



Political Philosophy of Hassan al-Turabi and its National and Regional Implications

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Abstract:

Hasan al-Turabi was a well-known Sudanese politician, political thinker, intellectual and philosopher. He played a significant role in modern Sudanese politics, advocating for the Islamization of the country and establishing a democratic government to address its challenges. He made controversial decisions during his political career, the outcomes of which regarding his goals and their broader impacts are still debated. While his Islamic movement inspired others outside Sudan, its internal complexities and the specific context of Sudan made a straightforward interpretation of "bringing people from darkness towards liberty" difficult. Additionally, his promotion of "Unity and Jihad towards Muslims as Uma" requires careful consideration within the historical and theological context of the term. This research employs a descriptive and analytical approach, utilizing secondary sources to analyze and discover al-Turabi's political and philosophical roles, both within Sudan and on global scale. Its main aim is to explore and analyze the influence and implications of his political philosophy on Sudanese society, as well as its potential impact on other countries' political systems, cultures, and societies etc.

Keywords: Hassan Turabi, Sudan, political philosophy, Islamization, political implications, democracy

INTRODUCTION

Hasan al-Turabi, a charismatic and influential personality, possessed remarkable leadership and persuasion skills. Widely recognized as one of the most influential figures in modern Sudanese

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history, he was born in 1932 to a devout Sunni family in Kassala, city of Eastern Sudan. While his family lineage is traced back to Sufi scholars, al-Turabi charted a different route, departing from his father's traditional Islamic education. He pursued religious instruction at a Quranic School and modern education at Handout High School ('Sudan: Hassan al-Turabi's life and politics,' 2019). After completing his graduation in law from the University of Khartoum in 1955, al-Turabi earned a master's degree from Oxford in 1957 and a PhD from the Sorbonne University in Paris in 1964. Upon finishing his doctorate, he embarked on a teaching career at University of Khartoum's Law Department (El-Affendi, 2015; Saeed, 2016). Turabi, a prominent modern Islamic philosopher born in Sudan, completed his studies in Western countries like England and France. He was influenced by Western concept of liberty and freedom, seeking to synthesize them with Islamic principles. However, he rejected what he considered western impudence and resisted undue Western influence on Islam. He wanted to establish a modern democratic Islamic government in Sudan, dedicating his entire life to efforts for this cause. He envisioned a system where public and private lives were guided by Sharia law but opposed a purely secular state. Drawing a contrast to the historical dominance of the Church in the medieval West, al-Turabi argued that mosques should not directly govern public life. Instead, he believed individuals should adhere to Sharia to regulate their daily routine. Turabi played a significant revolutionary role in politics of Sudan, theoretically and practically promoting Islam, Islamic values, and culture within Sudan and regionally. His tenure as Attorney General under President Jaafar Nimeiri in 1983 marked a critical juncture in Sudan's history, marked by the attempted implementation of his Islamic vision.

Hassan Turabi dedicated his life to implement democracy and Islam in Sudan. His decisions often sparked controversy, including his opposition to dictatorship and his role in the 1965 removal of military dictator Ibrahim Abboud through mass mobilization. However, his stance shifted. In 1989, he supported the military coup led by Omar Hassan al Bashir, aiming to establish an Islamic government guided by Sharia alongside democratic and economic reforms. He desired a liberal, modern Islamic democratic state for Sudan. Turabi also advocated for women's rights and participation in society and politics (Saeed, 2016). Turabi dedicated his life to education and development in Sudan, advocating for young men and women. The Sudanese youth found inspiration in his modernistic ideas, which aimed to cultivate a spirit of learning and progress. He encouraged them to pursue higher education and strive for a better future. Turabi was particularly vocal in promoting women's rights and participation in society, politics and the Islamic movement within Sudan. He challenged conservative interpretations of Sharia that restricted women's roles, contributing to increased female engagement in various sectors. Women currently hold 10% of the seats in Sudan's National Assembly. Turabi's contributions to Islamization and individual development focused on social and political reforms within Sudan. He advocated for a Pan-Islamic movement to unite Muslims globally, transcending national boundaries. This approach received recognition from various Islamic Movements in the region, including Tunisia's Ennahda Movement led by Rashid al-Ghannoushi, who admired Turabi's Pan-Islamic ideas and his advocacy for women's freedom, universal Shura, arts, sciences, and sports (Gizouli, 2016). However, Turabi's influence sparked opposition from Western powers and surrounding military regimes due to his vocal support for Islamization and democracy in Sudan. He faced significant challenges, including imprisonment, but remained committed to his vision ('Sudan: Hassan al-Turabi's life and politics,' 2019; 'Hassan Abdullah al-Turabi,' n. d.). This paper focuses on Hassan Turabi, a prominent

Sudanese figure who combined Islamic philosophy with political leadership. The research explores the main philosophical ideas of Hasan Turabi and their impacts on the political and social aspects of Sudan and the other countries of the region. The research delves into Turabi's core philosophical tenets, his political struggle to achieve Islamization and modernization in Sudan, and his aspirations for Muslim unity under a single "Uma."

