THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN SUDAN FROM NATIONALISM TO TRANSNATIONALISM: PROSPECTS FOR A SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT

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Abstract

This dissertation is a study of the effects of nationalism and transnationalism on the evolution of the women's movement in Sudan, also known as North Sudan. The women's movement in Sudan is an urban movement that mainly functions in Khartoum city -the capital of Sudan. Khartoum is a melting ground for women activists coming from different parts of the country: South, West, North and East. This study highlights the heterogeneity of the movement and indicates how women negotiate their differences and create alliances across the divides of ethnicity, religion and region. It also explores how women have succeeded in changing the meaning of gender relations over time and enacted these changes through their continued resistance to the patriarchy of nationalist projects, the postcolonial state, and society. This research aims to provide an understanding of women's activism as part of the nationalism in Sudan. I also, analyze the new era of women's activism during the 1990s & 2000s, and how women's groups, under the banner of transnationalism, have managed to build solidarity with each other, which enabled them to achieve some of their goals.

I argue that from nationalist to transnational influences, women's activism in Sudan has evolved through a long journey of struggle to change the meaning of gender relations, in both public and private spheres, and over time. This journey demonstrates that Sudanese women are not merely passive constituents of society but active agents, often working on their own, bargaining to enact changes on gender relations, surpassing the obstacles posed by their differences, and extending alliances and networks to advance their cause.

This study will contribute to our understanding of women's involvement in nationalist movements and how such participation varies as per the historical, geographical, political and the

cultural-religious contexts of the nation and its eventual location in a neoliberal economic and political global system. I contend that women's agency and struggle as national agents need to be highlighted. This study also explores the impacts of transnationalism on the local dynamics of women's movement in the context of Sudan and contends that women have benefited from transnational linkages and transnational ties to build solidarity across their divides. Overall, the dissertation contributes to feminist debates on the meaning of feminism in different contexts; the relationship between nationalism and feminism; the dialectical relationship between difference and solidarity; and the meaning of transnationalism in the local context of Sudan (i.e. transnationalism localized). The purpose of this study is to demonstrate a connection between knowledge and activism and to explore new possibilities for women's resistance and struggle to enact social change.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my father, Mohamed Elamin Ahmed Abu Bakr, who taught me the first "feminist" lesson in my life. And to my mother Fawzia Mohamed Abdulla, a teacher and a mother of seven kids, from whom I learned, among other things, the meaning of family giving, and women's resilience.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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Chapter One

Introduction

This dissertation aims to historicize and contextualize the life experiences of women activists in Sudan with reference to their heterogeneity, differences, and endeavors of solidarity. I will explore and highlight the evolution of the women's movement in Sudan from its inception and connection with nationalism in 1947 up to the current era of transnationalism during the 1990s and 2000s. I will not only track the history of the movement but also investigate the meaning of feminism in the context of the women's movement in Sudan within the frameworks of nationalism and transnationalism. I concur with Zeleza (2005) in his study of the gender biases in African historiography when he emphasizes that feminist historians are faced with two interrelated challenges which are to retrieve and to gender the history of women in Africa (p. 208). Several studies have thus far emphasized the history of the movement (Abdel-Al, 1997; Al-Haj, 2007; Ajooba, 2008; Badri, 1986; El-Amin, 1997; Hall & Ismail, 1981). Although such studies are important in terms of documenting history, there is a need to rethink this history to critically understand how women's activism has informed such a history. Abdel-Halim (2010) in her article titled "Sudanese Women Writing Their Status" has detailed the contributions of Sudanese women to the feminist religious and gender literature. I have referred to some of these resources in conducting this study and expand on them by addressing my main questions. In this dissertation, women activists voice their concerns, and describe their experiences, challenges, and accomplishments in their continuous struggle to change their lives for the better.

I argue that the impacts of nationalism and transnationalism have changed the meaning of gender relations over time for women activists in Sudan, the latter which has evolved through a long journey of struggle. This journey demonstrates that Sudanese women are "not passive victims,

but rather active agents continually struggling in different ways to change their positioning and overcome their diversified plights" (Badri. B, 2002, p. 11). They have enacted changes in gender relations, surpassing obstacles among themselves, and extended alliances and networks to advance their cause. I contend that women's struggles in Sudan have passed through various stages from independence up to the current stage of transnationalism. Their struggle with the nationalists resembles the first organized stage that was launched by the educated women, whom I call the "new emancipated women" in recognition of their efforts to achieve emancipation from colonialism and to foster their presence in public sphere as essential steps against their subordination. These women together with nationalist forces worked to gain independence and worked for women's rights to education, work, and suffrage at the same time. Currently, women's activism is led by women whom I call the "new transnational women" who struggle for women's rights and who adopt and adapt the International Conventions and other opportunities brought by transnationalism to move on with their interests.

It is worth mentioning that most of the women I interviewed in the context of this study rejected the label of feminism, which they regarded as being connected with foreign ideas coming from the West. Asma Abdel-Halim (2010), Sudanese Professor of gender studies argues that, the WU (the first formal women's organization in Sudan) "… still resists tackling feminist theories as some of their members, especially the president of the union, Fatima Ahmed Ibrahim, link it with lesbianism and sexual freedom in general. Such attitudes still prevail in Africa and the Arab world" (p. 79).

Tripp (2009) contends that in Africa, the term feminism is considered as "a Western and foreign construct" and is being "redefined" globally (p. 14). Asma Barlas (2008) in her paper titled "Engaging Islamic Feminism: Provincializing Feminism as a Master Narrative" also documents her

concerns with regard to being called a feminist. She questions giving feminism a Western and a white color and says, "So *what* if I use some of the same language as feminists? Can't one do that without buying into an entire ontology or epistemology… I derive *my* understanding of equality and of patriarchy from the Qur'an, not from any feminist text!" (p. 16). Ideas of global feminism that focus on the sameness of oppression, on individualism, and on gender as the sole reason for women's subordination have now been widely interrogated by black women, women of color, and Third World women who consider women's other experiences with racialization, colonialism, nationalism, and neocolonial structures as part and parcel of women's oppression.

My research outcomes reveal that women in Sudan believe that their struggles and activism not only revolve around gender and achieving equality with men, but that their activism began with their demand for rights in public life, in education, work, and suffrage. This does not, however, mean that they are unaware of their difference or what they want to achieve. I believe that grappling with the meaning of feminism is in itself an indicator of women's struggles and women's resilience to enact a social change that enables them to attain a better life and in itself, this is a feminist goal. More exploration of the meanings of feminism and different feminisms will follow in Chapter Two which details the theoretical background for this research.

The word "activism" provides a wider umbrella for defining the meaning of feminism in Sudan. Gluck (1998) refers to a definition of feminist activism forwarded by the California State University, Long Beach, and Feminist Oral History Collective as:

> Women's groups (including formal and informal committees, sub committees and caucuses) organized for change whose agendas AND/OR actions challenge women's subordinate [or disadvantaged] status in the society at large (external) and in their own community (internal). (p. 34).

She continues to say;

… in their own ways each [group] was also engaged in challenging women's

subordination. Although this may not have been articulated as their primary goal

[SIC]. (p. 43)

Accordingly, in this dissertation, women's activism includes not only political activism but also a

broad range of other activities handled by women's organizations such as (but not limited to)

charity, services, research, and advocacy.

The 1990s and the 2000s have marked a new era of women's activism and the women's

movement in Sudan, which I called a transnational era of activism. This era witnessed an enormous

increase in women's organizations and women's activism in Sudan. Also, women's activism has

been affected by the mounting pressures of globalization, the rise of fundamentalism, and the

influence of both international organizations and legal conventions and protections. The meaning

of transnationalism[1] in the context of this study extends beyond a single nation or state, to a wider

perspective that transcends geographical boundaries. I conceptualize transnationalism not only as a

link between global women's networks and women's local groups, but also in reference to the

activism and relationship among the variety of local women's groups. Such a perspective aims to

investigate the meaning of transnationalism in the local context of Sudan and how it impacts and is

being impacted by women's activism in this local setting.

Based on this definition of transnationalism, a space opens for debates around women's

issues that used to be framed within the parameters of the nationalist interests; women's rights,

family laws, violence, peace, and capacity-building are among the issues raised by a variety of

women's groups. Further, tackling these issues has led to a shift in women's activism towards a

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[1] A detailed definition of transnationalism in the context of this dissertation is provided in Chapter Two.

more gender-based and longer term orientation, although women's activism to sustain more immediate and basic needs for all still continues. Moreover, emphasis on these gendered issues in turn has brought women together across the ethnic, regional, and religious divides.

Difference in the Context of Sudan

Sudan (see map number 1) at independence was, and even with the separation of the Republic of South Sudan (see map number 2), continues to be a country of diversity that has many dimensions. Its colonial heritage made it a mixture of both Arabic and African languages and cultures. Badri.H (2002) indicates that the Arabs came to Sudan in the seventh century from Egypt in the North of Sudan and across the Red Sea in the East of Sudan, and they mingled with the original African population, affecting their languages, beliefs and customs. For political and geographical reasons, the Arab migrations did not reach the South (p. 7–8). Ethnically, the intermarriage between the African indigenous population and early Arab migrants has resulted in a variety of ethnic groups in the North, East, and West of Sudan. There are about 500 ethnicities across all parts of Sudan, such as the Arab, the Beja, the Dinka, the Fur, and the Nubian, in addition to others (Elsawi, 2011, p. 1). Religiously, there is Islam, Christianity, and indigenous African religions; about 75% of populations are Muslims, 20% are Christians and 5% are of indigenous religions (Badri, 2008, p. 17). "[S]ome authors have [been] inclined to see it [Sudan] as a microcosm of Africa" (Khalid, 1990, p. 23).

Map number (1) Sudan:

Source: http://sites.duke.edu/stefanijones/map-of-the-sudan/

Accessed Aug. 20, 2014

Map number (2): The Republic of South Sudan

Source: http://sites.duke.edu/stefanijones/map-of-the-sudan/

Accessed Aug. 20, 2014

Historically, modern Sudan was captured by the Turko-Egyptians in the period 1821–1885. In 1885, the national religious leader Mohamed Ahmed Al Mahadi led a revolution against the Turko-Egyptians and then ruled Sudan until 1898. In 1898, both the British and Egyptians ruled Sudan in what was known as Condominium Rule up to independence in 1965.

The British colonial state in Sudan established a particular form of rule through the use of gender and racialization as integral components for the functioning of the colonial institutions. The separation of "races" was considered necessary to maintain the British authority and to protect the cultures and religions of the southerners. Accordingly, they implemented a policy of divide and rule that separated the North and South of Sudan in 1921 (Khalid, 1990; Woodward, 1990). This resulted in a development neglect which led to the uneven development between North and South Sudan. Also, policies that discriminated against women were enacted, especially in education (Badri, 1986; Hale, 1996). Moreover, the colonial states consolidated the economic position of the main religious sects—Al-Mahdia[2] and Al-Khatmia[3]—as well as some ethnic tribal leaders by granting them considerable shares in government contracts and providing them with lands. This laid the foundation for the influence of religious leaders in post-colonial states in Sudan.

The historical transformations of states, nation-building, and changing state projects are essential elements in the analyses of women's position and gender issues (Al-Ali, 2000; Hatem, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 1997). The evolution of the women's movement in Northern Sudan reflects its

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[2] Al Mahadia refers to the religious sect which looks to Mohamed Ahmed Al-Mahadi, the religious Muslim leader who led the revolt against Turko-Egyptian Rule in Sudan in 1885. His followers are called Ansar. They received significant economic support from the British during their colonialization of Sudan. For details on the history of this religious group and its evolution and relation to state formation in Sudan, see the book by Fatima Babker Mahmoud *The Sudanese Bourgeoisie: Vanguard of Development"* Published 1984 and the Mansour Khalid book *The Government they Deserve: The Role of the Elite in Sudan's Political Evolution* published in 1991.
[3] Al-Khatmia represents the other large religious sect in Sudan; they received support from the Turko-Egyptian rulers in the period 1821–1885, mainly to offset the power of other religious Sufi leaders. For details on the history of this religious group and its evolution and relation to state formation in Sudan, see the book by Fatima Babker Mahmoud *The Sudanese Bourgeoisie: Vanguard of Development?* Published 1984 and the Mansour Khalid book *The Government they Deserve: The Role of the Elite in Sudan's Political Evolution* published in 1991.

relationship with Sudanese nationalist projects, as well as the post-colonial state (Hale: 1996, Mahmoud, 2002). Mohanty (1991) argues that "systems of dominations" based on "race," class, ethnicity and gender have no identical effects on women in Third World contexts. However, these "systems of domination" work through historically specific "relations of ruling." Relations of ruling refer to forms of knowledge, organized practices and institutions, as well as questions of consciousness, experience, and agency. Therefore, such relations reveal multiple intersections of structures of power. It is at the intersections of these relations of ruling with systems of dominations that Third World feminist struggles are positioned. It is also by "understanding these intersections that we can attempt to explore questions of consciousness and agency without neutralizing either individuals or structures" (Mohanty, 1991, p. 13).

The state is the driving force of the relations of ruling. Al-Ali (2000) refers to Robert Connell's conceptualization of the state as representative of "gender regimes." In other words, the state is implicated in gender relations in various ways and state power can work to either consolidate the existing gender relations or change them through enacting reforms. However, both states and civil society represent complex sites for women to launch their struggles, find space to negotiate, and articulate their interests, according to their position and to a given country's context of power relations and state formation (Al-Ali, 2000; Rai, 2002). Indeed, "women were both shaped by these elite nation-building strategies as well as, resistant to them" (Joseph, 1999, p. 165).

Since independence, Sudan has experienced only twelve years of nominal democratic rule (1956–1958; 1964–1969; and 1985–1989) and 35 years of military rule (1958–1964; 1969–1984, 1989–present). The post-colonial state continues to facilitate the reproduction of the interests of the dominant religious groups. Nationalist state projects define the boundaries of Sudan through a perception of shared language, religion, and ethnicity. However, this assumption is often based on

the denial of difference and even sometimes a coercive forging of "nation" within the artificial boundaries drawn by the colonialists. Doornbos (1990) states that, "in the urge to create political unity, [many post-colonial states in Africa] have negated ethnic, regional and cultural diversities rather than recognized them as building blocks in the construction of civil society" (p. 64).

