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Sudan: Islam as a Political Force



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An Intelligence Assessment

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*NESA 84-10144
April 1984*

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Sudan: Islam as a Political Force [Redacted]

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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [Redacted] Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. It was coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Arab-Israeli Division, NESAs, [Redacted]

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**Sudan:
Islam as a
Political Force** [Redacted]

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 16 February 1984
was used in this report.*

The major Islamic groups in Sudan are important political forces and potential rivals to President Gaafar Nimeiri. Their influence was demonstrated by Nimeiri's sudden decision in September 1983 to impose Islamic law—a move that, in our opinion, was largely an attempt to boost his standing with the Islamic factions. [Redacted]

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The Ansar, the largest of the Sudanese religious fraternities, have members from virtually all occupational and economic classes in the country and are, we believe, the most serious potential threat to the regime apart from the possibility of a military coup. The arrest of the Ansar leader in September 1983 left the group in temporary disarray, but, in our judgment, it has increased the chance that the Ansar will eventually intensify their underground contacts with secular anti-Nimeiri elements. [Redacted]

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The Khatmiyyah sect is almost as large as the Ansar but has not been involved as a group in antigovernment activity. Nimeiri's good relations with Cairo have helped win the tacit support of the Khatmiyyah, who are strongly pro-Egyptian. [Redacted]

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Sudan's Muslim Brotherhood, though relatively small, is influential because of its strength in elite and student circles. The Brotherhood believes it is most likely to accomplish its goals by working within the system, and thus it has participated in government since the late 1970s. If Nimeiri retreats dramatically from his policy of Islamization, however, we believe the Brotherhood's leaders will face increasing pressure from their fundamentalist membership to end collaboration with the regime. [Redacted]

A cohesive coalition of Islamic political-religious groups would be an extremely powerful force, but such a coalition is unlikely to form. The Ansar, Muslim Brotherhood, and other Islamic groups are split over political and philosophical issues and divided by historical and personal rivalries. It is more likely, in our opinion, that one or more of the groups would join a broad national opposition front. There would be considerable tension within such a front, however, between the Islamic groups and the generally left-leaning secular parties. [Redacted]

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We believe that the Islamic groups would adopt a "wait-and-see" attitude toward the most likely successors to Nimeiri—senior Army officers or high government officials. Some of the sects might participate in a coalition government. [Redacted]

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None of the Islamic groups are openly hostile toward the United States, but any government in which they played an influential role probably would maintain a greater distance from the United States than Nimeiri has. The groups would be unlikely to feel strong enough politically to go as far as Nimeiri has in supporting US interests, particularly through military cooperation. 

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**Sudan:
Islam as a
Political Force**



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The Islamic Groups' Past Involvement in Politics

Islamic life in Sudan has been influenced greatly by religious fraternities or orders, called *tariqas*, which developed around particular charismatic leaders. There are at least a dozen of these "sects" in Sudan. The two largest—the Khatmiyyah and the Ansar—emerged in the 19th century and today include some 70 percent of the country's Muslim population.

Two other religious-political associations—the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood and the Republican Brotherhood—are smaller, 20th-century creations. The Muslim Brotherhood, however, has disproportionate influence in Sudanese politics because of its popularity in elite circles and its collaboration since the late 1970s with the Nimeiri regime.

The Khatmiyyah originated in the early 19th century when a spiritual leader from the Arabian Peninsula traveled to Sudan and quickly developed a following. The Ansar began in 1881, when an obscure northerner declared himself to be the divinely guided Mahdi. His forces routed British and Egyptian troops in 1885 and established a theocratic state that was in turn overthrown by British troops in 1898. The Ansar movement was dormant for the next several years but reemerged as a strong political force during World War I under the leadership of the Mahdi's son.

The Ansar and the Khatmiyyah formed the basis of political parties that, together with the Khatmiyyah's secular liberal allies, dominated Sudanese politics from independence in 1956 until Nimeiri's coup in 1969. Once in power, Nimeiri tried to destroy the influence of the conservative sectarian parties. Many Ansar, Khatmiyyah, and Muslim Brotherhood leaders were jailed or exiled. Nimeiri concentrated first on the strongest group, the Ansar, attacking their stronghold at Aba Island in 1970. In 1972 Nimeiri created the Sudanese Socialist Union and declared all other political parties illegal.

