissals and detentions that have taken place, many thousands of professionals and others have also gone into exile, together with many former politicians. The regime has encouraged alternative bodies in the place of those organisations that have been banned, often claiming that these are independent, even if this is not really the case. Similarly, the previously free media has been totally commandeered and used for the government's propaganda purposes (Woodward 1997: 102).

On the policy front there has been an evident commitment to the *Sharia*, with a revised version of the 1983 laws being introduced in 1991. This also implied a major drive towards Arabisation and Islamisation at all levels. Concomitantly, there was a crackdown on women at work in the name of defending the Islamic understanding of the family, and hence the number of women actively engaged in a professional life dropped sharply. A conservative dress code for professional women and students was consequently also enforced, and some women were harassed in public places. The free movement of women was also restricted and depended on the permission of a male guardian or relative, if not his actual accompaniment (Woodward 1997: 102). In addition, many women have been subjected to detention, ill-treatment and torture again because of the government's hard-line Islamic fundamentalist policies. Whipping has also been introduced by the state as a punishment, and women have been specifically targeted for this harsh treatment. A number of laws have also been enacted which undermine women's rights in the name of Islam. These for instance include The Law of Public Order (1991) in which Chapter 3 on women's prudence states that "every woman who appears in the place of work or the street without the legal dress will receive punishment not exceeding 25 lashes, a penalty of LS 500 or both". Another case in point is "The Law of Personal Affairs" which, for example, in Article 40 legalises early marriage from the age of 10 according to the guardian's will and interest. In addition, Articles 51, 75, 91 and 167 which deal with polygamy permit this practice, but ignore the wife's right within the framework of polygamy in Islam. In turn, the husband is given all the rights regarding the relation (Eltigani & Khaled 1998: 222-223).

The stipulations and practices regarding the role of women in society clearly contradict both Turabi and the Constitution's apparently moderate stance as far as the position of women in Islamic society is concerned. Instead, women are deprived of the most basic of rights under the pretext that this is necessary in order to establish an Islamic system, ironically enough, the very same Islamic system, which, according to Turabi's rhetoric, embraces the equality of the sexes and recognises and promotes women's position in society.

The way in which successive Sudanese governments, but particularly Bashir's regime, have treated the people in the Nuba Mountains serves to illustrate another particular case where Islamic social planning has proved to be harmful and destructive to a large percentage of the Sudanese population.

Government hostility towards the Nuba began in 1986 under the elected government of Sadiq al-Mahdi, which already exhibited many Islamising tendencies. The government found it particularly irksome that the

Nuba people persistently rejected assimilation into the common “Sudanese” culture it was trying to impose, by continuing to adhere to many customary practices, which ran counter to its Islamisation project, including intermarriage with followers of other faiths and the consumption of alcohol. The real reason for the ensuing repression of the Nuba, however, was the fact that SPLA forces had entered the Nuba mountains in 1987 and were proving to be a real military threat. The SPLA had also gained the support of the Nuba, who perceived them as liberators. In 1992 the government declared *jihad* against the Nuba population, a decision which was directed not only against Christians and traditional believers, but also targeted Muslims. The *jihad*, which lasted for a number of years, meant that government forces resorted to randomly destroying churches, as well as mosques and Islamic books. This is highly ironic as the government claims to represent Islam. Simultaneously the motive of the *jihad* was arguably that of genocide. The destruction of the mosques was a manifestation of a far-reaching brutality and abuse with the aim of destroying Nuba culture and dismantling Nuba society. The government, for instance, planned to relocate most of the Nuba population away from their homeland, and even encouraged rape as a means of tearing Nuba society apart and creating a new generation of non-Nuba people, who would arguably be more willing to embrace the government’s Islamisation project. While the government later on abandoned its social engineering project in favour of the pursuit of a military victory in the Nuba Mountains, the fate of the Nuba people still hangs in the balance as a result of the effects of the humanitarian crisis that has been the result of the prolonged war (de Waal 2001: 131-132).