After independence, the post-colonial states in Sudan neglected the demand of the South of Sudan for federal status. Moreover, the modernization projects adopted neglected not only the marginalized groups in South, West, and East of Sudan but also women in these regions. Denial of and a destructive lack of respect for difference, along with the sequestration of economic and other resources and the denial of access to decent livelihoods for some groups, thus led to the long and devastating civil wars between the North and South of Sudan and instability in the other regions of the East and the West of Sudan.

These civil wars, which began almost simultaneously with the advent of independence, ceased but for a short period after the Addis Ababa Peace Accord in 1972, up until 1983. After President Nimairi re-divided the South of Sudan—in direct opposition to the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement—and the declaration of Shari'a Laws in September 1983, which also coincided with discovery of oil in the South, the war erupted again and continued up to 2005, when the current Islamic Government and the Sudanese Liberation Army signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). According to this agreement, a referendum was granted to the people of South Sudan to choose between unity with North Sudan or independence. This referendum was held on the 9th of January, 2011. Not surprisingly, most of the people in South Sudan opted for independence. On the 9th of July, 2011, Sudan was split into two countries: Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan.

Even after the separation of the South of Sudan, the ongoing political unrest has continued across the borders between the two countries and inside both countries among the different groups that still compete to attain political and economic power. The CPA has left the issues around oil revenue sharing, the borders between the North and the South, and the status of Abyei—the biggest oil-rich city—as well as citizenship open for further discussions and negotiations; this has paved the way for further disputes and conflicts in the already fragile post-conflict Republic of South Sudan and Sudan.

The *Human Rights Watch Country Report 2012* announced that, despite "the peaceful split" of the South of Sudan, crises continue at the borders between the two countries in Abyei, South Kordofan, and the Blue Nile; the conflict in Darfur, which started in 2003, continues; and in 2005, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for the President of Sudan Omer Al-Bashir, accusing him of war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity. As well, the government of Sudan restricted the media and arrested journalists; their security forces attacked political opponents, broke up peaceful protests in the streets of Khartoum, and raped one of the activists, who left the country after this incident. As Joseph (2001) rightly argues, "The State is a contested terrain, its actions reflecting local, national, and global conflicts and contradiction" (p. 10) and directly affecting, though differently, both men and women.

Research Questions

The women's movement and women's organizing in Sudan is not only influenced by colonialism, imperialism, and nationalism but also by transnationalism. I contend that the relationship between nationalism and feminism varies and may take different forms and that there is a need to consider each case of women's participation in nationalist struggles within its concrete context. As well, I concur with Ranchod-Nilsson's (2000) call for "a feminist perspective on nationalism that does not

discount or overlook women's agency or women's own imagining of the Nation" (p. 170). Women in Sudan benefited from the "contradictory discourse" (Chatterjee, 1989, p. 248) of the nationalists and the tension between tradition and modernity to strategically launch their activism and struggle to create spaces for themselves in the public spheres—such as in education, work, and suffrage— and which was a preliminary step to the achievement of their rights in the private sphere. Although they have succeeded in accessing the public and civic life, they are still struggling to achieve their rights in their private lives.

Women in the women's movement in Sudan have been aware of their differences since the inception of the movement and have struggled to negotiate these differences over time. I maintain that women's multiple positionalities, whether based on differences of ethnicity, religion, or region, and their complex interconnections with social, economic, and political contexts—all existing at one time and in the same space—have opened new opportunities for resistance and social change. I argue that, although the differences underlying different Sudanese nationalist projects resulted in essentializing women's differences across ethnicity, religion, and region, women challenged these divides to build solidarities that continue to press for their rights.

Transnational connections and international Conventions have had a distinct impact on local women's groups and women's movements, according to their different local contexts. In this dissertation, I argue for the adoption of a wider meaning of transnationalism that goes beyond "transnationalism reversed"[4] to consider the "local" as a site of knowledge production of the transnational. The ways in which women in Sudan have used, adopted, and adapted the International UN documents and their transnational ties (including NGOs, UN offices, and the support of donors and foreign embassies) to support their interests and create "complicated"

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[4] "Transnationalism reversed" is an expression used by Friedman (1999) to refer to the local activism of women in Venezuela in preparation for the international women's conferences in Nairobi and Beijing. The term has been used by Chowdhury (2011). See details in Chapter Two.

alliances have not only been an essential part of "transnationalism reversed" but indeed have been informative for women's struggle for their rights in general. The women of Sudan have been successful in using and adapting the UN Conventions in local sites and utilizing their transnational ties to put pressure on the government to enact some policy changes on the ground.

Transnationalism underlies the variety of ways that Sudanese women's groups have acknowledged their differences, their activisms, and their power relations. The nature of activism in the women's movement in Sudan has changed during the transnational era of the 1990s and 2000s to concentrate on issues such as women's rights, violence against women, and peace. This has further helped to foster an interest in gender relations, to bring women together across divides, and to build alliances which have enabled them to realize some of their goals and maintain some of their rights.

Thus, my analysis of feminism and nationalism will address the following research questions:

- What is the approach adopted by the nationalist forces in Sudan towards the "women's question"?

- What are the impacts of such an approach on women?

- How have women challenged and resisted structures of oppression and subordination sustained by the nationalist projects?

- What have been the accomplishments and challenges of the Sudanese women's movement?

With regards to feminism and transnationalism, I will consider the following questions:

- How have the changes of the 1990s and the early 2000s—with the increasing visibility and importance of transnational ties, globalization, and fundamentalism—affected the nature, composition, and concerns of the Sudanese women's movement?

- How do women activists pursue their activism under transnationalism?

- How do women activists define and/or customize "transnationalism reversed" in the context of Sudan?

- How do Sudanese women work out their differences and find ways to work together in solidarity networks to achieve their goals?

- What are the possibilities and the prospects of solidarity among Sudanese women?

- How do the women of Sudan define feminism?

The goal of this study is to critically examine the evolution of the women's movement in Sudan. Drawing from and building on feminists' theorizations of nationalism and transnationalism will help to highlight the experiences of women of Sudan and answer the above questions. Their agency in the achievement of independence along with other nationalist forces during the anti-colonial struggles needs to be noted and asserted. However, the achievement of independence in January 1956 was not enough for women to gain their rights. They had no choice but to continue their struggle for another decade by strategically maneuvering the patriarchy of their nationalist male counterparts, as well as the patriarchy of the society, to finally enter Parliament in 1965 when Fatima Ahmed Ibrahim the Leader of the Women's Union[5] won an elected seat in Parliament.

The change in the gender relations which the women managed to exert through their existence in public life opened new avenues for them to continue to struggle for their rights in

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[5] The Women's Union is considered to be the first well-organized women's organization in Sudan which led to women's activism during the 1950s and 1960s. More details about this Union are described in Chapter Three.

private life—a space that was safeguarded by the patriarchal relations of and ideologies promulgated by Sudanese society, state, and religion. The UN Decade for Women 1975–1985 together with UN women's conferences at that time and thereafter signaled a new phase for women's activism during which Sudanese women were and continue to be challenged by a divisive nationalist agenda, as well their own differences along the lines of ethnicity, region, and religion. The means and ways by which women have adopted and adapted international legal tools, conventions and documents, and their transnational ties to extend alliances to achieve more rights are highlighted in this dissertation.

The Significance of the Study

The participation of women in nationalist movements has led feminists to interrogate the gender blindness of nationalism. The relationship between nationalism and feminism is discussed and elaborated by feminists Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993), Giles and Hyndman (2004), Jacobs (2000), Jayawardena (1986), McClintock (1995), Pettman, (1996), Ranchod-Nilsson, S. (2000) Ranchod-Nilsson (2000), Saigol (1999), Tripp, Casimiro, Kwesiga, & Mungwa (2009), and Yuval-Davis (1997). My research will build on and contribute to this literature with the aim of making visible how women who joined the nationalist movements as active agents "imagine their nation." I argue that women's experiences as nationalist forces deserve to be rethought, and the assumed oppositional relationship between nationalism and feminism needs to be revisited, especially with reference to current challenges of neoliberalism, globalization, and transnationalism.

The mounting impacts of the UN convention and the UN women's conferences on women's activism have been much researched by feminists (Desai, M, 2010 Ferree, 2006; Grewal & Kaplan, 2006; Khagram & Peggy Levitt, 2008; Lee, 2010; Naples, 2008; Moghadam, 2005; Tripp, Casimiro, Kwesiga, & Mungwa. (2009). However, the impacts of such developments on women's

activism in local sites or at the local level have not yet received the same amount of attention (Alvarez, 2000; Basu, 2000; Chowdhury, 2011; Friedman, 1999; Tripp, 2006). This dissertation will contribute to feminist research on "transnationalism reversed" or the "flip side of transnationalism" by reflecting on the experiences of the women of Sudan in this regard and considering their locale as a local site of knowledge production wherein *both* top-down and bottom-up transnational processes has occurred. I argue those local women activists' actions, reactions, and interactions with these processes have informed women's resilience and achievement of rights.

Further, feminists have explored different scenarios for realizing solidarity among women and across the divides of "race," ethnicity, religion, and region (Al-Ali, 2000; Eisenstein, 2004; Friedman, 2001; hooks, 2001; Mohanty, 2003; Naples, 2002; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Solidarity among different women's groups is an integral part of transnationalism. Feminists have argued that the significance of the UN conventions pertaining to women lies in the fact that they can be used by local women activists to pressure their governments for more rights (Friedman, 1999; Moghadam, 2005; Naples, 2008; Tripp et al., 2009). This dissertation also elaborates on how women activists in Sudan have used these international tools of governance and their transnational ties to extend alliances across their differences of ethnicity, religion, and region to maintain their rights and further their interests.

This research questions the meaning of feminism in the local context of Sudan and adds to feminist literature in this regard. Reflecting on their local struggles, different feminists interrogate the meaning of feminism. Feminist literature on difference and the recognition of women's different experiences has informed both feminist theory and feminist practice, although the definition of the boundaries of what can be considered as "feminist" is still debatable. The questioning of "global sisterhood" has produced other groupings of women such as "black women,"

"Third World women," "women of color," "womanists," "African women," "Muslim women," etc. All these groups approach women's various forms of oppression using different strategies, but all work towards challenging oppression.

I maintain that the women's movement in Sudan, which includes a variety of women's groups and a variety of feminisms, stands as a good example for many other women's movements across the globe, especially in similar contexts in Africa and the Third World. It is critical to underscore that the activism of the Sudanese women's movement may provide some insights into other current feminist liberation projects by recognizing that a variety of feminisms can act as building blocks in any project of social change. In the section below, I will elaborate on the research methods which made the above analysis possible.

Feminist Research Methods and Field Work

Field work

As a student of gender, of feminist and women's studies, and as a woman of color from the South, issues associated with difference—especially with reference to women's different experiences, different sites of oppression, and power differences—represent a field of personal, as well as academic interest to me. My personal experience as a researcher is described later in this section.

Feminist standpoint theorists draw attention to the understanding of knowledge from the standpoint of women and/or other oppressed people and they highlight the importance of understanding power relations between the researcher and the researched (Collin, 1990; Haraway, 1988; Hartsock, 1987, 1998). However, there is no single privileged standpoint of women because women's differences intersect across ethnicity, "race," religion, class, sexuality, etc., i.e., "the subject of feminist knowledge is multiple and sometimes conflicting" (Sprague & Kobrynowicz, 2004, p. 92) and it is even more fluid and changing over time. Women's different experiences

across their divides represent "complex standpoints" to use the words of Hesse-Biber, Leavy,& Yaiser(Hesse-Biber, S. N., & Yaiser, M. L. 2004, p.23). Such standpoints are further complicated by the dynamism and fluidity of these divides and the power relations in the socioeconomic and political structures that perpetuate systems of oppression and subordination.

So, paying attention to such complexity may go further in opening new avenues for women's resistance and opportunities for change, than just giving voice to the marginalized. Therefore, this study of the evolution of the women's movement in Sudan necessitates an examination of women's experiences with reference to this "complex positionality" throughout the research process, including in my interviews and interactions with women and men informants. My research not only makes visible the resilience of Sudanese women activists but also provides them with the opportunity to present themselves in their own voices as active agents of change.

Due to the fact that difference and transnationalism are central concepts throughout all of my research, the use of feminist qualitative research methods during my field work and in the analysis of data has been essential. Feminist transnationalist research forges an adherence to positionality, reflexivity, and accountability on part of the researcher (Swarr & Nagar, 2010, p. 5). I concur with Hesse-Biber, & Leckenby (2004) that,

> Intersections of difference provide feminist research with a densely complex view of
> the world and the shifting environments that can be seen from within the research
> process. Incorporating difference within research design is a difficult task. Feminist
> research walks a fine line between balancing the efforts to seek knowledge that is
> capable of making generalizations about women as a group and the recognition that
> all knowledge is socially situated. (p. 214).

The issue of difference has also been raised by Sandra Harding (2008). She argues that,

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What we know about nature and social relations depends on our how we live in our natural/social worlds. And peoples at the peripheries of modernity—women and other marginalized groups in the West and peoples from other cultures—have lived differently, with distinctive kinds of interactions with the World around them, than those at the centers. This is not to say that the centers are all bad and the peripheries are all good… rather we need realistic reassessments of both Western and non-Western knowledge systems and the social worlds with which they are constituted rather than romantic evaluations of one and demonization of the other. (p. 5–6).

In support of this viewpoint, I maintain the importance of a consideration of the local context as a site of knowledge production, especially within the framework of transnationalism and transnational processes. I think that such consideration may help to create knowledge which is "socially situated" but capable of supporting the overall transformative feminist project.

In my field work, I have come across different issues with regard to women's experiences and ways to maximize "objectivity" in this research. Relationships between me, as a researcher, and the research participants included challenges of negotiating my difference and considering my "positionality"; the power relations involved between me and my informants; the considerations of being an insider/outsider researcher with my interviewees; and issues of ethics in gaining the consent of the research participants. I also interviewed men who support women's struggles to achieve more equitable gender relations.

Why feminist research?