LITERATURE REVIEW

Edy Chandra's research paper 'Al-Turabi's Thought on Islamic State' explores the foundational principles of an Islamic state outlined by Turabi. These include rejecting secularism, nationalism, absolutism and viewing the state as a secondary concept. Chandra (n. d.) also notes that Islamic norms are partially legal and Sharia implementation depends on individual conscience. While Chandra discusses these ideas, further analysis of their philosophical implications might be beneficial. W. J. Berridge's book "Hasan al Turabi' Islamist Politics and Democracy in Sudan" offers a comprehensive look at Hasan Turabi's life, including his education, political struggles, philosophical and political ideas, and his legacy in the post-Islamist and fundamentalist context (2020). He analyses various aspects of Turabi's life, including his role, actions, and opposing perspectives. The author analyses the influence of western thought on Hasan al-Turabi's Islamic beliefs. He clarifies Turabi's concept of Sharia, pointing out how, in his book "Al Imam," Turabi presents Sharia as a universal solution to global problems. The author highlights Turabi's emphasis on the divine and equitable nature of Sharia, contrasting it with systems based on class oppression. Further, the author notes Turabi's claim of equal rights for minorities while acknowledging the imposition of Sharia laws in Northern Sudan, with exemptions for South Sudan's Christian population. The analysis also explores Turabi's concept of "Shura democracy," drawing parallels to the election of the first four caliphs. His opposition to hereditary rule and advocacy for electing leaders based on piety are also discussed. However, the author suggests that the analysis needs a more detailed exploration of the implications of Turabi's philosophy on Islamic society and the wider region.

In an interview with Al Jazeera, he talked about his Islamic state, which is not based on any ethnic or nationalistic foundation but is open to all people alike. He opposed elections on a party basis, criticized the dictatorial role of confident Muslim leaders, and called it a legacy of imperial rule, farther from Islamic teachings.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive analytical approach has been used to conduct this research. The data for this study has been collected from various secondary sources, which include newspapers, research articles, books, journal and magazines articles, internet sources and interviews etc. All these sources deal with the historical background of the political struggle of Hasan al Turabi and his political movement, his role in Sudan's political history, and the regional and international implications of his political philosophy.

HASSAN AL-TURABI: POLITICAL STRUGGLE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Hassan al-Turabi joined the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood's student wing in the early 1950s. In 1951, he formed the "Islamic Liberation Movement" with students at Khartoum University, Opposing the Soviet-backed "Sudanese Liberation Movement" and communist influence in Sudan

("Sudan: Hassan al-Turabi's life and politics," 2019). After completing his PhD in Law in France 1964, he returned to Khartoum University as a lecturer and Dean of the Law department. He engaged students with his ideas on equality, liberty, and fraternity, seeking to merge traditional Islamic thought with modern western concepts. However, he advocated banning beliefs that contradicted Islamic identity.

During the political instability in Sudan, with the lack of a constitution and military leadership under General Ibrahim Abboud, public unrest grew in favor of a democratic government.⁴ In response, the Law Association organized a high-level conference at Khartoum University. At this conference, Hasan al-Turabi argued against military intervention in Southern Sudan, emphasizing that it was a constitutional, social, and political matter, not solely a security or military concern. He further advocated for the military to step down from the power. Throughout his career, he consistently advocated for and encouraged democracy and citizen participation in decision-making.

In October 1964, al-Turabi mobilized students and participated in the revolution against the military regime of Ibrahim Abboud. Following the death of a student, Al-Korachi, the movement gained momentum and attracted broader support from various political and social groups. Ultimately, the revolution succeeded and the Abboud government stepped down. This event established Hasan Al Turabi as a prominent political leader and scholar, gaining significant popular support for his involvement in the movement (El-Affendi, 2015; Encyclopaedia Britannica, n. d.; Schwedler, 2003). He firmly believed in the people's power and demonstrated his ability to mobilize them. Throughout his career, he consistently advocated for and encouraged democracy and citizen participation in decision-making.

Following the fall of Ibrahim Abboud's government in 1964, Hassan al-Turabi transitioned from academia to focus on politics and reform in Sudan ("Sudan: Hassan al-Turabi's life and politics," 2019). He established his political party, the 'Islamic Charter Front' (El-Affendi, 2015; Encyclopaedia Britannica, n. d.; Schwedler, 2003). Gathering support from various segments of society, he advocated for basing the country's charter and constitution on Islamic principles. By the mid-1960s, he had emerged as a popular figure in Sudanese Politics. In 1965, his political party contested in general elections, receiving approximately 7,191 votes ("Sudan: Hassan al-Turabi's life and politics," 2019), securing his first term in the national legislature (1965–67). As head of the parliamentary committee tasked with drafting a constitution, he aimed to unify different factions around an Islamic Constitution. He sought to abolish the Communist Party through political coalitions and mobilization. Al-Turabi campaigned against the Communist Party, portraying it as opposed to democracy and Islamic values. This, along with concerns over its perceived atheism, contributed to the party's eventual banishment from the parliament.