The case of the government’s actions in the Nuba Mountains thus again exhibits substantial discrepancies between Turabi, and by implication the NIF’s, moderate rhetoric and its policies. The desire to create and enforce a homogeneous Islamic society in Sudan necessarily involves “changing” those who are different in order to “integrate” them, by force, if necessary. What appears to be highly contradictory is the fact that the avowedly Muslim government declared *jihad* against both non-Muslims and Muslims and even resorted to allowing the destruction of sacrosanct Islamic symbols such as mosques and religious texts. This evidently contradicts the government’s supposedly God-fearing ideology, as do the brutal and unjustifiable actions of rape, destruction and forcible relocation. Interestingly, as is discussed in more detail later on, the government has engaged in similar practices in the Darfur region. De Waal (2001: 120) convincingly sums up the situation in Sudan when stating that “in the multi-ethnic, plural Sudan, a homogenous Islamist enterprise can ultimately only be implemented by coercion, and coercion is always ugly”.

According to the Human Rights Watch World Report for Sudan (2003), though substantial progress had been made in terms of a peace agreement with the SPLM/A, human rights abuses persisted on a variety of fronts. In December 2001, the National Assembly, for instance, which is dominated by the ruling NIF, approved the extension of the state of emergency, which effectively gave it the right to continue to deny political rights to opposition parties, notably to the PNC. Repressive measures were also exerted against moderate students, whose protests resulted in mass arrests and attacks by the security forces and police in October 2002. There were also reports that those who were consequently detained by the security police were subjected to torture. Sudan's media suffered at the hands of the state as well. Journalists and editors were detained and questioned about the contents of their publications, and often editions of papers were confiscated because of articles the censors did not like, although all papers were subjected to prior censorship. Emergency tribunals, as established under the 1998 State of Emergency Act, continued to hand down stringent sentences without respecting the standards usually associated with a fair trial. As a result, summary executions and brutal punishments such as cross amputations for crimes such as robbery and the unlicensed possession of firearms, took place. Sudan's precarious human rights situation was of course exacerbated by the ongoing civil war. So, for example, the Sudanese government in 2002 continued to displace and kill civilian populations, particularly in the oilfield areas of Western Upper Nile/Unity State. In the same area, women and children were also abducted and raped by local Arab militias, who were also suspected of enslaving those whom they abducted. In the same year there were several reports of intentional aerial bombing of civilian targets by government forces, while the government was also accused of recruiting high school students to fight against the SPLM/A. The war not only saw abuses on behalf of the government. The SPLA was also guilty of various human rights violations, including an attack on the village of Tuhubak, with a population of 970 people, in March 2002 during which 173 homes were burned and at least 25 civilians killed. As with the government, the SPLA was also guilty of recruiting underage soldiers (Human Rights Watch 2003).

It is this record of human rights violations of which the Sudanese government has been convicted, which has prompted the development of a description of Turabi's ideology, which is rather different from the moderate and liberal characteristics he himself ascribes to it. Wakoson (1998: 47) argues that "it is the politico-ideological dynamics" of the situation where the northern Arabicised-Islamic ruling elite has been following a policy of wanting to impose its ideology on all Sudanese, despite resistance from southerners, which has ultimately led to the country's civil war and has "impeded the country's potential to develop lasting political

institutions, a stable political environment, and a peaceful national democratic society”. He then continues to polarise Sudan’s two main competing ideologies (that of the ruling government as opposed to that of the opposition), by saying that the former adheres to “racialist theocraticism”, while the latter follows “national democratic secularism, which is also associated with the establishment of a democratic system based on the rule of law, without one single group dominating the government or a single religion guiding the national political and socio-economic activities of the country”. It is interesting to note that the way in which Wakoson describes the ruling government’s ideology, which he terms “Islamism”, is very different from the values espoused both by Turabi and by the Sudanese Constitution. “Islamism” is said to consist of:

- 1 Absolutism
- 2 Unitary theocratic totalitarianism
- 3 Monolithism
- 4 Exclusionist government
- 5 Imposed national unity
- 6 Coercion in resolving issues
- 7 Militarism – *jihad* on opponents
- 8 Cultural homogeneity
- 9 Suppression of other religions
- 10 Arab identification
- 11 Being intolerant of other racial groups (Wakoson 1998: 59)²¹.