Feminist research aims to make visible women's experiences for the purpose of producing alternative understandings that improve women's lives and "produce knowledge that will be useful for effective transformation of gendered injustice and subjugation" (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2000,

p. 147). In doing so, feminists have challenged the positivist paradigms in social science that emphasize scientific objectivity, value-free knowledge and neutrality. Further, feminists have also critiqued positivists who ignore contextual analysis and the influence of gender and other factors like racialization, class, and ethnicity in their knowledge production and scientific research. Rosser (2004) argues that, "feminists identified androcentric biases, African American revealed Eurocentric biases, and socialist uncovered biases reflective of class" (p. 61).

To maintain the scientific basis of feminist research, Sandra Harding introduced the concept of "strong objectivity" (2004) which considers the positions of both the researcher and the researched at all stages of research. Related to the aforementioned, Hesse-Biber & Yaiser (2004) argues that strong objectivity means that one considers one's own standpoint during phases of a research project, and that this approach "maximizes objectivity" for the researcher while at the same time "ensures that the respondent's voice is represented, listened to, and understood throughout the research process" (p. 131). Steady (2005) went a step further by arguing that, "A researcher has acertain obligation to become involved in the realities and problems of the 'subjects' under study" (p. 323). I have found this approach to be important as a means to ensure the engagement of both the researcher and the interviewees with the research.

Haraway (1988), in her explanation of feminist objectivity and the interdependent relationship between the researched and the researcher, argues that, "feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and the splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see" (p. 583). Bhavnani (2004) argues that feminist objectivity necessitates dealing with three factors to achieve "situated knowledge" which are: i) accountability: in the sense of revealing the agency of the researched (i.e., escaping the prevailing conceptualizing of research subjects as powerless); ii) positioning, which

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refers to power relations inherent to the interplay between the researcher and the researched (i.e., the micro-politics); and iii) partiality, which refers to the question of difference between the researcher and the researched. She argues that "feminist objectivity provides unexpected openings and connections" (Bhavnani, 2004, p. 71).

Feminist analysis considers the wider context of the relationship between the researcher and the researched, and recognizes that both research participants and researchers themselves "are positioned and being positioned by virtue of history and context" (Olesen 2000, p. 226). Both the researchers' and the respondents' attributes (i.e., gender, "race," class, history, and social characteristics) have implications for the research process. The power relations between the researcher and the researched, (i.e., the "micropolitics," which are based on "socially ascribed characteristics such as race, gender, class as well as age of the interviewer and the interviewee" [Bhavnani, 2004, p. 73]) and how the researcher negotiates this relationship needs to be examined.

Further, "reflexivity is the process through which a researcher recognizes, examines, and understands how his or her own social background and assumptions can intervene in the research process" (Hesse-Biber, 2006, p. 129), and can further affect knowledge production. I followed a reflexive approach to research which requires a deep consciousness of the impacts of difference on the relationship between me and my informants and recognition that in reflexive research, difference is neither ignored nor simply added (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser., 2004, p. 117). I agree with Hesse-Biber (2006) that reflexivity "goes to the heart of the in-depth interview" (p. 130).

Qualitative Research Interviews

I used qualitative research methods including in-depth, semi-structured, and open-ended interviews within a feminist framework to collect data from the field. I selected these qualitative research tools because of their capacity to access information about women's experiences, activism, and the

challenges they face. In-depth interviews go beyond merely questions and answers (Hesse-Biber, 2006, p. 34). The open-ended nature of questions created a sense of engagement between me as a researcher and the research participants. It allowed my informants to participate actively and speaks for them. I gave them the chance to talk freely about their experiences; I didn't want to miss a detail which the participant might think important from her perspective. I used broad and open questions and listened to the life histories and experiences of the interviewees.

I also shared my experiences and viewpoints, which I believe created a comfortable atmosphere during the interviews. Open-ended interviews also enabled me to deal with shifting contexts, fluidity of positionalities, and to grasp multiple meanings in changing contexts. I believe that I have made visible the agency and resilience of women I interviewed in Sudan by showing what women think of themselves. This is completely opposite to inscribing them as powerless and as victims of a patriarchal society, a false consciousness, or nationalism.

My relationship with the interviewees.

I tried to maintain a balanced relationship with the interviewees during the interviews. However, power relations were at play. My socially ascribed characteristics such as my "ethnicity," "religion," and "region" carry in Bhavnani's words "hierarchical loadings of their own" (2004, p. 72). As I describe with examples below, in some ways I was in a powerful position, and in some ways I was not. I maintain that the fluidity and dynamism of power relations may have shaped all my entire interview process. I am a woman from North Sudan; I am Muslim, and educated. But the center of standpoint and privilege may shift depending upon whether I am seen as a woman from North Sudan, as a Muslim, or as a researcher of women's studies. It is not necessarily a status of privilege versus underprivileged. One can be privileged in one factor such as "ethnicity" or

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"region" and underprivileged in another, for example, religion; it again depends on the complexity and interaction of the socioeconomic situation with the political context.

When I interview a woman from North Sudan who is a Muslim and educated, and who belongs to an NGO or any political party, there is a kind of mutual feeling of being of the same status. However, if I interview a woman with the same attributes, but who belongs to the National Islamic Front, then she may feel that she is in a privileged position because of her membership in that organization, which controls political and economic power in the country. In the latter case, being a Muslim is not enough to have a privileged status. Dealing with my shifting identities and trying to locate myself, I found that I neither fit the privileged nor the oppressed categorization. I believe that what is important is not to be blinded by privilege, but to have awareness as much as possible of my own multiple positionalities.

Simultaneously, the interviewees are not passive. Their answers were mainly governed by their personal experiences. They could omit some information or direct the interview in a certain way to satisfy their own objectives. In other words: "The respondent could mention things which she thought necessary to support her story; but what each person said was not free of exaggerations, self-censorship, or misrepresentation" (Patai, 2001, p. 276). For example, I requested an interview with one of the leaders of the Islamic group. She postponed the interview a few times. When I went to see her at her office, she greeted me well and apologized for postponing the interview because she said she had been busy and wanted some time to get ready for the interview, as she had heard that I was coming from York University and from Canada. After she signed the consent form, which seems have strengthened her feelings about my "outside" positionality, she started the interview by responding to my questions by reading from a paper which she had previously prepared. It seemed that my status—someone who is coming from Canada and from outside

Sudan—made her feel uneasy. She dealt with me like a foreigner. I felt like a complete "outsider." Then I decided to tell her that I had graduated from the University of Khartoum, and I mentioned a few names of women in the Islamic groups whom I knew during university. I felt the need to reassert my "insider" positionality, so to make her feel more comfortable and I succeeded. I concur with Hesse-Biber (2006) that, "It is interesting and important to note that one's insider/outsider status is fluid and can change even in the course of a single interview" (p. 143).

Although consent forms enhanced issues of accountability and ethics towards my research interviewees, they created different responses among my interviewees. Many of the interviewees liked the idea of signing the consent form before the start of the interviews; it created a kind of mutual confidence and added an element of respect between me, as a researcher, and the interviewee as a participant. It also seemed to add to the value of the research, thus giving me a respectful academic image. When I handed one of my interviewees a consent form, explained the points mentioned in the form, and requested her signature, she said, "Oh, this is very good. We don't have such things here; actually we don't insist to have them, but yes this is how people in good universities do research." Another interviewee had a different view. She said, "You don't need this. I know you, and you know me and I agreed to do this interview. You don't need my signature as a proof." This indicated the level of trust and comfortable atmosphere during that particular interview.

The emotional content and nonverbal gestures behind the stories and facts raised gave me a better understanding of the multiple and shifting meanings of gender in different contexts. In my interview with one of the community activists, who is also a worker in an NGO concerned with motherhood and children, I was told about the challenges of work in remote regions of Sudan where women often died during the delivery of their babies, and fathers were the object of awareness-

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raising regarding the importance of helping their wives to take care of children. When I asked her to what extent she thinks they have been successful in raising men's consciousness in such an extremely tight patriarchal society, she said, "we achieved relative success. Some men agree to learn how to hold infants and give them their food," then she sighed and said, "You know I am the only daughter in my family with three brothers, all of us are married. You know because I am the woman they [her brothers] believe that I am the one who is supposed to take care of my sick mother. She lives with me, they don't know and have no idea how much this is difficult, they just come as visitors." Her reflection on her personal experience demonstrated to me how activist women who work to change the meaning of gender in their society must also work hard to achieve more equitable gender relations in their own personal lives.

Women's personal experiences and "early experience [forms] an important ground for the female sense of self as connected to the world" (Hartsock, 1987, p. 168). Especially during the years of the Pioneers[6] my interviewees referred to the early experiences of their childhood and how it informed their understanding, activism, and their urge to defend their rights as women in society. For instance, in my interview with Dawla—one of the pioneers—she states that,

> My father insisted that I go to the English school in Khartoum [she was living in
>
> Omdurman another part of the capital and she needed to take the Tram]. Many came
>
> to my father and said, "How can you let your daughter travel by herself to a school
>
> of non-Muslims?" But my father said, "This is my daughter and I allow her to go.
>
> Nobody has the right to say anything about it." He supported me.

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[6] Pioneers were the first women in Sudan who established and led the women's movement there. I describe this group in more detail in Chapter Three.

In my interview with Amina, another pioneer, she said,

> We were living in Omdurman, which is a big city. We had clean water from taps,
> electricity, and a good bathroom but when I visited my uncle in Wad-Ramli[7] they
> had none of these; they suffered. That was when I started questioning the whole
> situation and trying to find answers.

As rightly confirmed by Trinh T. Minh-ha's life stories of interviewees, they represent not only her memory but "the story teller is the living memory of her time, her people" (Trinh, 1989, p. 125). Furthermore, some of these stories draw my attention to another factor, which is the positive and supportive role played by men in these women's lives.

In my fieldwork, I have also interviewed men who have been supportive of women and who have a different understanding and awareness of gender roles which may help women in their struggle to change inequitable gender relations. Sandra Harding (2004b) goes beyond the fact of the existence of men who have been supported to women in different contexts to recognize the contributions of male authors such as "John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, and Friedrick [Friedrich] Engels as central parts of the legacy of earlier eras of feminist philosophy, political theory, and social theory" (p. 177). She also calls for consideration of the possibility of solidarity "among groups with different but partially overlapping interests" (p. 195).

In my interview with one of the supportive Sudanese men, he said that, "I am a feminist in spite of people not accepting this from a man." He considers himself a feminist not only because he supports women's rights but also because he wrote a book and advocates for a certain kind of thinking which he believes can provide a route to women's rights. I concur with Harding's (2004) call for solidarity with supportive men (p.195) who, in the case of Sudan, were referred to by most

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[7] Wad-Ramli is a small rural community near Omdurman.

of my interviewees in complimentary terms rather than in competitive ways. Further, those men who understand and are aware of their gendered "positioning" in society may provide a different lens in finding opportunities for social change.

The question of social change has also shed its light in the research process in the debate around the academic/activist divide. Academics are not separated from their communities; they are socially related to their communities (Sprague & Kobrynowicz, 2004, p. 93). In my interview with one of these supportive men who is also an academic, I asked him about the obstacles the women's movement confronts in Sudan. In his answer, he said,

> I believe one of the major obstacles is that prominent researchers like you conducted
> such good research and arrived at good results, but kept their researches on the
> shelves of their libraries and hang their certificates on the walls without trying to
> disseminate the knowledge they gained and share it with their communities.

This accusation is often directed against academics and it affects the relationship between the academics and activists in a community. I am both an academic and a community worker, who used to work in projects directed toward helping women in the community. This issue of the importance of sharing knowledge and research results with not only the research participants, but also with the whole community of activists and women represents one of my concerns. I believe that sharing research findings can be a useful means of building connections between activists and academic women. It can also be a good tool for implementing research outcomes at a community level and enacting positive change in a woman's life, which is the ultimate goal to be pursued.

I conducted two rounds of interviews in December 2009 and again in December 2011 to follow up on some of the interviewees. During both sets of interviews, the political scene was very

tense.[8] During the first round in December 2009, the government, the political parties, and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) were all getting ready for the elections as per the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which enabled a new national government to represent the people of South Sudan in a transitional government. Issues of trust and suspicion were high. Some of the women from the National Congress Party and the Popular Congress Party—both Islamic political parties—refused to be interviewed because they thought that I was affiliated with opposition parties. I needed to use other contacts I had through friends and relatives in order to be able to interview some people. One of my colleagues at the Department of Political Science at the University of Khartoum introduced me to a research assistant who had some connections with the party of the government—the National Congress Party—as it was thought that this would spare me security hassles that might hinder my work.

I gave my interviewees full freedom to choose where we conducted the interview; some interviews were conducted at participants' homes, some at offices, and some in public places such as hotels or halls. Some interviewees would only give me half an hour or 15 minutes of their time as they were so busy. Thus, I needed to go back two or three times to finish the interview. For some others I had to wait for them to finish a workshop or a session in Parliament. One of the women whom I interviewed was among the youngest parliamentarians who had joined the government party as a women's representative from Eastern Sudan. When I passed through the security at the gates of the parliament for the first time in my life, in order to interview her, I was kept outside waiting until the security forces called her to verify my identity and the purpose of my visit. This interviewee was one of the few women from Eastern Sudan who managed to acquire a university education while also maintaining her political activism. She was very enthusiastic and

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[8] The interviews for this dissertation took in the years leading to and up to the separation of the Republic of South Sudan and immediately afterwards. I do not address the impacts of separation on the women's movement. Such an analysis will follow in future research and publications.

proud of being a Member of Parliament and was excited to introduce me to some of her colleagues, as well as insisting that I enter the Parliamentary chamber just before the start of a session to see the government in action for myself.

However, there are two things I want to mention that I experienced throughout most of the interviews. First, some of the interviewees were glad to participate and tell their stories and welcomed me with the well-known Sudanese hospitality. In some cases, this included invitations for meals, if it was time for breakfast or lunch. Second, most of them considered this research a good effort to document the recent developments in women's activism, especially since most studies so far are not concerned with the history of the movement. Some agreed to use their real names when referring to their statements in my study and I think this also reveals a degree of mutual trust.

In December 2009, I conducted 40 interviews with different women's groups in Sudan. I conducted 51 interviews in total. The interviewees included the groups described below.