A nearly successful coup attempt in July 1976 by an opposition front led by Ansar chief Sadiq al-Mahdi

The Religious Landscape of Sudan

Sudan's population is roughly 70 percent Muslim. Since independence, Muslims have controlled the government and dominated the country's political, economic, cultural, and social institutions.

Religious differences in Sudan for the most part follow the ethnic and geographic split between northern and southern Sudan (see map). About two-thirds of all Sudanese live in the north, which is 90 percent Muslim. Most southerners practice native, animist religions. A small percentage of Sudanese, primarily the southern elite, are Christian.

According to the US Embassy in Khartoum, nearly all Sudanese Muslims are Sunni, the main school of Islamic practice. Shia and mystical Sufi beliefs, however, have influenced many religious observances. The Embassy reports that Sudanese religious practice stresses the individual's relationship to God and opposes government intrusion into religious affairs.



apparently convinced Nimeiri that his survival required reconciliation with the Islamic groups. Representatives of the Ansar, Khatmiyyah, and Muslim Brotherhood joined the government between 1977 and 1979. Sadiq and the Khatmiyyah representatives soon quit, however, after becoming frustrated at their lack of influence on policy.

Nimeiri's Islamization Campaign

In September 1983 Nimeiri declared the imposition of the *sharia*, or Islamic law, in Sudan. The declaration was a radical shift in government policy that stimulated political maneuvering among fundamentalists, secular Sudanese, and non-Muslim southerners.

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President Nimeiri inaugurates his Islamization campaign in September 1983 by publicly destroying liquor bottles. [redacted]



Arabia: The Islamic World Review ©

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We believe the major factor behind Nimeiri's emphasis on Islam was his desire to placate the Muslim Brotherhood, whose disaffection with the regime had become increasingly apparent during the first several months of 1983. By adopting the Brotherhood's major objective, Nimeiri ensured the continued support of the only former opposition faction that participated fully in his national reconciliation campaign during the 1970s. Nimeiri may also have intended his Islamization campaign to appeal to members of the other orthodox Muslim groups and to win greater aid from Saudi Arabia. [redacted]

By mid-December it had become clear that some key elements were opposed to Islamization. Strong opposition from some northerners, many southerners, and important foreign allies—notably Egypt—has led Nimeiri to moderate his Islamic course. Nimeiri has gradually deemphasized the government's role in promoting Islam and has stressed that measures already adopted will be applied with tolerance and respect for the rights of non-Muslims. Nonetheless, he has not renounced Islamization. He continues his political juggling act designed to satisfy simultaneously the secular left and the religious right, the Muslim north and the non-Muslim south. [redacted]

The Sects Today

The Ansar. The Ansar sect is the largest association in Sudan. Its members represent virtually all occupational and economic classes in the country. The sect's size, organization, and history of political activism make it the most serious potential threat to the regime, apart from the possibility of a military coup. [redacted]

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Some 5 to 6 million Sudanese are Ansar, according to US Embassy estimates. They are concentrated primarily in the rural central and western regions of the country, although in recent years they have migrated in significant numbers to Khartoum and other urban centers. As of 1971 Ansar constituted a majority of the population in the Kordofan and Darfur Regions and about 60 percent in the Central Region. We believe the clustering of Ansar in certain cities and provinces facilitates their organizational efforts. [redacted]

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Ansar constitute a disproportionate percentage of the rank and file in the Army, according to defense attache reporting. In our judgment, any antigovernment move by Ansar leaders would gain at least tacit

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support from many of their followers in uniform. At a minimum, Ansar in the military might not resolutely defend the Nimeiri regime against a coup attempt led by the sect. When Ansar chief Sadiq al-Mahdi tried to overthrow Nimeiri in 1976, only 10 percent of the soldiers mobilized by the government reported for duty. Since then, the government has tried to recruit a larger percentage of non-Ansar for the Army, and few Ansar reach the senior officer level. [redacted]

[redacted]

Sadiq al-Mahdi, the great-grandson of the original Mahdi, was formally elected last year as the sect's imam, its political and spiritual leader, [redacted]

[redacted] The election ended a rivalry over the position that had begun when the previous imam was killed in a battle with government forces in 1970. Sadiq's selection will, we believe, strengthen the sect's internal cohesion despite his incarceration since September 1983 for alleged plotting against the regime. [redacted]