While points like “cultural homogeneity” and “Arab identification” could be seen to reflect Turabi’s ideas of *tahwid* and embracing the challenge of *ibtala*, it is significant to note that, according to Wakoson, the

²¹ It is important to point out here that Wakoson (1998: 59) uses a rather strong dichotomy when placing the Sudanese government and the SPLM/A opposite each other. The government, as is evident from the list of characteristics he attributes to “Islamism”, is said to almost exclusively embrace negative and totalitarian ideological notions. On the other hand, the SPLM/A is also said to adhere to a given ideology, which the author describes as “Africanism” and the list of concepts he presents as characterising this ideology is presented from a very favourable and optimistic point of view. Without exception, these concepts are said to focus on liberalism and democracy and include “constitutionalism”, “secular democratic federalism”, “consensual unity in diversity or secession”, “cultural diversity”, “freedom of religion” and “racial tolerance”. While such notions are doubtlessly desirable for the future of a peaceful and liberal Sudan, the SPLM/A, as has briefly been mentioned earlier, has also been guilty of a fair amount of human rights violations during the civil war. While the SPLM/A may oppose the ruling government’s policies and favours a more liberal alternative, it is by no means clear that, should it ever come to power, it would necessarily institute these ideas. A more cautious approach to the ideology opposing that of the Sudanese government should perhaps be followed.

Sudanese government has appropriated the right to impose its particular belief system on others, which makes a mockery of the decidedly broad-minded and liberal attitude the Sudanese government claims to possess in theory.

What aggravates the above-mentioned human rights abuses is the fact that these have been taking place in the midst of an ongoing civil war, that between the Sudanese government and the SPLM/A, whose belligerents have only very recently come to a rather tenuous and by no means conclusive resolution. The potential future relief the Naivasha agreement, signed in May 2004 and based on the Machakos Protocol, may hold for certain groups of the Sudanese population who have previously suffered under the civil war, is easily offset by the disastrous situation which has been emerging in Darfur, while the peace talks between the Sudanese government and the SPLM/A have been going ahead. Some dynamics of the north-south conflict and its effects on the Sudanese population are discussed, before moving on to an analysis of the events in the Darfur region.

Three factors constitute the main root causes of the Sudanese conflict and have to be addressed in order for the war to be conclusively and permanently resolved. The first is the cultural, religious, historical, ethnic and political diversity between the north and the south. The south sees itself as African, mainly Christian, and as historically distinct from the north which sees itself as an Arabicised Muslim entity, where the majority of the population is linked to Arab culture and Muslim religion (Nyot Yoh 2001: 28). Ironically, this “Arabness” is called into question, especially by real Arabs, which has resulted in the Sudanese regime’s use of Islam and Arabic as instruments for validating their superficial Arabness. Their task is that of creating more Arabs, which essentially boils down to de-Africanising the people in the south of Sudan (Yongo Bure 1994: 207). As for those Sudanese, especially southerners, who have resisted the government’s policies of unification, they have become the target of an extermination policy by the Sudanese government through methods such as starvation or denial of socio-economic development (Yongo-Bure 1994: 213). The second factor is the fact that under the colonial administration, Sudan’s northern and southern regions were administratively developed as separate entities and very little was done to forge any meaningful political integration of the two regions. While the north was treated as part of the Middle Eastern world, the south was administered as part of the British East Africa territories. The third factor which has contributed to Sudan’s civil war is the fact that the south, for various historical reasons, is economically underdeveloped compared to the north, where the colonial administration concentrated its main economic projects. However,

oil was discovered in the south in the 1980s and the region also has promising water reserves and fertile agricultural lands, all of which influence the south's status within Sudan (Nyot Yoh 2001: 29).