Pioneers of the women's movement.

This group includes four of the Pioneers who started the organized women's movement in the late 1940s. Their profound contributions have laid the basis for the evolution of women's activism. Their struggles with a patriarchal society and with the nationalist men deserve to be documented. Their stories reflect their resilience, frustrations, and accomplishments. They include one of the first Medical doctors to graduate from the University of Khartoum, one of the leading Pioneers of the 1950s as well as during Nimairi's regime, a Pioneer who was a member of the teaching staff at the University of Khartoum, and a Pioneer from the South of Sudan who is also a medical doctor with a long history as a political activist and NGO worker.

Women members of political parties.

This group includes 10 women who are active members of the main political parties in Sudan. They include members of the Umma Party, the National Unionist Party, the National Islamic Front, and the Republican Brothers . Women of these political parties represent a different segment of the women's movement. Their experiences inside the political parties represent another angle of the story of the women's movement in Sudan. They reflected on their struggles inside the political parties, including their gendered relationships with their male colleagues, their struggles to influence political parties' policies and organizations, and the many other challenges they faced.

Women activists in community organizations and NGOs.

This group includes 23 members of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community organizations, and members of the Sudanese Women Empowerment for Peace (SuWep). These activists represent the new era of women's activism in Sudan that has benefited from the creation of women's international agencies and women's desks at official ministries. Some of them lead projects on violence against women, women's legal concerns, women's income generating projects, gender awareness, etc. My research outcomes have proved that these women have managed to come together and work for women's rights regardless of their differences in region, ethnicity, and religion. They represent the current activism of women in Sudan and they reflected on their experiences and the challenges.

Men who support women.

I also conducted interviews with three male activists who are considered supporters of women's activism in Sudan. This group includes: a professor of political science at a Sudanese university, who is well known for his support for the women's movement, and his academic contribution to supervising and supporting research on women and by women, as well as his contribution to NGO

projects for the benefit of women. I also interviewed a member of the Republican Brothers, a group well known for their advanced discourse on women's issues from an Islamic viewpoint. This interviewee has written and published a book in support of women's rights. The third male interviewee is a member of the National Congress Party, the current Islamic ruling party in Sudan, who also has their own understanding of women's rights. I have included this group's different viewpoints and perspectives with regard to women's issues. All the interviewees reflected on the evolution of the women's movement in Sudan and referred to challenges they face in supporting women's issues.

Follow-up interviews.

Furthermore, in April 2011, I conducted another round of 10 interviews with SuWep members. I also conducted a Skype interview with a woman who was responsible for the Women's Desk at the Netherlands Embassy from 1993–2000 and who led the initiation and ongoing support of SuWep. All the participants' oral testimonies are documented as primary data and integrated with quantitative and secondary sources. I will also provide a brief biography of some of the interviewees from each category in the appendices.

Before engaging in the interview process, an informed consent form was discussed with each interviewee and they were requested to sign it. In cases where interviewees were illiterate or they feared signing the consent form for political reasons, their approval was taped prior to participation. The interviews were conducted in either Arabic or English (my first and second languages and the languages of the interviewees). I recorded, translated, and transcribed the interviews into English and coded my data.

Fieldwork Limitations

Changes on the ground challenged this research. In July 2011, based on the Referendum results, South Sudan was declared the newest state in Africa. Such a separation came as the result of adherence to the peace agreement signed between the government of Sudan and the People's Liberation Army of the South. I went back for another round of interviews in December 2011, and to follow up with my interviewees. As indicated previously (see footnote number 8) the analysis in this dissertation is mainly based on the period before the separation.

SuWep is a solidarity group which worked for peace in Sudan and included women from the North, South, and Nuba Mountains. During the second round of interviews in December 2011, I encountered difficulties interviewing members of SuWep who resided in South Sudan. Due to security and safety issues, I could not travel to the South to interview them, although I believe that their testimonies could have added important insights to my research. The government even prior to the Referendum had excluded all representatives of the South from the Parliament, including some of the SuWep members who were parliamentarians representing the South. I used all contacts available and tried to conduct telephone interviews, but with no success.

Archival Research

My secondary data collection began with research on feminist scholarship on difference and solidarity in 2006 for my comprehensive exams. Other secondary sources of information that are specific to Sudan were also searched through libraries and archival sources in Khartoum, Sudan, and through the Internet. Specifically, Ahfad University in Khartoum provided specialized materials concerning women in Sudan. The Sudanese Archival Center and the University of Khartoum in Khartoum provided various materials on history, politics, and socioeconomic

development in Sudan. NGO materials, university archives, and other special collections pertaining to the Sudanese Women's movement in Sudan were also examined.

Structure of the Dissertation

I developed the following structure for the various themes and chapters of my dissertation.

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter introduces my research and the context of the study. I have referred to the ways in which difference comes to play an important role in the contexts of Sudan and the women's movement in Sudan. I then explained the main argument, research questions, and the significance of the study, field work experiences and limitations, and the structure of the study.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Approaches; Nationalism, Difference, Transnationalism, and Solidarity

In this chapter, I critically engage with feminist scholarship and feminists' contributions to nationalism and transnationalism. In supporting my research arguments, I refer to those feminists' views that advocate against the labeling of women as passive and assert that women may be active agents capable of enacting social change each at their own capacity and from their own positionality.   I examine feminist contributions to understanding the gender relations of nationalism; ideologies about women's participation in nationalist struggle; and make reference to women's participation in nationalist struggles in Sudan.

Feminists' views on the meanings of transnationalism and feminism are presented. Interventions with regard to black women, Third World women, Muslim women, and African women are explored in order to define the meaning of feminism in the context of Sudan. The concept of transnationalism is discussed, as well as possible means for achieving solidarity among

women. The chapter ends with a reflection on possible ways towards solidarity and some insights in this regard with reference to Sudan.

Chapter Three: the Evolution of the Women's Movement in Sudan: from a Concealed Face to a Parliament Member

This chapter provides a history of the Sudanese women's movement since its inception in 1947 up to the current era of transnational activism. It includes an exploration of the gendered impact of nationalism in Sudan and examines how women of Sudan have contributed to nationalist movements and nationalist projects in Sudan. The experiences of women with the military regime are explained, as well as the current diversity of women's groups and activisms. This chapter confirms that women of Sudan were active agents of the nationalist movement and strategically maneuvered patriarchal structures "over time." The chapter also discusses the successes and failures of the Sudanese women's movement.

Chapter Four: Localizing Transnationalism

I explore the transnational era of Sudanese women's activism that includes the history of transnational ties of Sudanese women with international and regional organizations, the participation of Sudanese women in UN Women's Conferences, and the impacts of international conventions on women's rights in Sudan. Also, this chapter provides a record of the establishment of women's organizations and women's desks at different ministries and describes some of the activities of these organizations. Women from NGOs, political parties, government offices, and women research centers voice their experiences and speak to their contributions and their transnational activism.

Chapter Five: Building of "Complicated" Alliances

In this chapter, I provide examples of how transnational activism has influenced women's solidarity efforts. Two examples will be provided in this regard: The women's solidarity groups against government decisions and SuWep. These examples provide an overview of how Sudanese women worked together around issues of common concern, despite their differences.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The conclusion reflects on how activism and heterogeneity have impacted possibilities of solidarity and prospects of transnationalism for the Sudanese women's movement. It also highlights whether the relative success of the movement has managed to challenge women's subordination in family and society and positively change gender relations, and whether the differences of ethnicity, religion and region have challenged the possibilities of a transnational women's movement in Sudan. It also reflects on the overall meaning of feminism in Sudan within the framework of nationalism and transnationalism.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework: Nationalism, Transnationalism, and Feminism

Introduction

Many feminists, including those from Africa and the Arab, Muslim, and the Third World—along with those from the global north—have argued against the homogeneity of women's experiences and believe that women's life experiences vary across their different races, ethnicities, religions, and class thereby shaping their political consciousness and activism (Al-Ali, 2000; Allman, Geiger, & Musisi, 2002;; Gluck, 1998; hooks, 2001; Lazreg, 2005; Mohanty, 1991; Naples, 1998; Steady, 2005).

Sudanese women's experiences are also informed by their differences, as well as nationalism and transnationalism. When I refer to the women's movement in Sudan, I am not referring to a homogeneous single group; rather, I am referring to a multiplicity of groups that use different approaches that are sometimes complementary and sometimes antagonistic. However, they all have a shared belief and understanding about their struggles as women, and they all work together when it is necessary, as my research results demonstrate. It is in an acknowledgement of their shared beliefs as women and their ability to come together in alliances despite their differences that I refer to them as a women's movement. Also, I refer to them as a one movement in recognition of the continuity and complementary nature of their activism. Each stage was historically led by a different women's group; starting with the era of Nationalism and culminating with the current era of transnationalism, each group drew from and built on the previous groups' experiences and accomplishments.

The movement includes a variety of women's groups and organizations: Islamist women affiliated with the state, women associated with political parties, secular women's groups from the

different regions of Sudan, independent nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and advocacy groups. Such different groups have different approaches to handling women's issues. All these groups mainly practice their activities in Khartoum, although they out-reach to rural and regional areas. As the capital of Sudan, Khartoum represents a meeting ground for women activists across the divides of ethnicity, religion, and region. Women's different locations, identities, and therefore experiences have invalidated the concept of a "global sisterhood," whether at the micro local context of Sudan or at the macro level of women's varieties of activism and experiences worldwide.

Naples (2002) adopts a broad definition of a women's movement which refers to the diversity of women's movements nationally and internationally, as well as the "multitude" of women's activities that challenge patriarchal hierarchies, including women's engagement in local activism through which they embrace their daily survival activities (p. 278). Tripp (2009) also stresses the heterogeneity of women's organizations that compose women's movements in her exploration of women's activism in Africa and defines these movements in terms of their strategies around women's concerns and their main goals of improving women's status (p. 14).

Following on from Naples and Tripp, I contend that the relatively large number and wide variety of women's groups, networks, and associations in Sudan that have come into being since 1947, amount to a women's movement. Myra Ferree (2006) differentiates between a "women's movement" and "Feminism." She argues that women's organizing, explicitly as women, to make social change is what makes a "women's movement." She also recognizes that, "many mobilizations of women as women start out with a non gender-directed goal, such as peace, antiracism, or social justice, and only later develop an interest in changing gender relations" (p. 6). Ferree states that while feminism is "activism for the purpose of challenging and changing women's subordination… it is a goal for social change, a purpose informing activism, not a constituency or a

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strategy" (p. 6).   This definition is to a large extent applicable when defining the women's movement in Sudan, which began as part of a national liberation movement and therefore initially set independence from the British as a priority, but continues its struggle against women's subordination to achieve more of women's rights, as I describe in detail in Chapter Three.

This chapter engages with a theoretical mapping of feminist scholarship that navigates feminist theorizations of nationalism and transnationalism.   Both phenomena are central to an understanding of the evolution of the women's movement in Sudan.   I build on Mohanty's (1991) argument that Third World women's experiences are informed by colonialism, imperialism, and nationalism (p. 7).   I advance this argument further by assessing feminists' debates about difference and solidarity within transnationalism and how women have used transnational opportunities to expand their activism.   These analyses and my dissertation assert that women are active agents, capable of struggle against nationalists' patriarchal interests; they benefit from transnational ties and, despite their differences, they manage to build solidarities across divides.

There are three main sections to this chapter: the first examines feminist approaches to nationalism; the second addresses the role and impact of transnationalism at local and international sites; and the third section considers the literature on feminist alliance-building and solidarity movements.

Feminism, Nationalism, and Women

Some scholars argue that nationalism is primarily a cultural phenomenon that is connected to shared symbols, ethnicity, religion, and language and is located within well-defined territorial boundaries (Anderson, 1991; Gellner, 2006; Smith, 1993).   Anderson's influential work argues that, "nation is an imagined political community" (1991, p. 6).   Feminists have criticized theories of nationalism that ignore gender relations, despite the fact women have participated in nationalist struggles and

gender relations have shaped nationalist projects, nation building, nation states, and nationalisms (Blom, 2000; Pettman, 1996). Blom states that, "there is a built-in antithesis between the two fields of history, histories of nations and histories of gender" (Blom, 2000, p. 3). In exploring the details of the history of African women with colonialism, Allman, Geiger, and Musisi advocate against the gender blindness of African chronological history which "signify definitive moments in the colonial histories of male political elites" (Allman, Geiger, & Musisi, 2002, p. 2).

An understanding of nationalism as a gendered phenomenon is important in order to ascertain how women participate in nationalist projects. I agree with Stasiulis (1999) that it is always a challenge for feminists to "position" themselves with regard to nationalism and nationalist politics (p. 182). Feminist scholarship has interrogated the gender blindness of nationalism to expose women's roles and activities in nationalist struggles and their outcomes (; ; Giles, 2004; Jacobs, 2000; McClintock, 1995; Pettman, 1996; Saigol,1999; ; Yuval-Davis, 1997), but also to critically evaluate these outcomes and acknowledge some of the gains that women have realized (Jayawardena, 1986). These and other studies show how gender is implicated in different and complicated ways in the construction of national identities and the delineation of cultural aspects of nationalism and their impacts on women.

As well, research has opened new avenues of analysis regarding women's roles in nationalists' struggles (Al-Ali, 2000; Chatterjee, 1989; Eisenstein, 2004; Martyn, 2004; Mohanty, 2003). Daiva Stasiulis' 1999 article on "Relational Positionalities of Nationalisms, Racisms, and Feminisms" marked a milestone in the evolution of feminist literature on nationalism as it highlighted the intersectionality of gender, class, "race," and sexuality in determining the "positionality" of a nationalist movement in a given context and—perhaps more importantly— discussing the significance of power relations in understanding how women relate to each other in

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such unequal situations. Relatedly, Enloe (2000) explores the relationship between nationalism, militarism, and feminism and reflects on women's roles in cases of conflicting nationalisms. Her work is a notable response to the nature of some nationalist struggles that assume legitimacy based on religion, ethnicity, "race," or economic discrepancies.