Splinter Ansar factions on both the right and the left do not appear to threaten Sadiq's leadership of the sect. His uncle Ahmad al-Mahdi, head of a group of Ansar who oppose active resistance to the regime, has conceded Sadiq's preeminence since his election as imam in September, [redacted] source. Wali al-Din Al-Hadi al-Mahdi, a first cousin and another rival of Sadiq, continues to cooperate with other outlawed antigovernment parties. According to an assessment by the US Embassy in Khartoum in 1981, however, the London-based Wali al-Din has only a small following [redacted]

Ansar are generally orthodox in their religious beliefs and practices, according to the US Embassy. They have long advocated greater Islamization of Sudan, but many of their goals are more political than religious. They often criticize the regime for economic mismanagement, corruption, and one-man rule. [redacted]

In public statements before his incarceration, Sadiq often called for greater democracy and criticized Nimeiri's economic policies. He described the austerity program implemented by the regime in November

1981 as "economically wrong and socially destructive" and proposed that government administrative and security budgets be cut before measures were taken that lowered the standard of living. [redacted]

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Most Ansar are strongly anti-Egyptian, according to the US Embassy in Khartoum. The sect's antipathy toward Egypt has roots in the 19th century, when Egypt aided Great Britain in overthrowing the Mahdiya, the theocratic Sudanese state established by Sadiq's great-grandfather, the Mahdi. During Anwar Sadat's rule, Sadiq was a vocal critic of the Egyptian regime and the Camp David Accords. [redacted]

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[redacted] Sadiq may be less antagonistic toward Mubarak. Nonetheless, in discussions with US diplomats in Khartoum in October 1982, Sadiq criticized the just-concluded integration charter between Egypt and Sudan as an empty gesture. He suggested that Nimeiri focus his diplomacy on the Persian Gulf rather than Egypt. [redacted]

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The Sudanese Government has accused Sadiq of accepting Libyan funds. [redacted]

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[redacted] We judge that Sadiq and Qadhafi both believe they can use each other for their own purposes and then disregard each other once their shared goal—Nimeiri's removal—is achieved. [redacted]

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Ansar chief Sadiq al-Mahdi meets Nimeiri during brief period of reconciliation. [redacted]



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During 1983 Sadiq resumed political activity after several years of political quietude. His return from 16 months of self-imposed exile, his well-planned attempts to shore up his support within the sect, and his pointed public criticisms of the regime in September indicate that he was positioning himself to take advantage of any faltering by Nimeiri. [redacted]

according to the US Embassy. The sect never had as cohesive a political organization as the Ansar, and its religious leaders have largely stayed out of politics for several years. Their influence now rests on their persuasiveness and the residual political loyalties of their followers from the pre-Nimeiri era. [redacted]

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The arrest of Sadiq and several of his key lieutenants last September has left the Ansar in organizational disarray. The regime's crackdown has increased the odds, in our view, that the sect eventually will collude with other outlawed opposition parties. Should Sadiq be freed and immediately leave the country, he probably would resume his effort to organize the opposition from abroad, as he did in the mid-1970s. [redacted]

The Khatmiyyah have long favored strong ties to Egypt, and Nimeiri's good relations with Cairo since the early 1970s probably have helped to win the sect's grudging acquiescence to his role. According to US Embassy reporting, the Khatmiyyah have their own contacts with Egypt and also get some funding from Saudi notables. They favor a free enterprise economy and have not advocated a strong government role in religious affairs, but their leader, Muhammad Uthman al-Mirghani, publicly endorsed Nimeiri's institution of Islamic law in September 1983. [redacted]

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The Khatmiyyah. Sudan's Khatmiyyah sect has nearly as many adherents as the Ansar, according to the US Embassy, but it has not attempted as a group to influence Nimeiri's policies. The Khatmiyyah are concentrated in Sudan's Northern and Eastern Regions but also have large communities in Kordofan, Darfur, and Khartoum. Khatmiyyah form a large part of Sudan's business community, especially in Port Sudan, and many are shopkeepers. In rural areas many work on large Khatmiyyah farming estates. [redacted]

Although the sect does not formally participate in the current government, a number of people with Khatmiyyah connections are involved in politics. Dr. Ahmad al-Sayyid Hamad, a Khatmiyyah, is presidential adviser for political affairs. Several politicians formerly associated with the old Khatmiyyah-based People's Democratic Party hold high positions, most notably People's Assembly Speaker Izaddin al-Sayyid. Most Khatmiyyah in government, however, retain only loose ties to the imam, according to the US Embassy. [redacted]