In 1969, the Communist Party regained influence and supported a military coup against the government led by Jaffar Nimeiri, which included the Islamic Charter Front. Nimeiri secured support from the Communist Party and Arab nationalists, ultimately imprisoning Hasan al-Turabi

⁴ Ibrahim Abu Dauood was a Sudanese Political figure born in 1900 in Sudan, served in World War-II, and after independence, served as a Head of State between 1958-64.

and other leaders of the Front. During his 7 years, imprisonment, Turabi wrote extensively and stayed connected with his Party and supporters. By 1970, he had transformed his party from the Islamic Charter Front to National Islamic Front, now a coalition encompassing the Umma Party, Democratic Unionist Party, and the Muslim Brotherhood. Over the following years, this coalition served as a key opposition force to the Nimeiri Government. The revolution was about to be staged (El-Affendi, 2015; Encyclopaedia Britannica, n. d.; Schwedler, 2003). Communist forces aimed to seize power from Nimeiri in a planned 1971 coup. However, Nimeiri discovered the plot and executed the movement's leaders, effectively dismantling the previously powerful Communist party of Sudan. Meanwhile, Hassan Turabi and his party members were released from Kober jail in 1973. Turabi was placed under house arrest at Nimeiri's residence ("Sudan: Hassan al-Turabi's life and politics," 2019). He used this opportunity to plan the overthrow of Nimeiri Government, launching four unsuccessful attempts. On August 21, 1973, he instigated an uprising that lasted a year before failing. Previously, Nimeiri had aligned himself with both communists and Arab nationalists. Now, seeking broader support, he turned to Hassan Turabi and other Islamic groups. As a strategic move, he introduced the implementation of Islamic laws. After four consecutive unsuccessful coup attempts, Turabi reconciles with the Nimeiri government and joined his political party, the "Socialist Political Union," along with his allies. Shifting his strategy, he penetrated the regime from within (El-Affendi, 2015; Encyclopaedia Britannica, n. d.; Schwedler, 2003). Turabi made an alliance with the military dictator merely to implement Islamic sharia in the country. Nimeiri, recognizing Turabi's influence and the of his Islamic Charter Front, appointed him as an Attorney General in 1979 and tasked him with leading a commission to review and align Sudanese laws with Sharia principles ("Profile: Hassan al-Turabi," 2012).

During his tenure as Attorney General in the Nimeiri government, Hassan al-Turabi saw an opportunity to mobilize various segments of society to his cause. He and his allied harbored ambitious to gain complete control within the next decade. Driven to serve the nations, they envisioned implementing new economic policies, investing in youth and students, activating Sufi orders, and uniting various tribes and individuals behind their plans. Their strategy involved successful infiltration of the military and government. As a first step, Turabi established an Islamic economic policy, culminating in the founding of Sudan's first Islamic bank, Faisal Bank (El-Affendi, 2015; Encyclopaedia Britannica, n. d.; Schwedler, 2003).

As a member of the Islamic Law Commission, Hassan al-Turabi initiated new laws based on Islamic principles, such as alcohol prohibition. He also championed significant changes in laws related to women's rights, making him a "great supporter of women's liberation". He advocated for women's right to work, equal pay and maternity leave, even publishing a book titled 'Women in Islam' in the 1970s. Furthermore, he encouraged women's participation in the Islamic Movement. However, this progressive stance drew strong opposition from conservative Sudanese traditionalists and even some within his party. Moreover, he also introduced the controversial apostasy charge into Sudan's criminal code, leading to punishments based on Islamic interpretations, including amputation for theft and execution for apostasy and atheism. These harsh penalties drew international attention and criticism. Beyond legal reforms, al-Turabi was an Islamic thinker who promoted unity and renewal within Muslim communities. He advocated for an Islamic government system and structure, profoundly influencing the thinking of young Sudanese who admired his logical and

practical approach (“Sudan: Hassan al-Turabi’s life and politics,” 2019).

In 1983, just four months before the controversial “September laws” were declared, Nimeiri dismissed Turabi as head of the Islamic Law Commission. These new laws, based on Islamic principles, had been proposed by Turabi. However, Nimeiri prevented him from playing any role in formulating the final draft, fearing public appreciation and influence of Turabi due to the Sharia implementation (“Profile: Hassan al-Turabi,” 2012). Some speculate that he was jealous of Turabi’s growing popularity and saw him as a threat to his government. Moreover, Western nations warned Nimeiri of the potential consequences of implementing Islamic law. In response, Nimeiri and his allies decided to crack down on the Islamic Movement, planning to execute Hassan Turabi and other leaders. Turabi was arrested again, and anti-government protests erupted due to rising prices and harsh economic conditions. Despite this, Turabi’s popularity peaked in 1983 due to the country’s Islamization. However, the nationwide implementation of Sharia became a significant factor in the long-running war with the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), which lasted until 2005 (“Sudan: Hassan al-Turabi’s life and politics,” 2019).