My work draws from and builds upon the aforementioned literature, which has been informative and relevant in explaining some aspects of the evolution of the women's movement in Sudan. However, I argue that it is important to go beyond how women have been used in nationalists struggles. This is necessary to understand how women "imagine" their nations. As Sorenson & Matsuoka (2001) argue, men and women do not always share the same vision of a "nation." Women may imagine themselves achieving more participation in decision-making and a more equal division of responsibilities at home. Very few men envision new nations in which women play a major role and in which men participate equally in household tasks and child care (p. 105). We need to examine also how nationalist men perceive women's roles in nationalist struggles.

I contend that women's resilience in nationalist struggles underscores both national and gender struggles. I concur with Ranchod-Nilsson's (2000) call for "a feminist perspective on nationalism that does not discount or overlook women's agency or women's own imagining of the Nation" (p. 170). I further maintain that this is of utmost importance not only because the current dynamics of globalization and the rising ethnic, racial, or religious fundamentalisms necessitate a new analysis of gender (Grewal & Kaplan, 2008, p. 253), but also because the "subject woman" has changed from the "new emancipated woman" in anti-colonial nationalist struggles to the "transnational woman." This "transnational woman" is able, as my research results indicate, to

move beyond the patriarchal limits set by nationalist men and women and work as an active *nationalist* agent beyond the boundaries of the "nation" itself for women's rights

Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993) have identified five major ways that women participate in nationalists struggles: i) as biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities; ii) as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups; iii) as central participants in the ideological reproduction of collectivity and as transmitters of its culture; iv) as symbols in the ideological discourses used in ethnic/national differences; and iv) as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles (p. 7). Anthias and Yuval Davis argue that despite this active participation of women, especially during the anti-colonial nationalist struggles and their sincere efforts to gain independence as a necessary step to attain more rights, women's demands for equal rights after independence are normally ignored. Instead of considering women as symbols of change, it is maintained that their rights for equal citizenship have been denied and traditional gender roles asserted by post-colonial nationalist states (Giles & Hyndman, 2004; McClintock, 1995; Pettman, 1996; Saigol, 1999; Schaser, 2000; Tripp, Casimiro, Kwesiga, & Mungwa, 2009; Yuval-Davis, 1997).

Jayawardena (1986) highlights the interdependence of nationalism and feminism in Third World countries and acknowledges the gains women can achieve by participating in nationalist struggles. She contemplates the idea that nationalist projects allow women some space for resistance and strengthens both their capacity and self-assurance by enabling access to work and education. However, she maintains that in India—and other countries in which the local bourgeoisie replaced imperialist rulers through a process of negotiation and gradual reforms—the women's struggle did not move beyond the sphere of limited reforms, i.e., equality for women within the legal process; the removal of obvious discriminatory practices; and the right to vote,

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education, and property. Such reforms did not address the basic question of women's subordination within the family and in society (Jayawardena, 1986, p. 10). Even the sort of education provided was "incapable of pushing the consciousness of women beyond the appearance of legal equality" (p. 19).

I do agree with Jayawardena that these "reforms" did not directly deal with women's subordination in society, but women did benefit from these "reforms" to strengthen their existence in public life. If gender relations are understood as a process where the meaning of gender changes over time (Blom, 2000, p. 9), these "reforms" pave the way for transforming gender relations and enabling women to resist the patriarchy and realize some of their interests. Despite the change in gender relations, it is worth mentioning that these "reforms" do not have the same effects on all women. Differences of ethnicity, region, and religion—especially in the case of Sudan—result in the deprivation of many women from benefitting from such "reforms."

Susan Geiger's essay on "Tanganyikan Nationalism as 'women's work': Life Histories, Collective Biography & Changing Historiography" which is based on her book *TANU Women: Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism, 1955–1965*, is also an important contribution in highlighting the role of women in nationalist struggles. In her exploration and re-evaluation of Tanganyikan nationalism, she calls for reconsidering the master narrative of nationalism in Tanzania which glorified the contribution of men and neglected the important role played by women.

Geiger reframes the situation, "I suggest that Tanganyikan nationalism can be conceptualized as women's work—that women's work was central to its construction" (Geiger, 2005, p. 213). She mainly refers to what she calls "TANU women's relational construction of nationalism" in which she introduces the life histories of the women who participated in nationalist

struggles in Tanzania and who brought to and enriched nationalism in Tanzania with their relational ties, networks and rotating funds in women's groups, Swahili language and culture, dances, writing, singing and trans-ethic marriages. Women used all these means to call for freedom. She further argues that in so doing, women deny that their nationalist consciousness is coming from abroad or learned from nationalist men, but rather "they shaped, informed and spread a nationalist consciousness" (p. 215). I believe that the importance of Geiger's work lies in its assertion that women's nationalist consciousness is rooted in their culture and their sense of belonging to their nation. This also asserts their role not only as women, but as active political agents.

Also, other feminists writers have reviewed the cultural aspects of nationalism—for example, Al-Ali (2000), Chatterjee (1989), Eisenstein (2004), Martyn (2004), Moghadam (1994), and Mohanty (2003)—and stress the tension between modernity and tradition involved in the way nationalist projects deal with the women's question. This has provided more space to consider women's resilience in nationalist struggles, as it shows how women use the tension between tradition and modernity to extend their interests. Nationalists in India, Egypt, and other places have adopted an approach in dealing with women which is an equivocal combination of tradition and modernity. Women are "caught" between becoming "modern" and maintaining their traditional values as symbols of the nation (Eisenstein, 2004; Martyn, 2004; Mohanty, 2003).

Women in nationalist projects express modernity by practicing their rights through suffrage, education, and employment; however, their rights in the home and family are kept intact and this is an important difference from the West (Al-Ali, 2000, p. 28). In his analysis of this tension between modernity and tradition, Chatterjee (1989) argues that the nationalist project in India enhanced an identification of social roles by gender. Indians divide their culture into two domains: the material/masculine/outer/world versus the spiritual/feminine/inner/home. The "world" is the

domain of men while the "home" is assumed to be the domain of women and considered to be unaffected by the activities of the material world. By adopting this contradictory approach, Indian nationalists replaced the old or classic patriarchy which—was represented by the boundaries of the home—with a more flexible but culturally-determined domain set by the difference between socially approved male and female conduct (Chatterjee, 1989, p. 248). He goes on to define this new patriarchy by stating that,

> The new patriarchy advocated by nationalism conferred upon women the honor of a
>
> new social responsibility, and by associating the task of "female emancipation" with
>
> the historical goal of sovereign nationhood, bound them to a new, and yet entirely
>
> legitimate, subordination. (p. 248)

Such a contradiction is illustrated by the simultaneous opening of spaces for women versus the constraining of women's activism by men to sustain their patriarchal interests. For women to achieve equality, there should be a "struggle against the false essentialisms of home/world propagated by nationalist ideology" (Chatterjee, 1989, p. 253). I argue that women may benefit from this tension between tradition and modernity, and that this is the case with Sudanese women in Sudan. A "new patriarchy" and "contradictory discourse" has signaled a change in gender relations for Sudanese women, installing them in the public sphere in education, work, and participation in civic life. The inherent tension in this situation has created further fluidity in the margins between tradition and modernity, and redefined the meaning of gender differences. As elsewhere, Sudanese women have used the opportunities provided by the nationalists to open spaces in public life, i.e., rights to education and work, to strategically continue their activism, and to push for their rights in family life and other areas to overcome the dichotomy between the private and the public.

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Also, the manipulation by nationalist projects' of gender, race, and ethnicity as factors of inclusion and exclusion have been well documented (Chatterjee, 1989; Juteau, 1999; Mohanty, 1991; Stasiulis, 1999). Women's participation in nationalist projects is also connected to their differences across gender, "race," ethnicity, and religion. Depending on the particular expression of power relations, "race," or religion may predominate. Indeed, only women who are members of the dominant nationalist groups benefit from nationalist projects. Women who are part of minority nationalist projects within the same geographical space (i.e., because they are of different ethnicity, religion, or race), often suffer oppression at the hands of dominant nationalist men and women (Stasiulis, 1999, p. 183).

In her contribution, which demonstrates how gender and other factors can position, determine, and affect women's participation in nationalist struggles, Stasiulis (1999) highlights the need to develop a theoretical framework that can analyze "not merely the plurality but also and more importantly the positionality of different nationalisms, racisms, ethno-cultural movements, and feminisms in relation to one another" (p. 183). I further argue that this framework is essential not only for an analysis of women's "positionality" but also to examine women's possibilities of coming together in alliances. Indeed, this process of "othering communities" (Rai, 2002, p. 13) under the banner of nationalism affects relationship between women in diverse groups across the differences of region, religion, and ethnicity.

In Sudan, as Bernal (2005) argues, "nation-building efforts often entail attempts to foster or impose notions of cultural homogeneity" (p. 173), as demonstrated by Sudanese Arabic and Islamic cultures. This has resulted in long civil wars between the North and South of Sudan. Enloe (2000) highlights the relationship between nationalism, militarism, and feminism to claim that, "when nationalist movements become militarized, men's privilege in the community becomes more

entrenched" (p. 56). In Sudan, women from the Islamist group—namely, members of the National Congress Party and women of the South—were active participants in the national and civil war between the North of Sudan and South of Sudan. As argued by Enloe (2000), "the processes of militarization frequently were oiled by the failures of women activists to create cross-sector alliances, to lower those barriers separating women" (p. 295). In another development of feminist theorization of nationalism, and in a move to assert the positive relationship between feminism and nationalism as well as to affirm women's agency in nationalist struggles, Ranchod-Nilsson (2000) argues that,

> … Because the very idea of the nation is premised on gender inequality, specifically the subordination of women, those writing about the gendered nature of nations are almost entirely pessimistic about the possibilities of women asserting their own agendas, feminist or not, in the context of nationalist movements. (p. 173–174).

In a trend which affirms that the relationship between feminism and nationalism is not necessarily antagonistic in all contexts, Hee-Kang Kim (2009), in her study of nationalism in South Korea, confirms that feminists there continued to hold onto their nationalist agenda while concomitantly fighting the patriarchal aspects of nationalism. Ranchod-Nilsson (2000) also provides an example of how rural and combatant women's active participation during the liberation movement in Zimbabwe was important in envisioning the nation. As well, my research results indicate that in the case of Sudan at a certain stage in 1997, Sudanese women became aware of the negative impacts of war and managed to surpass the influence of the nationalists' divisive "militarized" agenda and go beyond their differences of religion, ethnicity, and region to form alliances that furthered their will and needs. This is why I believe it is important to highlight

women's roles in nationalist struggles and consider that the relationship between feminism and nationalism may not necessarily be oppositional.

I concur with Vickers (2002) that the relationship between nationalism and feminism varies and may take different forms, i.e., "feminisms and nationalisms take different forms in different contexts… both isms are historically and geographically situated and shaped by a nation's location in global systems of colonialism and neocolonialism" (p. 284). So, women may or may not realize certain benefits from joining nationalist struggles depending on the context and the timing of their participation. Also, women participate in different capacities in nationalists' movements and have different experiences ranging from organizing or participating in demonstrations to active combat in national conflicts and wars. There is a need to consider each case of women's participation in nationalist struggles within its concrete context to reach more specific conclusions and avoid generalizations. So, women may join nationalist projects as active agents and as such, their goals may depart from those of the nationalist leadership at a point in time, as per the outcomes of this study. Saigol (1999) observed that women who participated in nationalist projects earlier in India tended to remain within the boundaries of the nationalist project. Only at later stages did they start to question the nationalist patriarchy itself (p. 99). I argue that women in Sudan considered the nationalist agenda as their own, and strategically participated in the nationalist struggle for independence.

I further maintain that there is a need for a new analysis of gender with regard to the intersectionality of women's differences, women's "positionality" in nationalist struggles, as well as the current wave of globalization and transnationalism. This necessitates the revisiting of women's roles in nationalist struggles. Currently, nationalism is challenged by globalization and transnationalism. As the new "transnational woman," who indeed surpasses patriarchal boundaries

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of the nationalists as well as the boundaries of the nation, assumes new roles in nationalist struggles. In her efforts to transcend the repressive structures that are maintained by nationalists, the "transnational woman" is launching her activism locally, but reaching out transnationally.

Women and Transnationalism

The aim of this section is to discuss the impacts of transnationalism at the local level of women's organizing and women's activism. I have adopted a wide definition of "transnationalism." I propose that it provides an analytical framework that is suitable for examining the activism of women of Sudan in the current era of the ongoing multifaceted processes of globalization and neoliberalism. Further, transnational feminists' praxis allows for the contextualization of women's experiences and agency with a consideration of the oppression of their daily lives (Naples, 2008, p. 514).

I concur with Inderpal Grewal (1994) that transnationalism considers "multiple subjectivities" and works out differences in a way that can avoid essentialism, appreciate dissimilarity, but reach out to "overlapping positions" to create alliances (p. 236). I expand on Grewal by arguing that in transnational feminist practices do not only refer to alliances among feminists across borders, but also include coalitions among different women's groups across the divides of ethnicity, religion, region etc. In this research, I emphasize transnationalism as a mutual linkage that occurs not only between global networks and women's local groups but also among the variety of local women's groups, i.e., transnationalism at two levels—"local/international" and "local/local"—in an attempt to acknowledge the efforts of building "transnational alliances" among women's different groups at local sites.

Feminists have used the term "transnational" in many ways. Feminist literature (Desai, 2010; Ferree & Tripp, 2006;; Khagram & Levitt, 2008; Lee & Shaw, 2010; Moghadam, 2005;

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Naples, 2002; Tripp , Casimiro, Kwesiga, & Mungwa, 2009) celebrates and explores the opportunities provided by the United Nations (UN), the role of the UN International Women's conferences, and International and Local Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in support of women's local and international activism. This research refers to the role of women's transnational networks, the provision of new resources and spaces for channeling local women's concerns, and the facilitation of interconnections between global women's networks and local women's groups. Transnational activism includes, in addition to international conferences, the growth of transnational women's movements and civil society groups, as well as linkages within transnational civil society and the flow of resources to support women's organizations.

However, until recently little attention has been paid to local women's groups and/or networks involved in transnational activism and the local impacts of such engagements on the different dynamics of women's activism (Alvarez, 2009; Basu, 2000; Chowdhury, 2011; Friedman, 2001; Tripp, 2006). Friedman (1999) calls such local impacts "transnationalism reversed" and refers mainly to the local activism of women in Venezuela in preparation for the international women's conferences in Nairobi and Beijing. She argues that both local conditions and international opportunities come together to shape women's local activism in different ways (p. 385).