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Theologically, Khatmiyyah practice is orthodox and emphasizes personal piety. Until recent years, loyalty to the sect's imam, who was considered semidivine, had been an important principle and unifying factor, [redacted]

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A small Khatmiyyah faction is allied with exiled, secular remnants of the National Unionist Party, which has in recent years accepted aid from Libya. According to the Embassy's assessment, this group has only a nominal following, principally outside Sudan. [redacted]

Hasan al-Turabi, the Brotherhood's leader, has served in government since reconciling with Nimeiri in 1977. The group's policies are set by an advisory council, chaired by Turabi, which is composed of representatives from all regions. A political bureau, also headed by Turabi, meets regularly to implement policy. [redacted]

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We believe that the Khatmiyyah probably will continue their tacit support of Nimeiri. [redacted]

The Brotherhood has a highly organized and secretive structure, and administrative units exist down to the town, neighborhood, and "family" cell level. Despite the Brotherhood's participation in government, it is proscribed as a political party under Sudan's one-party system. Therefore, the Brothers keep most of their activities secret. [redacted]

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[redacted] the Khatmiyyah are unlikely to challenge the military regime because a majority are relatively well-to-do and would be unwilling to take up arms. In contrast to the Ansar, [redacted] the movement is not messianic and thus is more difficult to mobilize. [redacted]

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The Muslim Brotherhood. Sudan's Muslim Brotherhood is smaller than the two mass sects but has greater support in elite circles. According to estimates of the US Embassy in Khartoum, membership in the Brotherhood is at least 100,000 but might be considerably higher. Embassy reporting suggests there could be as many as 300,000 members. The Brotherhood admits that it has remained more elitist than similar organizations in other countries and that it is most interested in gaining influence among the intelligentsia. [redacted]

Because of this secrecy, the Brotherhood's foreign links are difficult to discern. According to the US Embassy in Khartoum, Sudan's Muslim Brothers have only loose ties to fundamentalist groups outside Sudan and receive most of their funding from the Saudis. [redacted]

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According to Embassy reporting, the Brotherhood enjoys strong backing among students, intellectuals, and professionals—especially lawyers, physicians, and engineers. The organization's influence is strongest in the Khartoum area, but the group is active in schools throughout the country, even in the predominantly non-Muslim south. The Muslim Brotherhood dominates the student councils at the University of Khartoum, the Islamic University of Omdurman, the Khartoum extension of Cairo University, and Juba University. [redacted]

The Brotherhood's declared goal is to establish a "true" Islamic society in Sudan. The Muslim Brothers believe that the Koran provides a complete guide to religious practice and social organization, according to the US Embassy in Khartoum. Most members believe, however, that their objective can be achieved only gradually and have pledged to support any leader, party, or organization sharing their goal. [redacted]

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The Brotherhood's sizable following within the politically active student population has been one of its most important assets. The Brotherhood's political standing with the government was boosted in January 1982, for example, when its leaders persuaded their student followers not to join other youths in large antigovernment demonstrations. [redacted]

Embassy reporting indicates that the Brotherhood's principal activity since joining the government in 1977 has been to press the regime to adopt Islamic law as the legal basis for Sudan. The Brothers proposed increasing the jurisdiction of Islamic law courts throughout the country and, [redacted] [redacted] advocated the official use of Arabic even in the south. Turabi has stressed a gradual approach to avoid alarming secular northerners and non-Muslim southerners. [redacted]

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Although Turabi is universally recognized as the Brotherhood's leader, there is a more radical faction led by his predecessor, Sadiq Abdullah Abdel Majid. The two leaders differ primarily over whether to cooperate with the regime. [redacted]

[redacted] Turabi believes his organization has more influence working within the system and has opposed violent action as too risky and disruptive. Abdel Majid's faction advocates open opposition to the government, having claimed until September 1983 that Turabi's efforts toward Islamization were fruitless. [redacted] he has since claimed that Nimeiri's religious measures have been incomplete and un-Islamic. [redacted]

In return for the Brotherhood's acceptance of Nimeiri's national reconciliation program, its members have been appointed to several high government posts. Turabi served as Sudan's Attorney General from August 1979 until May 1983 and is now presidential adviser for foreign affairs, Sudan's equivalent of the US National Security Adviser. The Brotherhood's deputy secretary general, Yassin al-Imam, and several other members have been appointed to parliament. Another Brotherhood member is Minister of Internal Affairs. Muslim Brotherhood influence is greatest in the Ministry of Finance and the judiciary, where brethren hold many key positions. [redacted]