The discovery of oil in Sudan's south has caused the government to view the centuries-long inhabitants of the southern oilfields as a security threat to its development ambitions, especially as a result of the SPLM/A's questioning government ownership of the south's natural resources. The abuse most closely linked to oil development in southern Sudan has been forcible displacement, by military means, of tens and perhaps hundreds of thousands of residents of the areas' Nuer and Dinka residents, in order to provide space for international oil companies to launch their operations. A particularly controversial oil company that has been active in Sudan is Talisman Energy Inc., Canada's largest independent oil and gas producer. When it entered the Sudanese market in 1998, it also introduced superior technology and experience and drastically increased the success of oil production in Sudan, which at the time greatly benefited the war-stressed and cash-poor Sudanese government. In fact, since Talisman first started producing oil in Sudan in 1999, oil export has amounted to 20 to 40 percent of all government revenues. Controversially, Talisman's tenure in Sudan was besieged by a number of complaints related to its complicity in human rights abuses, which were made by church groups, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), UN rights officials and some governments. While the oil company initially rejected these accusations, it finally, after months of pressure from the Canadian government, signed the International Code of Ethics for Canadian Business, thereby committing itself, among other things, to the "value" of "human rights and social justice" and "not to be complicit in human rights abuses". Talisman justified its presence in Sudan by saying that it became involved in community development programmes for the (increasingly diminishing) population. It also claimed that development would eventually bring peace. However, even though Talisman did make charitable contributions to several communities, the money spent on these nonetheless only amounted to one per cent of Talisman's pre-tax revenue (Rone 2003: 504-505).

Ultimately, the activities of international oil companies in Sudan did not produce the improvements originally predicted by companies, especially as far as human rights were concerned. The war became increasingly focused on the oilfields and became more brutal as the government bought new weapons with its oil resources and started using these in order to displace the civilian population. By 2002, the government was able to deduct enough money from Sudan's oil income to purchase more helicopter gunships and armaments in order to enable it to target a specific area, clear out the population and secure the next oil

concession area with roads and garrisons. This strategy, it appears, might be reproduced successively until all oil areas and transport corridors could be cleared of southerners and brought under heavy government guard. According to the UN special rapporteur on Sudan who reported to the March/April 2002 session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, “oil has seriously exacerbated the conflict while deteriorating the overall situation of human rights”. In addition, it was estimated that as of March 2002 approximately 174 200 civilians remained displaced as a result of the conflict between the government, its proxies and rebel factions in the oilfields of Western Upper Nile/Unity State. International pressure on oil companies to stop collaborating with or at least allowing the Sudanese government to displace communities and use its oil revenues to further the conflict, did have some effect. On 30 October 2002 Talisman agreed that it would sell its Sudanese interests to a subsidiary of India’s national oil company and at this point it was generally agreed that human rights pressure had forced Talisman out of Sudan. Other oil companies, Lundin, however, continue to operate in Sudan (Rone 2003: 506-508).

It is of course also important to look at the Sudanese conflict in terms of the precarious economic situation which characterises the country. Although Sudan is endowed with rich natural and mineral resources such as abundant arable land, as well as the largest river in the continent, the Nile, it also features a number of extremely complicated socio-economic difficulties, such as poverty, urbanisation and unemployment. In addition, the economy is characterised by a macroeconomic imbalance that is reflected in high rates of unemployment and inflation, excessive balance of payments deficits and a heavy debt burden. According to statistics, the total population of Sudan increased from 14 million people in 1970 to an estimated 30 million in 2002. Moreover, an estimation of the age structure in 1998 shows that 45 percent of the population are in the age group of one -14 years, 53 percent in the age group of 15-64 years and the remaining three percent are above 65 years. While Sudan’s labour force should technically constitute those in the age group of 15-64, in other words approximately 53 percent of the population, it is nonetheless important to point out that at the same time 66 percent of Sudan’s total population is non-productive. This ultimately means that about 8 million people make up the active labour force and that these are the ones who support more than three times the number of children, women and older people. In a nutshell, there are about 19 million people in Sudan who form an economic dependency burden (Mohsin 2002: 85-87).