I agree with Tripp (2006) that these transnational impacts are not only shaped by the local contexts, but are dealt with differently by different women's groups in local sites (p. 6). Also, part of this "reversed transnationalism" underscores the importance of solidarity among different women's groups. Alvarez (2000) maintains that both the national and the transnational "are mutually constitutive" she refers to down-top activism on part of local women to pressure for their rights (p. 32). However, she acknowledges the dynamics of power relations involved which may

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lead to contradictory and clashing impacts among different women's groups. Chowdhury (2011) highlights the "uneasy alliances" between women activists and the local and international development and human rights organizations against acid violence in Bangladesh in the mid-1990s,[9] and indicates the importance of the contradictions, tensions, hierarchal relations, and the adverse "unintended effects" of "transnationalism reversed," as well as calling for a critical understanding of this "reversed women's activism" with the hope of building "more just feminist alliances" (p. 8).

I agree with Basu's (2000) emphasis on the complexity and "indeterminate character of transnational activism" and argue with her for a widening of the scope of "transnationalism reversed," or the "flip side" of transnationalism, to use Alvarez's (2000, p. 32) words, to include references to not only "home activism" between local women's different groups and international organizations and/or international ties, but also to consider women's activism among different women's groups at local sites. It is also crucial to consider efforts at creating solidarity and "complicated" alliances among local different women's groups as part of this "transnationalism reversed." I argue that in the case of Sudan, such "*complicated transnational alliances*" have been achieved at both levels: local/local (i.e., Sudan), and local/transnational, (i.e., across borders).

I also argue that adopting a wider definition of "transnationalism reversed" requires a broader understanding of the "transnational." I concur with Chowdhury (2011) that the term transnational "refers to women's organizing that recognizes, in theory and in practice, the multilayered power relations shaping women's struggles in North-South as well as South-South contexts" (p. 7).

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[9] For more details about this campaign and its ramifications, please refer to Elora Halim Chowdhury (2011).

Chandra Mohanty and Jacqui Alexander (2010) provide a broad definition for the "transnational" emphasizing its difference from "global feminism."[10] For them, transnationalism considers the importance of the different geographical locations, women's difference, and unequal power relations in shaping women's experiences. It also pays attention to the different international impacts of the economic, political, and ideological processes. Finally, it highlights the importance of "anti capitalist and antiracist positions in building solidarity among different women's groups" (p. 24). They further this definition to include the academy as a site of knowledge production about the "transnational" and highlight the importance of "the link between the politics of location, the spatiality of power, and that of knowledge production" (p. 26).

I argue that such a broad definition of transnationalism is quite helpful to understand and analyze transnationalism in the context of this study. I extend this definition and call for considering the local as a site of knowledge production of the transnational. This is of key importance. The ways in which women in Sudan have used and adapted the International UN documents and their transnational ties (including NGOs, UN offices, and the support of donors and foreign embassies) to support their rights and create "complicated transnational alliances" are informative and represent an essential part of transnationalism reversed. A succinct understanding of transnationalism reversed necessitates a thorough consideration of tensions, contradictions, and power relations involved. This is a cornerstone in the building of alliances and assuming anti-capitalist and anti-racist positions in building those alliances. I argue that though transnationalism provides a space to realize such complicated alliances, it also challenges the possibility of such

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[10] In defining global feminism, Friedman (2001) maintains that, "this term arose in relation to the common second wave feminism assumption of a universal patriarchy and the promotion of a global sisterhood united in its resistance to worldwide male dominance" (p. 25). Global feminism is further criticized for advocating agendas that are not necessarily related to women's struggles in Third World contexts: "the term global feminism has stood for a kind of Western cultural imperialism. It has eluded the diversity of women's agency in favor of a universalized Western model of women's liberation that celebrates individuality and modernity" (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994, p. 17).

alliances. I agree with Moallem that the "recognition of the heterogeneity of women and the historical specificity of their subjectivity is crucial to a feminist transnational perspective" (1999, p. 168), and furthermore, the ways that women deal with their differences in transnational contexts is of similar importance.

The local in the transnational: African and Islamic feminisms.

Debates concerning women's different experiences began with the second wave of feminism during the 1970s in the West. Such debates, especially with regard to different meanings of feminism and the definitions of African feminism and Islamic feminism, are relevant to an examination of women's movement in Sudan and defining Sudanese women's feminisms.

The denial of difference among women results in forms of universalism and the promulgation of ideas of global sisterhood that emphasize individualism and consider gender as the sole reason for women's oppression. It ultimately results in the neglect of women's experiences, as confirmed by Yuval-Davis (2006) who asserts that,

> …women who see the world differently, or who argue that they are not as oppressed
>
> by men and patriarchy as some other women, are not recognized as having different
>
> histories and/or locations, but just as expressing symptoms of their un-raised
>
> consciousness. (p. 276)

Such approaches that interrogate the meaning of feminism and generalizations about sameness of oppression have been led by Black feminists, women of color, Third World feminists, Islamic feminists, and African feminists (Allman, Geiger, & Musisi, 2002; Collins, 2000; Grewal & Kaplan, 2006; hooks, 2001; Nnaemeka, 2005; Oyewumi, 2005; Swarr & Nagar, 2010; Steady, 2005; Tripp, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Blom (2000) argues that, "concepts of equality and of individuality, central not only to Western feminism but also to Western philosophy, seemed foreign

to the value systems respected by Indian women" (p. 10). Collins (2000) indicates that "Black women's feminist epistemology stems from the Black women's consciousness of both gender and race oppression as they are rooted in material conditions structured by social class" (p. 89). Mohanty (1991) stresses the importance of the experiences of colonialism, nationalism, and imperialism in Third World women's lives and argues that there is a "contrast between a singular focus on gender as a basis for equal rights and a focus on gender in relation to race, and/or class as part of a broader liberation struggle" (p. 11).

Along the same lines Oyewumi (2003) highlights the importance of colonialism, slavery, imperialism, and "western hegemony" in understanding women's subordination (p. 31). She also confirms the importance of the local setting as opposed to universalized findings imposed by the West (2005b, p. 15). I concur with Tripp (2006) in her argument that, "in their local struggles for equal rights, women in these regions—Asia, Africa, and Latin America—developed their own feminisms distinct from Western feminism" (p. 59). However, Black women, women of color, African, or Muslim women can't be considered as a homogeneous category due to the different ways in which gender is implicated with the other factors of class, "race," ethnicity, religion and because differences along these axes are constantly fluid and changing.

In exploring the details of the history of African women within colonialism, Allman, Geiger and Musisi (2002) confirm that African women challenge the patriarchy rooted in both indigenous and colonial ideologies (p. 2). African feminist writings interrogate the meanings of feminism and its connections with the West. Arndt (2000) maintains that the hostility of many Africans to feminism has more to do with imperialism than with the basic ideas of feminism (p. 67). In their endeavor to distinguish African feminism, African feminists call themselves different names such as womanists (Walker, 1983) and Africana womanists (Hudson-Weems, 1993). Nnaemeka (2005)

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and some others refer to negofeminism in reference to the philosophy of negotiation which is at the center of Igbo culture (i.e., a "feminism of negotiation" and "no ego feminism," p. 12). African feminists also question the meaning of the categories of gender and the divide between the public and the private as basic concepts used by some feminists that may not always fit with African contexts (Steady, 2005, p. 317). Cornwall (2005) maintains that,

> … a starting point for exploring "gender" in Africa calls for an approach that is
>
> sensitive to the range of relational subject positions taken up by women and men in
>
> the different domains of discourse that coexist within any single cultural setting. (p.
>
> 5).

I agree with Arndt (2000) who—in her study of African feminist literature—argues that gender in African contexts is always combined with other oppressions that are the result of imperialism, religious fundamentalism, and more recently, neoliberalism and corruption to name few. Also, both men and women are seen to suffer from similar social oppressions and need to collaborate to end such oppressions. Arndt regards men and women's relationships as "complementary" (i.e., both should work together to transform the existing unequal gender relationships). She quotes Ogundipe-Leslie, who contends that,

> No, men are not the enemy. The enemy is the total social structure… but men
>
> become enemies when they seek to retard, even block, these necessary historical
>
> changes for selfish interests in power… (Arndt, 2000, p. 73–74)

And important to my argument, Ogundipe-Leslie asserts that African women are aware of the limits, controversy, and challenges of this "complementarity" approach. Arndt further maintains that with regard to family structure, African feminists value motherhood, but insist that women should define themselves beyond being wives and mothers. They are also concerned with burdens

of the daily work of African women and woman-to-woman discrimination, "especially the discrimination against daughters-in-law (gerontocracy)" (Arndt, 2000, p. 72). Tripp et al. (2009) maintain that although extending the concept of motherhood to political spheres have been criticized; it is still referred to in some contemporary African contexts (p. 28).

African feminist writings also assert the strong community relationship among women in African contexts and signal this connection as a feature of African feminism and African women's agency (Mahmoud, 2002; Nfah-Abbenyi, 2005). Mahmoud (2002) argues that, "African women's traditional groups translated women's awareness of their place in society and reflects their support for each other which enables them to solve most of the problems they face" (p. 158). Nnaemeka (2005) and Steady (2005) emphasize that African feminism reflects the basic ideals of many African communities, which underscores complementarity, power sharing, accommodation, and compromise. Steady (2005) argues that,

> African feminism as defined in 1981 outlined the value of African women in the
> ideological, institutional and customary realms. Women's power bases are partly
> derived from cultural values that stress the potency of a female principle governing
> life and reproduction through motherhood and the centrality of children. (p. 326).

Despite the generality and romanticism of this definition, I find it useful in the sense that it confirms the impact of the society, culture, and community on women's activism despite the fact that the strength of community, collectivism, and social ties is challenged and weakened by the current socioeconomic and political conditions imposed by neoliberalism and globalization. In Sudan, as my interviewees confirmed, women define and connect their activism with their "complementarity" with men, and with their community wherein customs, traditions, and religion play a large role.

Sudanese society is predominantly Muslim, and Muslim religious sects have come to play a major role in the history of both Sudanese society and state relations since independence and through affiliated political parties. This is why it is important to highlight how the "Islamic feminists" interrogate the meaning of feminism. Islamic feminists' writings started in the beginning of the 1990s and mainly argue that Islam has guaranteed many rights for Muslim women, but that they were denied those rights by the dominant patriarchal man-made readings of the Quran—the holy book of Muslims—that are irrelevant to the current time and distort the basic principles and the spirit of Islam (Afshar,1994; Barlow, 2008; Yamani, 1996). They work to build an Islamic framework which is gender-sensitive (Afshar 1999, p. 200) and seeks to realize justice for women within this religious framework (Eisenstein, 2004; Vickers, 2002).

Badran (2008) argues that, "Gender equality is integral to the Islamic feminist notion of equality of all insan or humankind transcending tribe, class, ethnicity, and race" (p. 33). Mayer (2008) maintains that this is a new trend in the understanding of Islam that creates a shift in the interpretation of Islamic sources that is based on goals beyond Islamic law (Maqasid Ash-shari'a). This trend asserts basic Islamic goals and values in opposition to the literal interpretation of Islamic sources, which is led by "medieval Islamic jurisprudence" (p. 17). In Sudan, Nagwa Mohamed is among the very few who recently started similar Islamic feminist work; she mainly writes about the Islamic understanding of family, marriage and calls to go back to the main goals and objectives of Islam (Mohamed, 2013). Similar to other feminists groups, Islamic feminists encompass different groups with different conceptualizations centered on providing non-patriarchal readings of Quran i.e., different hermeneutics.

Moghissi (1999) criticizes "Islamic feminism," considering it as a project that threatens the existence of both liberal and socialist projects in Islamic societies (p. 110). In response to this

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criticism, Moallem (1999) argues that Moghissi "ignores the ways in which the secular and the socialist projects to which she refers unproblematically have been defined by the modernist opposition drawn between religion and secularism, not to mention that between religion and culture" (p. 176). Moallem further argues that Islamic feminism is a transnational resistance project formed against the "subjugation" of Islamic fundamentalism and Western global feminism and unsettles the dichotomies of secular/religious, tradition/modernity, and Islam/West (176). I concur with Cooke (2001) that the writings of Islamic feminists stand against the "passive" image of the oppressed Muslim woman and work to transform the conditions that lead to such images (p. 155–156). Moghadam (2005) considers Islamic feminism as "an innovative strategy… an intellectual movement of believing women whose interpretation of the Koran [Quran] serves to challenge political Islam and orthodoxy" (p. 48).

I argue that Islamic feminists strive to take part in the production of knowledge about Islam and in opportunities to overturn the passive image of Muslim woman. However, their initiative is challenged internally by fundamentalists for whom such a new approach represents a threat to their long-established reign. These religious leaders depict Islamic feminists as Western. They miss no opportunity to topple this initiative as simply being anti-Islamic, and those feminists as anti-religious or atheists.

Internationally, Islamic feminists are faced with both the hostility of the West—which often conflates them with supporting or justifying fundamentalists—and the resentment of those who believe in an anti-religious frame for approaching women's rights. Concurrently, their efforts are also threatened with suspicion due to the mounting violation of women's rights and violence against women in the Muslim countries. In Sudan, a considerable part of the women's movement

advocates Islam as a civilized project of the state and some are advocating a new interpretation of the Quran as will be indicated below.

The local in the transnational: Introducing Sudanese feminist history.

As previously discussed in Sudan the women's movement and women's organizing started with the struggle against colonialism in 1947. The Women's Union, which is considered as the first women's organization that led women's activism during the 1950s and 1960s and planted the seeds for the evolvement for women's activism in Sudan, got its first support from the Communist party in Sudan, although not all members of WU were communists. The pioneers of the women's movement in Sudan adopted a cautious approach in their demand for their rights so as not to incite the traditional and the religious forces in society against them. The first split in the movement came as a result of ideological difference among the members of the WU when two of its members decided to be part of the Sudanese Muslim Brothers Party. More details about the history of the movement will be explored in Chapter Three.