In 1985, the transnational military council eroded the Nimeiri government mainly due to ruthless policies in Southern Sudan (“Profile: Hassan al-Turabi,” 2012). In 1986, the general elections were held to restore civilian rule in which Hassan al-Turabi’s National Islamic Front (“Sudan Islamist opposition leader,” 2016) won 51 seats and established their government in coalition (“Profile: Hassan al-Turabi,” 2012) with Unionist and Umma party won 99 seats out of 301 of total parliament seats. Sadiq al Mahdi became the Prime Minister of Sudan. Hassan al-Turabi served as Foreign Minister in the Mahdi Government (1988-1989) (“Sudan: Hassan al-Turabi’s life and politics,” 2019). The next three years of the civilian government were politically unstable, with weak leadership and many useless efforts to sign an agreement with the SPLA of southern Sudan (“Sudan Islamist opposition leader,” 2016). The military was not fully satisfied with the government’s performance, as the fuel price rose, and there were street protests, etc. Moreover, the opposition parties intended to stage a military coup over the Sadiq ul-Mahdi government (“Sudan: Hassan al-Turabi’s life and politics,” 2019). As a result, on June 30th, 1989, Lieut. General Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir seized power in a military coup, establishing himself as the leader of Sudan. He remained in power until 1993, heading the Revolutionary Command Council for National Salvation (RCC), which governed the country. The RCC had close affiliation with Hassan Turabi and his National Islamic Front party and many considered it Turabi’s tool for wielding influence. Many believed that Bashir’s military coup has Turabi’s consent. Hassan Turabi, known as the first Sudanese democratic leader to stage a military coup, aimed to implement Sharia law in the country. However, he also faced challenges from Western powers. It is argued that by establishing a military government, Turabi hoped to advance his Islamic agenda while concealing it from the West (“Profile: Hassan al-Turabi,” 2012; Hassan al-Turabi, Sudan opposition leader,” 2016).

Despite the public perception that the military ousted the National Islamic Front (NIF) government due to its Islamist policies, the real power rested Hassan Turabi. He held significant influence, making and removing cabinet appointments. Publicly, however, Turabi repeatedly claimed that the military opposed implementation of Islam and had ousted the National Islamic Front government. The public readily accepted this narrative, especially after Turabi and his associates were imprisoned. Notably, he established a hidden private office from within jail and continued to exert

influence. While he and his party members desired a return to power, their public pronouncements were merely propaganda to manipulate public opinion.

Some argue that Turabi and his political party tolerated military rule to ensure Sudan's survival and autonomy in the face of opposition from major powers. The US, Britain and Egypt allegedly feared the implications of an Islamic government in Sudan for their interests and systems. This suspicion materialized when Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak visited Sudan shortly after the coup. During his visit, Mubarak questioned then-leader Ummar Hassan al-Bashir, revealing his doubts about Sudan's commitment to Islamization. Despite these concerns, Mubarak recognized the new military regime ("Profile: Hassan al-Turabi," 2012). He subsequently contacted Saddam Hussein and the Saudi leadership, urging them to provide aid to Sudan. Iraq and Saudi Arabia responded by supplying Sudan with free oil ("Sudan: Hassan al-Turabi's life and politics," 2019).

In 1993, general elections were held to restore civilian rule, and Turabi's National Islamic Front won power. Bashir became President, serving until 1996. He was re-elected in 2000 and 2010 ("Sudan Islamist opposition leader," 2016). However, in 1999, differences arose between Turabi and Bashir. As a result, Bashir dissolved the parliament and declared a state of emergency. These political conflicts led to split in the National Islamic Front, forming two new parties: Bashir's National Congress Party and Turabi's Popular Congress Party (Gizouli, 2016; "Influential Sudanese opposition leader Turabi dies," 2016). Turabi was subsequently imprisoned on multiple occasions ("Influential Sudanese opposition leader Turabi dies," 2016).

Political resentments between Turabi and Omar al Bashir⁵ had fueled the dissolution of the parliament and the brief rise to power of Marshal Siwar Al-Dahab⁶ ("Sudan: Hassan al-Turabi's life and politics," 2019). Turabi was later released and remained influential, primarily operating from his house in Khartoum home. He served as the National Assembly's speaker from 1996 to 1999 ("Profile: Hassan al-Turabi," 2012).

After losing his prominent position, Turabi formed the Popular Congress Party and remained active in opposition for fifteen years. However, he failed to achieve significant political change under al-Bashir's dictatorial rule. He then sought alliances with other parties and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the South Sudan People's Liberation Army. In 2001, Hasan al-Turabi, with the help of his student Ali Osman Taha, played a crucial role in negotiating a peace agreement with SPLA leader John Garang, ending the war with South Sudan (Gizouli, 2016). Despite his contribution, Turabi faced imprisonment: first in 2001, then again in the same year on coup charges. He was finally released mid-2005 (El-Affendi, 2015; "Muslim brotherhood," 1998; Schwedler, 2003).

Under Omar al-Bashir, the National Congress Party distanced itself from the radicalism of Turabi's National Islamic Front. The party even cooperated with the U.S. on the War on Terror after 9/11 and allowed secession of South Sudan in 2011. This alienated many of al-Turabi's followers, who

⁵ Omar Hasan Ahmad al Bashir born in January 1944 was a military officer and political figure who was brought to power because of a Military coup in 1989, framed by Hasan al Turabi.

⁶ Marshall Siwar Eddahab was the president of Sudan from April 6th, 1985 to May 6th, 1986. In 1985, he staged a military coup on the democratic government of Gaffar Numeri.

sided with al-Bashir, creating a bitter rift between them. While Sudan's cooperation with the U.S. grew, the Darfur Conflict⁷ hampered relations with the West. Despite a brutal counter insurgency campaign, Omar al Bashir's government failed to defeat the rebellion group in Darfur (Gizouli, 2016).