[redacted] Brotherhood members serving at the lower levels of government keep the party informed about developments in their agencies and at times can discreetly influence decisions in favor of Islamic doctrine. [redacted]



In our judgment, the Muslim Brothers' future attitude toward the government will be shaped largely by the regime's pace in implementing Islamic law. If Nimeiri retreats from his commitment to Islamization, Turabi will face increasing pressure from his membership to end the group's cooperation with the regime. The fact that the government allows the organization to function without serious constraints, however, militates against a complete break. We believe, moreover, that the Brotherhood has been pleased by Nimeiri's periodic crackdowns on Sudan's leftists and fears that almost any other leader would be less tolerant of Islamic interests. In our judgment, the President's adherence to Islamic precepts in his personal life also has impressed the Brotherhood. [redacted]

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The Republican Brotherhood. The Republican Brotherhood is decidedly unorthodox and philosophically innovative, but it is politically insignificant. Numbering no more than several thousand students, the Republican Brothers criticize traditional Islamic law as "outdated and irrelevant" and believe new principles must be derived from Koranic sources, according to Embassy and scholarly assessments. [redacted]

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The group claims its goals are spiritual rather than political, and until recently it had been generally sympathetic toward Nimeiri. First Vice President and State Security Chief Umar Tayyib cracked down on the organization in May 1983 after it distributed a pamphlet criticizing his religious associations. [redacted]

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[redacted] Several Republican Brotherhood leaders were arrested. Considered heretical by most Muslims, the Republican Brothers have few foreign connections, according to the US Embassy in Khartoum. [redacted]

Prospects for an Opposition Coalition

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A cohesive coalition of the four Islamic political-religious groups would be extremely powerful but, in our judgment, is unlikely to form. According to the US Embassy in Khartoum, last year there was renewed talk among Sudanese Muslim groups of a common "Islamic line." The four Islamic groups share a strong commitment to Islam and a general belief that the political and economic situation in Sudan has continued to deteriorate under Nimeiri. Despite these shared attitudes, however, there was no

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evidence that an Islamic front was developing. The Ansar, Khatmiyyah, and Muslim Brotherhood are split over political and philosophical issues and divided by historical and personal rivalries. The Republican Brotherhood, because of its heterodoxy, would not participate in an Islamic front. [redacted]

The Ansar and the Khatmiyyah, the two main rivals for political power in the pre-Nimeiri period, have fundamental differences and are divided by historical animosity. They also are diametrically opposed in their attitudes toward Egypt, with the Khatmiyyah favoring closer ties and the Ansar wanting to loosen those already established. Although both groups are religiously orthodox, Ansar beliefs are tinged with a messianic cast and Khatmiyyah, a mystical one. The US Embassy in Khartoum notes that although the political rivalry between the two sects has been blunted by Nimeiri's 14 years in power, there still is little collaboration between them. [redacted]

The Muslim Brothers have informal links with both the Ansar and the Khatmiyyah, according to the US Embassy. The Brotherhood is separated from the other two groups, however, by its close collaboration with the regime and its role in shaping Nimeiri's Islamic policies during the past year. In any Islamic front, there would almost certainly be disputes over the government's role in promoting religion, given Sadiq al-Mahdi's harsh criticism of Nimeiri's Islamic campaign, the Khatmiyyah's lukewarm endorsement of it, and the Khatmiyyah's traditional attitude favoring separation of "church" and state. [redacted]

Although we believe an Islamic front based on a common religious platform is unlikely, one or more of the groups might join secular opposition elements in an antigovernment coalition. The Ansar, with their history of political involvement and antigovernment activity, are the most likely to do so. The only common ground, however, between any of the Islamic groups and the secular opposition—which tends to be leftist or socialist in orientation—would be opposition to Nimeiri. Any such opposition front would be marked by considerable internal tension. [redacted]

The Sudanese Government has charged that Ansar led by Sadiq al-Mahdi are already cooperating in an opposition front with the Sudanese Communist Party,

the Sudanese Ba'th Party, and elements of the old National Unionist Party. [redacted]

In our judgment, [redacted] these four groups are in contact with each other, but little proof that they are coordinating their activities. [redacted]