Since then, many women's groups in Sudan have come to define their activism within the parameters of Islam. The Muslim Sisters and the Republican Sisters represent the most influential Islamic feminists groups in Sudan, despite the existence of other Muslim women's groups that are connected with the religious sects, i.e., Al-Khatmia and Al-Mahdia and their affiliated political parties. Badri (2008) argues that in Sudan, Islamic women's groups are

> … composed of three main groups; pro-government groups who emphasize women's rights in the public life, without reference to the position of women in Islamic Family Law, conservative Muslim women who believe and accept uncritically all that is mentioned in the *Quran* about women and reject all Western allegations, and a third group who believes in the reinterpretation of the *Quran*,

some of them are members of the Republican Brothers who believe in the gender
equality of Islam. (p. 63).

The Muslim Sisters is a pro-government women's group that has adopted more advanced
thought in relation to women's existence in public life. The leader of the Muslim Brothers[11] and
Muslim Sisters in Sudan, Hassan Al-Turabi, explains the different stages in the development of the
Muslim Brothers' thoughts about women. During the first stage in the 1940s and 1950s, along with
other traditional groups, the Muslim Brothers denied women's existence in public life, but called
women to join the Muslim Brothers because they regarded Islam as open to all men and women.
The second stage came as a reaction to the Communist Party's support of women and the fact that
the Muslim Brothers lost women's support and women's votes in the 1960s, when women were
allowed to vote and entered elections of 1965. However, a critical understanding of women's
position in Islam and in society did not begin for the Muslim Brothers until the 1970s (Al-Turabi,
1991, p. 40). Hale (1996) describes the ideology of the Muslim Brothers or of the National Islamic
Front toward women by arguing that the Islamist men position Islamist women to serve the Islamic
movement. Accordingly, Islamists women are active in the work force under the conditions that
they fulfill the requirements of the party and the state (p. 186). A member of this group, in
explaining the ideology of the movement, said that,

> …the Islamic movement has realized a big push for women's presence at political
>
> life. It encourages women to join and connect this to Islam. It considers women's
>
> work in public life as "work for Allah—GOD-cause on earth"—it is one aspect of
>
> Jihad. It is a religious duty.

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[11] The Sudanese Muslim Brothers Party was established in 1954 and was influenced by the Islamic movement in Egypt. The Muslim Brothers and Muslim Sisters i.e., Al-Akhwan Al Muslimeen and Al-Akhwat Al-Muslimat, changed their name to the National Islamic Front (NIF) during Nimairi's Regime and again changed to the National Congress Party when they assumed power with military support in 1990. Thereafter, the Party split (in the late 1990s). The segment under their old leadership of Hassan Al- Turabi took the name: The Popular Congress Party.

The aforementioned understanding of Islam and the connection between women's role in Islam and women's role in public life has had a tremendous impact on the lives of many women who chose to join the Muslim Sisters. They actively participated in the different community activities in small residential areas, as well as in schools and universities. They "are often highly visible in public and may be engaged in creating new kinds of political roles for women" (Bernal, 2005, p. 174). My interviewees within this group further confirmed this active presence in public life.

The rereading of Islamic sources initiated by the Republican Brothers and Sisters Party, which started in 1945 and adopted a special understanding of Islam, especially with regard to women. Mohamoud Mohammed Taha was the leader and the philosopher of the Republican Brothers and Sisters. He was accused of apostasy and sentenced to death by President Nimairi in 1983 with the announcement of Shari'a Laws in Sudan. An-Na'im (1990) describes the Republican Brothers' approach of interpretation of Islamic resources as arguing that the Quran is divided into two parts of revelations: The Mekka revelations which came earlier, and contain the basic goals and messages of Islam, and the Medina revelations which came later, and contain legal provisions which are relevant to the specific historical conditions of the time of the "Prophet" (p. 54). The Republican Brothers provide a historical interpretation of the *Quran* rather than a literal interpretation in an attempt to consider time and context.

Regarding equality between men and women, they argue that on "doomsday" men are not responsible for their wives' wrongdoing; so if women are directly responsible to God, then in this world they should have the chance to be responsible for their work. Based on this argument, women are equal to men and they support this view by referring to the sections in *Quran* that clearly state equality between men and women. For them, the relationship between men and

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women is not built upon guardianship, but on mutual responsibility. Women, under the Islamic Personal Status Law,[12] have the freedom to choose their husbands and they do not believe in polygamy. One the pioneers of the Republican Brothers said,

> We believe that the philosophy of interpretation set centuries ago to solve men's problems at that time is not suitable for our current time and we call for a better understanding of our Sharia'a Laws.

Also, in my interview with one of the prominent male scholars who is a member of this group, he maintains that,

> I believe a social revolution for emancipation for women in Sudan can only be achieved from within Islam and religion and from within the advanced Islamic vision of Mohmoud Mohamed Taha, especially because the society is highly religious.

However, this group's presence and impact on Sudanese society is limited in comparison to the public presence of the Muslim Sisters, or other religious sects, and the secular groups of women who call for women's rights as human rights. The group that advocates support for international documents/tools and women's rights as a means for realizing justice for women includes mainly members of the Communist Party and a considerable number of women in NGOs and civil society groups i.e., secular groups. These groups have benefited from the opportunities provided by the International NGOs and the UN conferences and declarations with regard to women, as I will describe below.

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[12] Personal Status Law is connected with Islamic Shari'a Law and it mainly refers to regulations in regard to marriage, divorce, preserving women and children, guardianships and custody of children, and the Inheritance Law (Fluehr-Lobban 1987, p. 86). Joseph (2000) considers this Law as "a benchmark of feminist struggle, has been a site of contestation in the making of state and nation. Family law has been among the highest agenda items of liberal reformist movements, political Islamic movements, Islamic and secular women's movements—a testimony to the centrality of women's bodies and behavior to scripts of nationhood and statehood and a testimony to the centrality of "family" to social and political projects in the region [Middle East]" (p. 20).

The international in the transnational.

In an acknowledgment of the efforts of the UN in building a global women's movement and contributing to women's activism, Snyder (2006) highlights the collaboration among the UN civil servants, NGOs, and diplomats in the accomplishment of the UN's role (p. 48). Also, the UN represents a "transnational location" for the meeting of women from different parts of the world (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 279). Moghadam (2005) maintains that UN conferences have provided transnational feminists networks with resources to "spread their message" (p. 147). She further argues that these women's networks organize to collectively campaign for women's rights against Islamic fundamentalism, neoliberal capitalism, environment, human rights, and women rights at both local and transnational levels. I argue that the UN and the UN conferences have provided an arena for women's activism worldwide.

The establishment of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 1946 signaled the earliest form of international support for the promotion of women's rights. The establishment of the CSW marked the "shifting dynamics within transnational women's movements globally, giving more voice and legitimacy to the global South" (Tripp, 2006, p. 60). Important milestones in the history of the UN and women's rights include the UN Women's Conference in Mexico in 1975; the Women's Decade up to 1985; and the UN Women's Conference in Nairobi in 1985. Other sign posts include women's roles in protecting the environment at the Rio Conference on Environment & Development in 1992; the recognition of women's human rights in Vienna in 1993, at the International Conference on Human Rights; the recognition of women's reproductive rights in Cairo, in 1994, at the International Conference on Population & Development; the recognition of gender equality in Copenhagen, in 1995, at the World Summit on Social Development; and, finally, women's rights were advocated for and promoted in Beijing, in 1995, at the Women's Conference,

followed by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which included a recognition of gender equality across all MDGs.

Friedman (1999) mentions that,

Over the course of twenty years NGO forums expanded in size, responding to the level of interest in transnational networking. At Mexico City there were 192 workshops held for 6,000 participants; by Beijing a total of 3,340 workshops were attended by the over 30,000 participants. (p. 361).

In my view, increasing numbers of people joined preparations for these conferences from local level NGOs, civil society organizations, and governmental bodies due to the increase in international support. This backing has increased the level of awareness of women's issues and has increased women's activism. Tripp et al. (2009) note that after the 1990s, in many parts of Africa, newly independent women's organizations arose with their own agendas and sources of funding (p. 81). As well, I believe that transnational conferences provided a "safe space" for activist women to discuss their local disputes (as per Beijing in 1995, when women from the North and South of Sudan met for the first time to discuss possibilities of peace in the Peace Tent).

Ferree's (2006) "transnational opportunity structures" (p. 11–16) have implications for my analysis of women's organizing and activism in Sudan and will be examined in more detail in Chapter Four. Suffice it to say here that Ferree's structures refer to:

- The development of "women's policy machinery" within state institutions. These came into existence following the Women's Conference in Mexico in 1975 and include national, local, and regional administrative structures concerned with gender inequality (e.g., ministries of women's affairs or agencies concerned with mainstreaming gender perspectives in policy making);

- Advocacy networks outside formal institutions. These include feminist advocacy transnational networks concerned with realizing gender equity with regard to peace and heath, as well as networks organized to specifically deal with women's issues, such as trafficking and prostitution;

- The development of knowledge creation practices among the women's movements and women's groups. Journals and women's studies programs that contribute to the development of feminist theory and gender analysis are among these practices.

International documents which support women include the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the 1990 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Policy on Refugee Women; the 1995 United Nations Beijing Platform for Action; the 1996 International Labor Organization Convention on Home-workers; and the 2000 UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. These documents spread ideas about human rights and women's rights and created suitable platforms to launch women's activism in new ways and under the supportive banner of international conventions. Despite the fact that such documents are not binding, their significance lies in the fact that they can be used by both national and local groups to hold their governments accountable to using universal standards in different contexts to further the aims of local women's groups (Friedman, 1999; Moghadam 2005; Naples, 2008). Tripp et al. (2009) highlight how CEDAW as well as other international treaties have shaped women's movements' activism in Africa (p. 64). However, transnational connections and the UN conventions have distinct impacts on local women's groups and women's movements, according to their different local contexts.

Also, in Sudan and worldwide, most women activists are now fully aware of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325.[13]   African women played a particular role in support of Resolution 1325 by mobilizing around peace both at domestic and regional levels to ensure its passage. The conference on Women and Peace that was held in Kampala Uganda in 1993 under the sponsorship of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the UN Economic Commission on Africa (UNECA), and the government of Uganda resulted in the Kampala Action Plan on Women and Peace, which was accepted by the OAU heads of state and governments in 1995. The principles of the Plan were incorporated into the African Platform for Action and were later folded into the UN platform for Action adopted at the 1995 Beijing Women's Conference (Ferree & Tripp, 2006; Tripp , Casimiro, Kwesiga, & Mungwa, 2009)).

Women from different sides of conflicts were able to meet in neutral UN conference zones and—with the support of international women's groups—begin to solve their disagreements (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 280). Women from many conflict zones in Africa—including Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Sudan—formed coalitions and networks for peace in these spaces (Tripp et al., 2009, p. 9). The women of Sudan formed the Sudanese Women Empowerment for Peace organization in 1997 with the support of the Dutch Embassies in Khartoum and Nairobi, which pressured both parties in the North and the South to work for peace. However, despite the support of the UN and international donors (who provided financial backing for Sudanese women to participate at the Sudanese peace process) and their

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[13] The Security Council adopted Resolution (S/RES/1325) on women, peace, and security on October 31st, 2000. This Resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response, and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. Resolution 1325 urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. It also calls on all parties in conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. The resolution provides a number of important operational mandates, with implications for Member States and entities of the United Nations system (http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/ OSAGI Office of the Special advisor on Gender).

unprecedented efforts in this regard, women were not allowed to formally participate at the Sudanese peace talks in 2005. This indicates a clear failure of incorporating women as equal political participants and begs the question as to the possible effective impacts of the 1325 Resolution and UN resolutions in general.

Actually the UN has issued more four resolutions in support of women in the areas of peace and security: Resolution 1820 on the 19th of June 2008 included measures for protection and prevention of sexual violence during conflicts; Resolution 1888 on the 30th of September 2009, was issued to accelerate the processes of ending sexual violence, especially against women and girls; Resolution 1889 on the 5th of October 2009 issued to remedy the low representation of women in all peace processes; and Resolution 1960 on the 16th of December, 2010 issued to address the slow processes of ending sexual violence.

After almost eight years since the issuance of the Resolution 1325, the UN has recognized the need to enhance its implementation with more resolutions, but without serious analysis of the reasons behind the ineffectiveness of the peace processes on the ground. As part of gender mainstreaming policies adopted by the UN, these resolutions concerning peace and security assert the victimization of women as opposed to their empowerment and have not challenged the structure of capitalism, neoliberalism, or imperialism (Cohn, Kinsella & Gibbings, 2004; Eisenstein, 2004; Pratt, 2009). Despite the validity of these claims and considering some of the benefits which women have gained out of these resolutions, I do agree with Otto's (2010) argument that,

> While the content of feminist ideas is reshaped to serve the institution in the
> processes of institutionalisation, it is unduly pessimistic to describe this as creating
> 'new forms of exile' for feminism. It is better to think of these processes as creating
> productive footholds for feminist ideas, which need to be critically engaged with and

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re-appropriated for the political purposes of feminism, while also celebrating them cautiously as feminist achievements. (p. 120–121)

As some countries like Sudan emerged out of years of civil conflicts, new constitutions were written. This presented women's movements with opportunities to assert their existence in the new parliaments through their requests for a women's quota of political representatives and women's representation in decision-making bodies. For example, in January 2005, the Sudanese Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) and the government of Sudan signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). This agreement recognized the right of women to political representation; as well, the new transitional constitution granted women a 25% representation in the Parliament.

The use of the international documents at the local level by women's local groups has not only provided international support and legitimacy to local women's activism, but also enabled the translation of these international documents into a language that is understandable by women at the grassroots level. This in turn has raised awareness and resulted in tangible results on-the-ground in cases of successful campaigns for women's rights leading to what Alvarez refers to as the "public visibility of feminism" (Alvarez, 2000, p. 38). This visibility was facilitated by the development of communications, including the Internet and fax machines that accelerated the organization of feminists' global and local meetings and their networking (Tripp, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2011). Such technologies of communication (which have now been surpassed by Facebook, Twitter, blogging, and other modes of digitally-based face-to-face exchanges) have enabled the dissemination of information and made available timely international interventions that are frequently of the utmost importance, especially in cases of severe violations of women's rights.