Turabi fiercely criticized al-Bashir's regime for worsening the Darfur Conflict and neglecting its victims. In a public address, he accused al-Bashir of killings and displacements in Darfur, demanding his trail at the International Criminal Court. This led to Turabi's imprisonment again. He faced accusations of links to the Justice and Equality Movement, a Darfur rebel group, but denied them. He also tried to organize another movement against Omar al Bashir, but his past experiences with military regimes hindered his ability to garner trust from other parties ("Profile: Hassan al-Turabi," 2012).

In 1999, vast oil discoveries in South Sudan initially promised prosperity for its people, improving their living standards and access to clean water and electricity. However, exploitation of these resources primarily benefitted Northern Sudan, fueling rebellions in both the South and Darfur. The government's brutal response to these uprisings, including accusations of genocide in Darfur by the International Criminal Court, drew international pressure. In 2011, a referendum led to South Sudan's secession, leaving the northern deprived of significant oil reserves and facing economic turmoil, including high inflation that triggered protests against Bashir's regime ("Arab Spring returns to Sudan," 2019).

In 2012, during the peak of the Arab Spring, Turabi faced accusations of coup plotting. However, leaked documents prevented the plan's execution ("Turabi sees imminent Arab Spring," 2012). Though he passed away on 5 March 2016, his influence on Sudanese politics persists ("Profile: Hassan al-Turabi," 2012). While Western views diverged, his legacy inspires his followers in Sudan (El-Affendi, 2015; "Muslim brotherhood," 1998; Schwedler, 2003). Fueled by renewed Arab spring protests in December 2019, Sudanese citizens demanded a transition from military rule to civilian governance. The Transitional Military Council (TMC) ousted Omar al-Bashir's thirty-year regime after lengthy rule. General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan led the coup and then assumed the presidency ("Sudan: The last domino stood up," 2021).

Turabi's Regional Influence and Challenges

As an Islamic scholar and a great political leader of Sudan, Turabi was widespread across the border throughout the regions. Other Muslims countries' political leaders and rulers were inspired by his political Islamic philosophy and his political revolutionary ideas (Saeed, 2016). In 2011, Richard Ghannouchi, leader of the Tunisian Ennahda party, visited Sudan to attend a Jerusalem conference and met with Turabi. He was inspired by Turabi's Islamic movement in Sudan and his immense struggle to implement Islamic laws. Turabi was a role model for him. He was impressed by the discipline and management that Turabi's political party and Islamic movement always

⁷ Darfur Region is located in Western part of Sudan. This conflict was started in 2003 when rebels in Darfur attempted to occupy the government. The grievances were related to ignorance of government for non-Arabs and the western region.

maintained. Turabi's support for women's rights and encouragement for women's participation in an Islamic movement greatly inspired him (Gizouli, 2016). Ghannouchi requested the Sudanese government to release Turabi from jail⁸, as it is un-Islamic to keep him in jail without any charges and in his old age ("Tunisian Islamist leader meets," 2011). Turabi desired to establish an Islamic ummah and to unite the world's Muslims (Gheorghe, 2019).

Turabi maintained relationships with overseas Islamic organizations, but his efforts to internationalize the National Islamic Front's Islamist movement faced complications. He gained international attention for attempting to unite resources from fundamentalist groups across the Islamic world and challenge the Muslim Brotherhood's dominance as the sole international voice of political Islam. This approach manifested in the formation of the Popular Arab and Islamic Congress, which invited eminent figures like Osama bin Laden (head of Al Qaeda), Yasir Arafat (leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organization), and Rached Ghannouchi (a leader from Tunisia) to Sudan. His goal was transforming Sudan into a center for Islamic learning and leadership.

He ventured to the U.S. congress to present his message to the West. Upon his return, he was attacked at the Ottawa airport by a South Sudanese rebel leader en-route to Canada. Further controversy arose when, after his return, he invited Osama bin Laden's company to work on a construction project. Bin Laden resided and operated businesses in Sudan from 1991 to 1996 before his expulsion at the behest of the U.S. and Saudi Arabia.

In 1995, the President of Egypt Hosni Mubarak faced an assassination attempt allegedly linked to a radical group in Khartoum, though these claims remain proved. In response, the UN imposed sanctions on Sudan, and the U.S. added it to its state sponsors of terrorism list in 1993.

Later, in 1998, the Bill Clinton administration bombed a pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum, citing accusations of chemical weapons production by al-Qaeda (Gizouli, 2016; "Arab Spring returns to Sudan," 2019). Turabi believed the US bombings in Kenya and Tanzania stemmed from a logic labeling those resisting powerful entities as "Terrorists." At the same time, similar figures opposing other powers might be called "freedom fighters" and "revolutionaries." He advocated for and held strong beliefs in Jihad ("Hassan al-Turabi, Sudan opposition leader," 2016). Despite his advocacy for Jihad, Turabi's liberal democratic ideas rooted in Islamic principles inspired more pragmatic and pro-democratic Islamist movements in Tunisia, Turkey, and Malaysia, and others (El-Affendi, 2015; Schwedler, 2003).

Role in Sudanese Politics

Al-Turabi, a prominent Sudanese philosopher and leader, played a complex role in the country's political history. He advocated for democratic reforms and Islamic values, contributing to the overthrow of the conservative military regime in 1964. Joining the Sudan's Muslim Brotherhood branch of Islamic Charter Front, Turabi actively supported the nonviolent revolution that toppled the dictatorship ("Sudan Islamist opposition leader," 2016). In subsequent years, he gained influence in Sudanese politics (El-Affendi, 2015; Schwedler, 2003). However, his views on

⁸ Turabi after its political difference with Omer Bashir and separation of National Islamic Front into two political parties remained mostly in jail.

liberalizing political and social spheres led to a split within his own party, with the conservative wing forming a separate Muslim Brotherhood branch.