In addition, urbanisation has proved to be a massive problem, especially during and since the last decade. The migration from rural to urban areas partly took place because of the economic problems that reached

exacerbating levels in the middle of the 1980s and the drought problem, which affected both the northern as well as the western regions. The urban population thus increased from 4,2 million in 1984 to 11 million in 1998, and is expected to increase further to 20 million by 2015. The effects of urbanisation are manifold. On the one hand, this has meant reduced production in the agricultural sector, as the rural labour force has decreased. The government has thus had to import more food, which in turn has put a greater strain on the economy. Furthermore, the increase in the number of people in the urban areas creates an enormous demand for new infrastructure facilities, such as water supply, electricity, housing, and social services, such as health care and education, in addition to providing jobs for those who have newly migrated. The result of these trends has been that Sudan's population has the highest percentage of people living in poverty in the world. In 1994/1995, in fact, it was estimated that about 85 percent of the total population were living in poverty. Though the last decade has shown some improvement in the GNP per capita, the human development index (HDI), life expectancy at birth and access to safe water are still very low when compared to other countries. Coupled with the increasing levels of poverty in Sudan is the fact that people have stripped most wooded areas around towns to either sell the wood or use it for cooking purposes. Desertification has also been caused by turning large areas of forests into farmland and overgrazing. The result has been the loss of trees, forests and shrubs which ordinarily act as buffers against dry weather and the absence of which can result in severe droughts (Mohsin 2002: 88-90).

Some of the economic problems discussed above are the direct result of Sudan's heavy debt burden. Sudanese governments started borrowing large amounts of foreign capital in the 1970s as they were aiming to develop Sudan's agricultural sector in order to make the country economically self-sufficient. At the same time, however, the industrial sector was largely neglected. It was estimated that by the end of the year 2000 Sudan would have a total external debt of US\$ 20 billion, due to the increase of interest on loans and of imports of equipment for refining oil, in addition to funding development programmes such as constructing new highways, improving the railways and the airport and building more hospitals. The war, of course, has also had an immensely negative impact on the Sudanese economy, and has led to the destruction of most of the resources in the south, as well as rendering entire communities homeless (Mohsin 2002: 90-93).

From the arguments discussed above it thus becomes evident that the post-1989 situation in Sudan has been highly precarious, and has not only seen the continuation of a bloody and protracted civil war and concomitant economic problems, but has equally been characterised by brutal government policies aimed at

divesting certain areas of their original residents. This may have the purpose of creating space for oil exploration to take place, as has been the case in southern Sudan, or of repopulating an area with Arabised Sudanese in order to fulfil the government's aims of creating an Islamic state. As has already been established, one area where such a policy has been pursued is the Nuba Mountains. Another, most topical and contentious, is Sudan's western Darfur region.

As has already been discussed, the Darfur crisis first emerged when two rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), began attacking government targets in February 2003, claiming that the government is oppressing black (Muslim) Africans in favour of Arabs (Q & A: Sudan's Darfur Conflict 2004). The rebel groups furthermore demanded an end to chronic economic marginalisation, to be included in power sharing within the Arab ruled Sudanese state and that government should end the abuses of its rivals, Arab pastoralists, who had been driven onto African farmlands by drought and desertification, which led to conflict with the inhabitants of Darfur. In reaction, the government of Sudan adopted a policy of "ethnic cleansing" in Darfur, and together with Arab "Janjaweed" militias has launched numerous attacks on the civilian populations of the African Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa ethnic groups. The aim is thus apparently to target and punish the civilian populations from which the rebels were originally drawn. Government forces have thus not only overseen, but also directly participated in massacres, summary executions of civilians (including women and children), burnings of towns and villages, and the forcible depopulation of considerable areas of land long inhabited by the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa people (Darfur destroyed: ethnic cleansing by government and militia forces in western Sudan 2004: 1). Refugees from Darfur have reported that following air raids by government aircraft, the Arab Janjaweed militias, who are accused of trying to "cleanse" large pieces of land of black Africans, ride into villages on horses and camels, slaughtering men, raping women and stealing whatever they can find (Q & A: Sudan's Darfur Conflict 2004). The government's policy of dealing with the Darfur issue has resulted in up to 50 000 deaths and more than one million civilians, mostly farmers, fleeing into camps and settlements in Darfur where they live on the very edge of survival and are hostage to Janjaweed abuses. More than 100 000 people have also fled to neighbouring Chad (Darfur destroyed: ethnic cleansing by government and militia forces in western Sudan 2004: 1).