In our view, the Republican Brothers or some Khatmiyyah might participate in an opposition front. The potential increase in dissident ranks from the small Republican Brotherhood and the relatively few Khatmiyyah malcontents would be marginal, in our judgment. We believe that the Republican Brotherhood, once fairly favorably disposed toward Nimeiri, has changed its attitude because of the arrest of its leaders last spring and Nimeiri's flirtation with orthodox Islam. Some Khatmiyyah already belong to opposition parties and probably would not hesitate to join a broader coalition. Most Khatmiyyah, however, probably will continue their tacit support for the regime, barring a drastic decline in Sudanese-Egyptian relations. [redacted]

The Muslim Brotherhood, in our view, is the least likely of the Islamic groups to participate in an opposition coalition. Even with the slowing of Nimeiri's Islamization campaign, the decrees promulgated in 1983 probably reinforced the Brothers' conviction that Nimeiri is the most sympathetic ruler they can reasonably expect. Moreover, the US Embassy reports that Turabi has repeatedly emphasized his unwillingness to cooperate with leftists in a national front. [redacted]

Relations With a Successor Regime

Even if the sectarian parties do not try to overthrow Nimeiri, any successor to the President will have to take account of their political strength. We believe that the lack of an heir apparent will lead to intense

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jockeying for power after Nimeiri departs. Any successor probably would try to co-opt those parties he considers malleable and crush those he considers dangerous, just as Nimeiri did in the early years of his rule. [redacted]

In our judgment, the most likely successors are senior Army officers or high government officials. Most Sudanese now in those positions hold views close to those of the President. We believe that the Ansar, Khatmiyyah, and Muslim Brotherhood would adopt a wait-and-see attitude toward a new leader drawn from the military or the government, hoping that such a ruler would continue the main lines of Nimeiri's Islamization policy and avoid blatant attacks on the groups' corporate or political interests. [redacted]

According to the Sudanese Constitution, First Vice President Umar Tayyib would replace Nimeiri if he dies or becomes disabled while in office. If Tayyib did become president, he probably would enjoy good relations with all Islamic groups except the Republican Brotherhood. Tayyib has maintained a good relationship with Sadiq al-Mahdi [redacted]

[redacted] The Vice President also has strong family ties to the Khatmiyyah. Moreover, he is a devout Muslim. [redacted]

In the unlikely—but not impossible—event that young, leftist officers seized control of the government, the new regime's relations with the Islamic groups would almost certainly be tense. The orthodox parties would undoubtedly perceive a leftist regime as inherently anti-Islamic. The sort of direct clashes that took place between the Ansar and Nimeiri loyalists soon after Nimeiri took power might well recur. [redacted]

Implications for the United States

If Nimeiri is succeeded by an officer or official close to him, there is an at least even chance that one or more of the orthodox Islamic parties would accept an invitation to participate in the government. According to the US Embassy in Khartoum, none of the Islamic groups are hostile toward the United States. In our judgment, however, none would be as willing as Nimeiri to cooperate closely with Washington. A Sudanese government dominated by one or more of the Islamic groups would be less supportive than

Nimeiri of US interests in the region and would be particularly likely to reduce US military access in Sudan. We believe that, even in government, the Islamic leaders would fear they would lose support among their followers if they come to be seen as closely allied to Washington as Nimeiri is perceived to be. [redacted]

Sudanese-US relations would be most likely to suffer under a government in which Sadiq al-Mahdi played an influential role. Sadiq has publicly criticized the United States several times, charging in a press interview in 1982 that Washington looks at Sudan only in terms of its strategic importance to Egypt. He decried the fact that Washington has not used its influence to "persuade" the International Monetary Fund to grant loans to Sudan on easier terms. Sadiq earlier had opposed Nimeiri's offer to allow the United States to use Sudanese military facilities. [redacted]

Despite these public jibes, Sadiq's attitude toward the United States is somewhat ambivalent. An Ansar serving in Nimeiri's cabinet told US officials in October 1982 that Sadiq had made a statement suggesting at least indirect support for President Reagan's Middle East peace initiative. During the hostage crisis in Iran, Sadiq interceded with the Iranians on behalf of the United States. [redacted]

The Islamic groups have focused primarily on politics and religious issues and paid less attention to economic matters. We do not believe that these groups would necessarily promote commercial policies harmful to US interests if they were in a position to influence government policy. The leaders of the two strongest groups, the Muslim Brotherhood and Ansar, are known for their pragmatism and, in our judgment, would not be likely to support nationalization of foreign companies in Sudan or other measures aimed at harming US commercial interests. [redacted]

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