Turabi played a key role in introducing and implementing aspects of Islamic Sharia in the country. Despite leading a smaller Parliamentary party, he fostered agreement for a Sharia-based constitution, that was opposed by secularists. He brought Islamic reforms in politics and society, including increased rights of women and democratic principles (“Sudan Islamist opposition leader,” 2016). However, some of his proposed liberal reforms regarding women’s role faced criticism from conservative religious factions.

While serving under the military government of Nimeiri, Turabi initiated the implementation of some aspects of Islamic law. However, full implementation was hindered by the military coup led by Bashir ul Hassan and later pressure from the West (“Hassan al-Turabi, Sudan opposition leader,” 2016).

He also played an influential role in the 1965 roundtable conference aimed at resolving the South Sudan conflict. He dedicated his life to establishing a democratic Islamic system and promoting Islamization in Sudan, though his efforts were often overshadowed by Western influence and power (“Arab Spring returns to Sudan,” 2019). Turabi envisioned uniting the entire Islamic Ummah but faced challenges from both the West and internal Sudanese politics. He also sought to secure the future of Islamist leaders by advocating for their inclusion in society. Although his legacy remains controversial, Turabi received international recognition as a great Islamic scholar and leader who pursued the implementation of Islamic Sharia in Sudan, albeit with diverse views on issues like jihad, women freedom etc., (El-Affendi, 2015; Schwedler, 2003; Saeed, 2016). Turabi played a pioneering role in introducing Islamic elements to Sudan’s economic and trade systems, including establishing the Al Faisal Islamic banking system. He drew inspiration for these from the economic principles ascribed to Prophet Muhammad S.A.W (Peace be Upon Him). However, his approach, blending economic liberalization and social control, reflected broader trends in the Middle East and Africa. While aiming to financially empower both young and elderly citizens, Turabi’s system faced criticism for unequal resource distribution, particularly favoring allies at the expense of Southern Part of Sudan. Additionally, his implementation of Islamic law, including Islamic punishments like amputations and flogging, sparked controversy. Turabi advocated for a modern welfare state concept, arguing that the state’s responsibility extends beyond security to include fulfilling citizens’ basic needs (Paracha, 2013).

Political Philosophy of Hassan al Turabi

Hasan al-Turabi envisioned a modern, democratic state in Sudan rooted in Islamic principles, drawing inspiration from western ideas of liberty and freedom. He advocated for a state where both public and private life adhered to Islamic principles but emphasized it wouldn’t be a theocracy ruled by Mullahs. Instead, it would be governed by representatives chosen by the people. He strongly opposed secularism, arguing that an Islamic state could not be inherently secular. He believed Islam encompassed all aspects of life, not just religion practice (“Hassan Abdullah al-Turabi,” n. d.). Turabi envisioned a Muslim state on Islamic principles, yet distinct from theocratic models dominated by religious leaders. He emphasized that for the people who believe in Allah should recognize Allah as the ultimate power. He envisioned a Muslim state free from ethnic and

nationalistic divisions, solely based on the principles of humanity. He argued that nationalism and ethnicity create barriers, leading people to treat others as enemies. This ideal Islamic state, often referred to as an “Ummah”, would guarantee equal rights for all citizens (Gheorghe, 2019). He advocated for a democratic system established through fair, impartial elections free from sectarianism and corruption (“Hassan Abdullah al-Turabi,” n. d.). Turabi criticized the rule of dictators and their roles in the Muslim World, viewing them as remnants of the imperial history contradicting Islamic principles. He argued that Islam does not endorse authoritarian rule; instead, it emphasizes that any leader in power submits their authority to Allah, meaning they are not absolute sovereigns. He believed an Islamic state should implement Sharia law, representing Allah’s will and serving as the supreme law, preventing totalitarian tendencies. Rulers should not wield absolute power but surrender their will Allah’s (Hassan, & Buaben,, 2015). Turabi saw Sharia as divine law, not a tool for oppression devised by any social class. He considered it a set of universal principles promoting equality for all and a potential solution to global challenges. He emphasized the importance of crafting laws through careful consultation (Ijtihad) to adapt Islamic principles to the modern world. In a 1967 lecture at the University of Khartoum, Hasan al-Turabi addressed interpretations Sharia that focus primarily on penal aspects like the Hadd punishments. While acknowledging the existence of such penalties for specific offenses, he emphasized that their application should be considered within a broader social context. At a 1987 NIF conference, Turabi raised concerns about the potential for individual freedom, suggesting it could prioritize personal desires over broader societal considerations. He further questioned the lack of a specific religious foundations for concepts like human rights, potentially leading to subjective interpretations. However, he strongly advocated for the rights and freedoms of non-Muslims within a Muslim state. In a 1967 lecture, he emphasizes that non-Muslims should enjoy the freedom of faith and practices like eating pork and drinking alcohol, as long as they don’t infringe on others’ rights (Berridge, 2020). This stance stemmed from his belief in protecting minority rights as a tradition in Islamic history. He cited the Prophet Muhammad’s establishment of the State of Medina, which granted religious freedom and legal protections to non- Muslims communities.