In addition to the destruction of villages and civilian property, the Sudanese government has also engaged in the systematic destruction of mosques and the desecration of Islamic articles in Darfur. The African Fur,

Masalit and Zaghawa people of Darfur are Muslims (unlike the people of southern Sudan), just as the Sudanese government and the affiliated Janjaweed militias purport to be. In the past year, government and Janjaweed forces have resorted to killing *imams*, as well destroying mosques, prayer mats and *Qurans*. A case in point is Dar Masalit, a village in which government forces burned at least 65 mosques and killed scores of people in mosques. As a local resident puts it, “the government wants to kill African people, Muslim or not Muslim, so as to put Arabs in their places. They are not good Muslims” (Darfur destroyed: ethnic cleansing by government and militia forces in western Sudan 2004: 27). Here yet another contradiction between government rhetoric and practice emerges. Not only are the gross human rights violations in direct contrast with the supposedly moderate ideology of Turabi and the Sudanese government, but again, as with government actions against the Nuba people, this is a situation where brutal attacks are carried out by Muslims and are directed against Muslims. It would thus appear as if the government policy in practice, even if not necessarily espoused in theory, has diverted from that of mere Islamisation, the spread of Islam regardless of race, to one of Arabisation, with the aim of creating populations that are as “purely” Arab as possible. This is ironic, as members of the Sudanese elite itself are often dark-skinned and are Arabs as a result of their cultural and religious affiliations, rather than their biological makeup. According to Human Rights Watch (Darfur destroyed: ethnic cleansing by government and militia forces in western Sudan 2004: 40-42), the government’s policy is one of ethnic cleansing where the attacks directed against civilians, the burning of their villages, the mass killings of persons under their control, the forced displacement of populations and the destruction of their food stocks and livestock are aimed at removing these ethnic groups from large areas of the region and redistributing the population mainly into the vicinity of government controlled towns where they can be concentrated, confined and controlled. Additional evidence of the fact that the government is conducting a policy of ethnic cleansing is that clear patterns were followed and coordinated and planned operations were carried out when attacking and looting villages. These attacks followed similar patterns (aerial bombings and reconnaissance by the Sudanese airforce followed by ground attacks by government forces and Janjaweed militias) and were repeated until the population was finally driven away. In addition, government-supported militia forces have been deployed in and around destroyed villages to prevent displaced populations from returning. Apparently, militias continue to attack displaced civilians after they escape into camps and settlements, beating, raping and sometimes killing women and children who attempt to leave the settlements in order to collect firewood and basic foods. Men in these camps have been tortured and killed.

Peace talks held in September in Nigeria between the Sudanese government and the rebels have ended without agreement. The talks were said to reconvene in October. The rebels refused to sign an accord on greater access for aid agencies, saying the pro-government militias must disarm first (Sudan talks break up with no deal 2004). A UN resolution was passed on 18 September 2004, calling for Secretary General Kofi Annan to set up a commission to investigate whether the events in Darfur amount to genocide. The resolution also threatens measures against Sudan's oil industry if the government fails to fulfil its pledge of disarming pro-government militias. The Sudanese government has grudgingly accepted the conditions of the resolution, although it has labelled the threat of sanctions as "unfair" (Sudan grudgingly accepts UN vote 2004). To date, though the Sudanese government had responded to international pressure to end the violence by sending in thousands of extra police officers to Darfur, and calls have been made by African Union (AU) president Obasanjo for funding to enlarge the AU's mediation force in Darfur, people are still subject to attacks, which they blame on the Janjaweed (Sudan rebels hit outside Darfur 2004). A likely reason for this is that the Sudanese government has been, rather than disarming the Janjaweed militias, giving them uniforms and merging them with the security forces. This, the International Crisis Group, a campaigning charity, says, leaves them "free to operate as servants of the state by day and Janjaweed by night, to the double peril of civilians" (Crunch time in Darfur 2004).