He advocated for granting non-Muslims in an Islamic state the right to laws based on their culture and beliefs. He praised Islam as the only religion, in his view, that guarantees rights to minorities, contrasting it with other religions that impose their laws on minorities (Gheorghe, 2019). Reflecting this stance, Hasan al-Turabi’s 1988 draft of Islami and criminal laws, and the subsequent penal code of 1991, aimed to implement Sharia-based punishments for different crimes. While these punishments were wholly implemented in Northern Sudan, despite its religious minorities, the Southern region with a Christian majority was exempted from Hadd penalties.

However, in September 1983, despite ongoing legal reforms under Sharia, non-Muslims in Khartoum were subjected to Sharia punishments for public alcohol consumption. Interestingly, private alcohol consumption and extramarital sex among non-Muslims were not included under these punishments (Berridge, 2020).

He strongly advocated for establishing Shura (consultation) as a pillar of an Islamic state for formulating Islamic laws. He viewed Shura as an integral part of Islamic tradition, citing its practice by the four Caliphs. He gave his philosophical foundations for Shura in his book ‘Al Shura wal Demokratiya’ which was published in 1987. He argued that in an Islamic state, leaders should be

chosen through Shura consultations, similar to the selection of the first Caliph Abu Bakr after Prophet Muhammad's passing. He was selected after a comprehensive discussion among the prominent members of the community. Similarly, Hazrat Umar R.A and Hazrat Usman were also selected on this basis. He also opposed hereditary rule, calling it a historical legacy of both Muslim imperial rulers that undermined the full implementation of Shura (Moussalli 1994, 54-61).

Turabi criticized western democracy, party politics and totalitarian form of governments, arguing that imposing them universally contradicts democratic principles (Hassan, & Buaben, 2015). Instead, he favored a democratic Islamic government based on consensus for decision-making, laws, and appointments. He proposed an Islamic state structure with four organs: executive, legislature, Judiciary and Shura. The 'Ameer,' elected for virtue and positivity, would head the state and implement laws. An active executive would run the government, with the legislature drafted Sharia-compliant laws. Both legislature and Judiciary would ensure laws align with Islamic principles and community needs. Turabi viewed religion as inseparable part from politics, advocating a government based on the principles of Touheed, freedom, equality, and believer unity. He believed the implementation of Sharia could prevent power and hierarchical as succession as sources of political legitimacy (Hassan, & Buaben, 2015).

He argued that an Islamic state's economic system should be established on both free trade and socialist principles. While advocating for a strong public sector to oversee the economy, he emphasizes that ownership of the means of production should not be so extensive as to undermine social justice through the empowerment of a bureaucratic elite. He favored a mixed economy with both private and public ownership, believing it will bring prosperity to society. He emphasized that ultimately, it is Allah who grants profit solely to one's efforts constitutes shirk, or the association of partners with Allah.

During his time as Attorney General under the Nimeiri government, Turabi implemented his economic strategy, prioritizing development and youth initiatives. He initiated the Islamization of the economy, establishing the Islamic Faisal Bank ("Sudan: Hassan al-Turabi's life and politics," 2019). Seeking economic independence, he cut off Sudan's relations with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, imposing policies aimed at trade and currency liberalization. However, these policies shifted the focus from state-funded health and education towards promoting Islamic charities and asset sales to government allies. These policies intensified the process of extracting natural resources from South Sudan, initially boosting Sudan's economy through oil revenue. Despite restructuring and neo-liberalization, historical inequalities persisted, as resources from one part of Sudan fueled another, contributing to conflict and deeper integration into the global economic order (Kodouda, 2017).

He advocated for the unity of both Muslim states and African states. He viewed the European Union as a symbol of Western unity and proposed a similar model for Muslims states, envisioning an inclusive form of government. He argued that African countries, facing poverty, require unity for development and support. He suggested establishing a common market and diminishing the colonial-drawn that divided them (Hassan, & Buaben,, 2015).

Turabi held progressive ideas on women's rights within Sharia law, emphasizing Islam's principles of equality and prohibiting discrimination (Naib, 2010). He argued that Islam prescribes similar

regulations, duties, prayers, and social conduct for both genders, promoting societal welfare and eliminating distinctions. Thus, Turabi strongly advocated for equal expression and participation for women, free from gender-based discrimination ("Women in Islam and Muslim society," 1991; Naib, 2010). He was in favor of female liberty and their participation in the politics. Therefore, he engaged women members in his Muslim Brotherhood party despite its male majority, aiming to liberate them from cultural and social constraints. Notably, Sudan's parliament now includes ten percent female representation, partly due to his efforts. He also allowed women to move freely in the country and could attend mosques and fully participate in the Social and political life (Naib, 2010).

Turabi advocated for women's property rights, arguing that exploiting women shows weak faith of a man. He believed dress codes stemmed from morality, not legal mandates. Though Islam promotes modest dressing, he stressed universal principles over legal specifics, advocating for full freedom of dress code for female within the bounds of modesty. He allowed women to choose their attire, emphasizing modesty as personal choice. He also criticized France for banning Hijab, calling it an infringement on personal freedom ("Women in Islam and Muslim society," 1991; Naib, 2010). Turabi played a key role in advocating for women's rights through his book "Women in Islam and Muslim Society." He highlighted the challenges faced by women in the current Muslim world, including underrepresentation in politics and exploitation within families and society. He encouraged the concept of women as an independent entities, directly accountable to Allah for their actions, citing Quranic verses like Surah Maryam 96 as evidence 'when women reach the age of puberty, she has full freedom to accept or reject the message of Islam and she cannot be forced to accept Islam. She is personally responsible for all her acts directly to God and she will be asked about her actions on the day of Judgment as Allah says in the Quran; "For, on the Day of Judgment, every one of them will come to Him singly" (Maryam, 96) ("Women in Islam and Muslim society," 1991; Naib, 2010). He got very popular among the women of Sudan who were struggling for education, social and political participation, and survival in a restrictive society. He brought them out from that darkness (Gizouli, 2016).

Turabi championed education for Muslims, viewing it as necessary to combat the modern political, economic, and social challenges. He urged Muslims to engage in contemporary power struggles, politics, and business, rejecting isolation from the modern world. Maintaining piety while participating, he argued, was a religious duty for Muslims. His perspective resonated with young Sudanese seeking to live their lives according to Islamic principles reconciling with modernity. Hasan al-Turabi promoted equality within his Islamic movement, calling it a collective endeavor without hierarchical leadership. He offered equality and brotherhood/sisterhood to all members, emphasizing the importance of faith in bridging historical divides among the people. However, the Islamic movement's foundation of harmony and tolerance did not survive later conflicts, which saw it waging wars against others, hindering its revival (Gizouli, 2016).

Turabi opposed party-based elections, claiming they represented power struggles between different groups with minimal ideological differences. He argued that public support for parties shifts over time, aligning with broader trends rather than specific party platforms (Hassan, & Buaben, 2015 2000).

Implications of al-Turabi's Thought

- Turabi was the first leader of Sudan who provided democracy, liberty, and freedom to its people. He was a great people mobilizer who strongly believed in the power of the people and democracy. He dedicated his entire life to serving the people of Sudan and engaging in politics based on the power of the people. In 1967, through the power of the people, he overthrew the first military government of General Abood, a dictator, and established a democratic form of government. Turabi holds the distinction of being the first leader in the history of Sudan to introduce Islamization, liberty, and modernity to the Sudanese government and society. Turabi, being a modern Islamic philosopher and political leader, played a significant role in introducing Islamization to Sudan. He advocated for a democratic Islamic government based on Islamic Sharia, synthesizing western concepts of liberty and modernity with Islamic principles. However, he did not support western dress codes, extremism, or aspects of western culture that contradicted Islamic laws and moral values. Turabi endorsed western values and standards in human rights, equal social participation for women, humanitarian basic rights, and democracy, while vehemently opposing extremism and terrorism. Despite facing allegations from the West, including accusations of joining hands with Osama bin Laden, Turabi, as an Islamic scholar and political leader, aimed to unite the Islamic legacy.
- He led Sudan away from conservatism towards awareness of fundamental rights, democracy, liberty and modernity. He provided a set of ideas for the establishment of an Islamic political democratic government, supporting women's rights in political participation and liberty. He encouraged women to participate in the Islamic movement and various social fields, making him the first political leader in Sudan to give significance and identity to women. While he did not support confining women to homes, he favored the hijab and Islamic dress code. Turabi laid the foundation of an Islamic state by implementing various Islamic policies and developments, such as establishing the Islamic economic system through the establishment of the Islamic bank Al-Faisal. He also initiated policies to allocate more funds to education and the development of youth.
- Through his revolutionary ideas, he brought about political and social change in Sudan, serving as a great source of encouragement for people in his region seeking revolutionary changes in their societies and governments through Islam. He is credited for contributing to the Arab Spring revolution in the Middle East.

CONCLUSION

Hassan al-Turabi, a modern Muslim philosopher and politician, dedicated his entire life to serving the people of Sudan. His life, philosophy, struggle and services continue to make him popular and immensely significant among the people of Sudan, serving as an exemplary figure for the wider Muslim world. His ideas remain relevant and revolutionary, with a substantial following. He ardently promoted democracy, liberty, freedom, Jihad, and women's social and political participation. Despite his efforts to implement Islam in government, Turabi faced challenges due to western and communist influence, resulting in some setbacks. Though, he introduced valuable steps for Islamization in Sudan by establishing an Islamic banking system.

He raised awareness among the people about democracy, fundamental rights, liberty, and freedom, liberating them from traditional conservatism. He imparted an understanding of Islamic values and education, while actively promoting Jihad against those disrupting the harmony of Sudan, whether peace breakers or non-Muslims. He strongly believed in the unity of Muslims as one Ummah and discouraged the promotion of nationalism bonds that hinder the unity of Muslims. His political and philosophical role serves as an exemplary model for Muslims, particularly the people of Sudan.

As a great leader for the people of Sudan, Turabi's ideas and encouragement continue to be followed. He remains a great source of enlightenment, introducing new political and social thinking to Sudan. Turabi brought liberty, freedom, and modernization to the people, emphasizing Islamization and the greatness of Islamic values. He made concerted efforts to unite Muslims and discarded the promotion of nationalism, racial, and ethnic differences among them.

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