Sudan's prospects for future peace and stability are by no means secure. The Darfur crisis, though perhaps moving somewhat more towards increased government adherence to international demands, nonetheless remains a humanitarian disaster and could easily escalate again, unless the situation is resolved satisfactorily. Chapter seven of the dissertation deals with some recommendations on the matter. In terms of the agreement signed to end the north-south conflict, it remains to be seen whether this is actually stable enough to hold. Though the Machakos Protocol on which it is based is the most promising peace initiative yet, the real challenges lie not only in resolving tangible and negotiable issues, such as power- and wealth sharing, but also intangible ones which are rooted in the more abstract and interpretative dynamics of history, psychology, culture, values and identity (Nantulya 2003: 8). The resolution of the conflict thus depends on whether and how the tangible and intangible factors can be reconciled. As already mentioned earlier, the Machakos Protocol makes provision for a six year period of autonomy for the south, to be followed by an internationally monitored referendum to determine whether or not the south wants to secede from Sudan. The protocol also stipulates that Sudan's Constitution is to be rewritten so as to ensure that *Sharia* law will not be applied to non-Muslim southerners (Europa World Year Book 2004: 3965). Autonomy for the south

means that the people of southern Sudan will have the right to participate fully in the political and economic governance of their region, as well as at the national level. The protocol also offers a solution that enhances social, political and economic justice, which respects the fundamental human and political rights of all the Sudanese people. There has been considerable criticism regarding the content of this protocol, however (Nantulya 2003: 11). The NIF appears to be determined to ensure that southerners do not vote for independence, “should referendum day ever dawn”. Paradoxically, however, the protocol rejects the one thing that would possibly make southerners want to remain a part of Sudan – a secular constitution. While *Sharia* is not to be applied to non-Muslim southerners, it will be applied to the at least five million non-Muslims who live in the northern part of Sudan (Muddying Machakos: the gap widens between interpretations of last month’s peace agreement 2002).

There are also other significant differences and difficulties that characterise the Machakos Protocol, of which a few key ones are discussed here. No definite agreement was reached on the crucial issue of separating the state from religion, which has remained unresolved for decades. The Machakos Protocol, in fact, is the result of concessions made by the SPLM/A and does not explicitly refer to this issue, though it does stipulate a number of other religious freedoms. Another area where the highly contentious issue of the separation of state and religion is present is in terms of the status of the national capital. In discussions the government maintained that Khartoum needs to be retained as the national capital and that it should remain Islamic. The SPLM/A, on the contrary, proposed that the national capital needs to be secular and accessible to all religions, in the spirit of the peace process. The question remains unresolved and shows just how far apart the parties still remain on the issue of religion and state. In terms of wealth sharing, the position of the Sudanese government is that land belongs to the state, whereas the SPLM/A insists that it belongs to the community and that each community must participate in the processes which will determine how the wealth of their land will be allocated. This has resulted in the government suspecting the SPLM/A of an attempt to undermine it, as most of the strategic resources are located in the south. This is where the issue of self-determination comes in. Again, the government suspects the SPLM/A of wanting to break-away from the rest of the country in order to deny the ruling elite control over natural resources, including oil. Also, up until the referendum for self-determination takes place, it is accepted that northern Sudan will retain its Islamic character, while the south will remain secular. While this appears to be a realistic compromise, it may be much more difficult to implement in practice. Related issues are those of what law is to be applied to

southerners living in the north and whether it is in fact feasible to create parallel legal systems for minorities living in the north and south respectively (Nantulya 2003: 10).

When it comes to power-sharing, significant differences also remain. These pertain to what role the SPLM/A will have as part of the executive and judicial arms of state, and what the composition of parliament should be in terms of the representation of the south and the north. Another crucial issue is that pertaining to Abyei, the Nuba Mountains and the Southern Blue Nile areas. Though these areas have been a part of the north since independence, they are ethnically and linguistically part of the south and have participated in successive southern-based liberation movements, including the SPLM/SPLA. In the October 2003 session of negotiations, representatives from the government of Sudan and the three areas presented position papers. The SPLM/A argued that during the six year interim period, the Nuba Mountains and Southern Blue Nile would be governed under SPLM/A control and accorded autonomy within a decentralised government of southern Sudan. Importantly, the regions would also, among other things, be awarded resources for reconstruction and rehabilitation to ensure that they were on the same developmental level as other regions, owing to their historical marginalisation. In terms of the region of Abyei, the SPLM/A insisted that this be returned to the southern province of Bahr el Ghazal, or, if this did not materialise, at least have the right to participate in the referendum in order to determine which part of Sudan it would be part of in future. The government denied all these requests and insisted that the areas were to remain part of northern Sudan, although it did make the concession of allowing them special resources in order to overcome their underdevelopment and neglect. This position has been rejected by the SPLM/A and thus the parties still remain divided. What is of particular interest in terms of these three areas is that they present a microcosm of the wider conflict of nationalist visions in Sudan. In fact, the feelings of nationalism, self-identification and cultural preservation are particularly strong here. Thus, these areas could either serve as cultural melting pots, where interaction and reconciliation between the different cultures could take place, or they could turn into places of violent conflict, in which those identities would continue to compete for self preservation. No definite agreements on these matters have as yet been reached, and what is also important to realise is that the parties are being guided by fundamentally opposed ideological and philosophical outlooks about how Sudanese society should be managed. Thus again, it needs to be reiterated that power-and wealth sharing are not the only issues to be addressed. It is crucial that core ideological, cultural and philosophical issues are dealt with as well, if peace in Sudan is to be lasting (Nantulya 2003: 11-13).

The dialogic model of interpretation is thus used in this chapter to attempt an open-minded, yet critical analysis of the ideology of Turabi as the chief ideologue of the NIF, as well as the ideas expounded in the Sudanese Constitution. In addition, structural (economic, political and social) factors are taken into account to, among other things, help explain the importance of Islam for Sudan's northern elite, and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Sudan. This information serves as an essential background for an analysis of the ideology of Turabi, which has influenced and continues to closely inform the current Sudanese government, (no ideology can be understood in isolation from the environment from which it has emanated). How this ideology has been applied to Sudan's political life is consequently discussed, within the context of structural factors. This chapter then aims at providing a deeper understanding of the ideology that informs the Sudanese government, while also taking into account additional structural factors in order to better understand the complexity of the situation in Sudan. The concluding chapter of this dissertation deals more specifically with the findings of this chapter and attempts to make recommendations for a way forward to resolve the conflict.

5.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FIVE

Sudan is characterised by the divide between the country's northern and southern parts, which has manifest itself in repetitive conflicts and disputes – both physical and intellectual. The persistent civil war has continued despite many peace agreements, as none thus far have managed to decisively address the inherent differences in belief structures between the Sudanese north and south. The Machakos Protocol which has led to the signing of the Naivasha agreement in 2004 appears a hopeful step in the right direction, though the signing was rushed into and many finer points remain unresolved. While the north-south conflict has now finally shown some signs of abating, another crisis has emerged: the humanitarian disaster in Darfur which will require substantial effort by the international community, the UN and the Sudanese actors involved if it is to be resolved conclusively.

The main ideological force behind the Sudanese ruling party the NIF has been Turabi who has advocated an ideology characterised by a combination of Islamic fundamentalist and Islamic modernist rhetoric. While religious and political life are not to be separated, Islamic texts are nonetheless to be reinterpreted so as to become relevant to modern life and developments. Along the same lines, technology and science should be embraced, not rejected. Such notions are also reflected in the Sudanese Constitution of 1998, which in theory should provide for a free and prosperous society. In practice, however, things have looked very different in

Sudan. The government has over the years been culpable of serious human rights violations and restrictions of personal liberties, very much in contrast to its professed ideology. It also has to be taken into account that all of this has happened in the context of a continuing civil war, which of course further has increased the suffering of the Sudanese people. If the situation in Sudan is to stabilise, it is important that far-reaching and long-term solutions be found to the massive political and economic problems that the country faces.