The World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993 succeeded in considering women's rights as human rights. In Nairobi, at the UN Conference on Women, violence against

women was extended beyond domestic violence and rape to include violence caused by economic deprivation, structural adjustment, environmental degradation, war, and political repression (Tripp 2006, p. 62). The 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women was announced in 2003, opening more avenues for women's activism concerning women's rights. One-third of all human rights organizations in Angola, Eritrea, Gabon, Niger, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda are women's organizations (Tripp , Casimiro, Kwesiga, & Mungwa, 2009, p. 83).

Grewal & Kaplan (1994) has criticized the international human rights approach as a framework provided by the first world to "modernize" the Third World (p. 505–507). Further, women are considered as individual women, as opposed to being part of a family or a nation (Jamal, 2005; Sinha, 1999). Although the campaign for women's rights as human rights has been a relative success according to women in Sudan, and provides an umbrella for universal support against violations of women's rights worldwide, the implementation of legal instruments to protect women's rights are challenged by tensions between the national/transnational and heterogeneity/homogeneity, including the different ways in which actors at local, international, and transnational levels understand women's rights.

Furthermore, feminists have also criticized the role played by the UN and None Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in this transnational era, especially around issues of funding, representation, professionalization, and autonomy. The UN conferences and the process of preparations handled by women at local sites require certain skills in conducting workshops, writing reports, writing proposals, and preparing budgets. Such tasks are usually done by middle class women who are employed by local and/or international NGOs and who have received the necessary training. This has created an "industry for studying poor women" rather than helping poor women, which are the purpose of these UN efforts in the first, place (Carty & Das Gupta, 2009, p. 108).

Further, these processes change feminism from a "mass social movement" to the "full-time business of trained experts" (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 288) and contribute to the creation of an "institutionalized feminism" (Alvarez, 2000, p. 58). Also, the funding of NGO activities has created other challenges and increased competition among local women's groups and local NGOs, leading to power struggles among groups and between those who have enough skills to "win" funding and those who have not. This may threaten their solidarity work (p. 57). Furthermore, local women's groups' or NGOs' dependency on foreign funding has "impeded the open ended two way flow of ideas that has been so critical to the development of feminism" (Basu, 2005, p. 82). In other words, local women groups have turned out to be only passive recipients of financial aid in many cases.

In addition, donors have their own agendas that may contradict women's needs at local sites, resulting in accusations that local NGOs are siding with western foreign agendas that fund mainly short-term projects. These short-term projects may hinder the efforts of local women and NGOs who are working towards longer term structural changes (Tripp et al., 2009, p. 103). Chowdhury (2011) summarize feminists' critiques and debates around the impact of NGOs in the global South in three categories; *the first* recognizes the role of NGOs, especially in providing for citizens in the context of weak states; *the second* views NGOs as neoliberal representatives of development that maintain dependency between transnational corporations, states, donors, and "target populations"; and "*a third* critique emphasizes the complex and often contradictory roles that NGOs play and the multifaceted relations they foster with states, donors, and clients" (p. 2).

I concur with Chowdhury that the work handled by NGOs is multifaceted, and thus restricting it to only providing for the so-called "needy," or only creating and sustaining dependency relations with neoliberal agents, is not helpful to explain the complexity of feminists'

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activism, especially in the context of challenges by "neo-liberalism and patriarchy." The internal dynamics of these processes and their implications on women require a contextual analysis of local sites. Like Basu (2005), I believe that "local women's groups can't simply be referred to in terms of either completely absorbed by global factors or only engaged in resisting them" (p. 69–70).

In Sudan, large numbers of middle class women joined NGOs after being dismissed from their jobs in 1990 after the current military Islamic regime assumed power. These NGOs created a safe and professional environment where women could work and provide for their families, as my interviewees confirmed. Some of these women, after receiving training, became confident enough to establish their own organizations and compete for international funding for their local projects for women. Although this has led to the so-called NGOization of feminism, it is also a reflection of the local and the international socioeconomic and political processes and how women at local sites deal with them. Also, these professional, middle class women have gained knowledge and insights that enable them to be leaders who work on *complicated transnational alliances* and the support of women's causes. They also represent the group of women who can challenge the system from within.

Although the patron-client relationship created by NGOs between professional working women and women at the grassroots levels reduces the chances for collective structural transformation, such structural transformation requires dealing with many local and international challenges among which there are possibilities for building solidarities among a variety of women's groups. The existence of women's NGOs has led to changes in gender relations that impact different women groups, including women at the grassroots level. At the same time, these organizations increase the chances for "professional" women to extend alliances and build solidarities.

Conclusion

When space opens for a collective engagement in imagining, the feminist project of social transformative change is then possible. Sudan has proven that women can be successful in using global feminist imaginings and subsequent gains to put pressure on their own government to enact policy changes at the national level. In fact, governmental and oppositional women's groups and South Sudan women's groups met for the first time in the Peace Tent during the Beijing Conference in 1995 and worked from that point forward towards the creation of the Women's Network for Peace and Development (WENPD) and the Sudanese Women's Empowerment for Peace and Development (SuWep), organizations that have led dialogues to narrow the distance between Northern and Southern groups through a consensus around a minimum agenda for building and sustaining peace (Dawalbaiet, 2006, p. 16).

As well, Sudanese women have collaborated to advocate for a 25% quota for women's representation in Parliament after the passage of the CPA in 2005. Issues around women's rights and violence against women are commonly discussed in public workshops in Sudan and in other international forums. New women's groups that are not necessary affiliated with the state and/or nationalist parties carry out the contemporary nature of this activism. New civil society organizations have managed to absorb women in Sudan as active participants both in the management of these organizations and as beneficiaries. All these efforts are reflected in the many positive changes underpinning a transnational era that began in the 1990s.

The focus on issues such as peace, violence against women, women's human rights, etc., has paved the way for new solidarities among different women's groups in other areas of struggle. Women have built coalitions of women's movements; networks of women from around the world have been successfully built around particular issues (Dhruvarajan & Vickers, 2002; Naples, 2008).

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Yuval-Davis (2008) argues that the discourse of human rights initiated by the UN helped both local and transnational women's groups to challenge discrimination on a legal basis and change feminist activism from identity politics and universalism to a transversal politics, which advocates dialogue. I argue that transnational feminists' practices not only refer to alliances among feminists across borders, but also include coalitions among different women's groups across all divides.

In this chapter, I have argued that Third World women's experiences—including the experiences of women of Sudan—are not only informed by colonialism, imperialism, and nationalism (Mohanty, 1991, p. 7) but also by their differences across class, ethnicity, region, and religion as well as by transnationalism. I maintain that women's experiences with nationalist projects vary and take different forms as per the nation's historical, geographical, and locational contexts. Women assume the nationalist agenda and participate in nationalist projects as active agents and this helps with an "imagining of the nation."

However, they work hard to maintain their strategic and prioritized objectives, which may indeed depart from those of the nationalist forces at any/some point in time. It is important to acknowledge the role and resilience of women in nationalist movements. Glossing over this undermines women's struggles in favor of an image drawn by nationalist men that frames women's participation in the nationalist struggle within certain patriarchal parameters that support a patriarchy. But, to ignore women's nationalist struggles because they are not directly responding to women's gender needs is undermining the resistance and efforts of Third World women in favor of an image of a "true" feminism that is sometimes described as Western and/or global.

I maintain that *the self* in the context of the women of Sudan is not equated only with *the individual self* but rather with family, community, and nation. This is why their struggle is waged across all these fronts: self, family, community, and nation. Their ultimate cause is prioritized,

maneuvered, and bargained according to the complexity of this self-positionality and the complexity of power relations that exist at a point in time.

I argue that under transnationalism, which is defined in this dissertation as a gendered process that encompasses mutual local and global efforts that have different impacts on the dynamics of feminism and women's organizing nationally and transnationally, and women's activism under transnationalism has resulted in the disruption of the dichotomy—maintained by nationalist—between tradition and modernity; between the public sphere and private sphere. The public sphere has become an open space for the international ideas of women's rights, while the private sphere has been exposed to frank challenges by women's advocates of issues around personal laws, violence against women, and other issues.

However, the overall effect of these changes has blurred the divisions between the public and the private spheres. My research tells me that contemporary feminist change in Sudan is being led by a transnational woman subject who is sufficiently aware of her difference from her global sisters; who is able to escape the repressive constructions of Sudanese nationalism through the strategic use of international legal tools, instruments, and documents; and who concomitantly reaches out in solidarity to the local and the international. It is important to consider the complex power milieu as an essential element that helps to build solidarity and recognizes the different mechanisms used by different women as per their location against structures of oppression and subordination. This will ultimately be reflected positively in terms of social change as a primary goal of feminism.

Badri (2008) maintains that, "feminism to me upholds a continuum that starts from the minimum of addressing women's basic needs to the maximum of addressing the structural causes of subordination and violence" (p. 69). Although I disagree with Badri's use of cumulative words of

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minimum and maximum, I do agree with her that feminism includes all kinds of struggle against oppressions in women's life.

I contend that from nationalist to transnational impacts, women's activism in Sudan has evolved through a long journey that asserts that Sudanese women are not merely passive constituents of society but active agents, able to enact changes on gender relations, surpass the obstacles of their differences, and extend alliances and networks to advance their cause. In the following Chapter Three, I will explore the historical details of this journey with its accompanying successes and pitfalls.

Chapter Three

The Evolution of the Women's Movement in Sudan:

From a Concealed Face to a Parliament Member

Introduction

In Sudan, women's activism started with their participation in the fight against colonialism and has always been connected with Sudan's national concerns, namely the achievement of independence. Women's gender rights were not the sole focus of women's activism. In this chapter, I will map the evolution of the women's movement in Sudan to show how women have historically struggled to accomplish their goals despite obstacles imposed on their activism by nationalist forces and post-colonial states.

I will explore how Sudanese women have negotiated their relationship with nationalist state forces that worked to achieve the independence of Sudan, namely the National Congress, and how this relationship affected their activism and impacted the achievement of their goals. An understanding of nationalism as a gendered phenomenon and gender relations as an ever-changing process is important to our exploration of how women in Sudan have managed to create spaces for resistance, manipulate the patriarchal structures of the state and society, and enact gradual changes in gender relations.

I will discuss the heterogeneity, success, and failures of the women's movement in Sudan with regard to education, equality in political participation and employment, and family laws. I argue that the women's movement in Sudan has achieved relative success in gaining access to education, employment, and political participation because they strategically chose to pursue their rights in public life as a first step toward changing gender relations. The achievement of rights to

education, employment, and political participation has allowed women to instill considerable change into unequal gender relations and loosened the tight grip of patriarchy.

Through an examination of two historical eras of Sudanese women's struggles, I explore how they have bargained with patriarchal structures and made use of tradition to collectively support each other and to further their interests. The current chapter is divided into two eras of women's activism:

The First Phase of women's activism went from 1947–1969. This is the period of the establishment and consolidation of the activism of Women's Movement in Sudan which includes:

- Nationalist Women and the Struggle for Independence

- Women's Activism after Independence.

The Second Phase of women's activism went from 1969–1990. This era includes:

- Nimairi's Regime 1969–1984 and Women's State-Sponsored Activism

- The Interplay of Nationalism and Transnationalism: 1985–1990

The First Phase of Women's Activism from 1947–1969

Nationalist women and the struggle for independence.

Historians of Sudan have documented many cases of Sudanese women who struggled against colonialism even before the beginning of women's access to primary education in the early 20th century and at that time women had opportunities to join religious groups for informal education.[14] Adel-Al (1997) documents the story of Mihera Bint Abood, whose father was the leader of Al-Shaigiyya Tribe in Northern Sudan; Mihera participated with the knights of her tribe in fighting against the Turko-Egyptian invasion in 1821. She was also a poet who wrote a long poem encouraging her people to fight against the invaders (p. 64).

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[14] For more details on the history of Sudanese women's struggle, refer to Abdel Al (1997), Ajouba (2008), and Al-Haj (2007).

Women's participation in the nationalist struggle in Sudan began as early as 1924 with the White Flag League demonstration against the British (Hall & Ismail, 1981). Ajooba (2008) writes about Al-Aza Abdulla—wife of Ali Abdulatif, the leader of the While League—who was the first woman to participate in the demonstrations and help with communications among the nationalists of the League (p. 153). Badri (1986) contends that this early participation was documented in a popular song that encouraged women to take a lead in freeing their country. This asserts these women's political conscious and sense of belonging. However, women were subjected to the society patriarchal structures present in society at the time.

Sudanese society is highly patriarchal and thus men enjoy a dominant position in social life and control both access to resources and political decision-making. Women are confined to activities that take place within their homes, with their families. Women were rarely seen in the streets unless there is a wedding party or social event (Al-Haj, 2007, p. 50). As Joseph (2001) observed in her study of societies in Middle East and North Africa, which included Sudan, the family is the "site" of tradition, religious moralities, and patriarchal rule; it is a "women's authentic place" (p. 19).

Hall and Ismail (1981) maintain that while women in Northern Sudan are bound by a traditional Islamic code of conduct that segregates the sexes, the mixing of sexes is customary in other parts of the Sudan (i.e., the West and the South). Also, Sudanese society is characterized by collectivism which is an inherent feature of the African value system (Mahmoud, 2002).[15] People come together and participate in all social occasions, such as marriage, as well as in rituals pertaining to death. Kinship, extended families, and strong neighborhood bonds tie people together.

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[15] Mahmoud, in her study *African Women: Heritage & Modernity*, 2002, refers to the spirit of collectivism that exists among African women that is part of the African social value system and heritage. Women come to support each other in building houses in Kenya or assist each other financially through "rotating funds" as in Sudan.

Women benefit from these social networks and create traditional means to support each other, like rotating funds. I concur with Deng's (1990) description of Sudanese society,

> In all regions of the country (North or South), the Sudanese society is largely dominated by family or kinship ties and an ancestrally oriented lineage system that stratifies people according to descent, age and gender. Leaders tend to be from politically and religiously dominant families, men dominate over women, and youth must show filial piety to their fathers and elders. (p. 605).

The above situation was further consolidated by the economic conditions. Commercial capitalism began to replace feudalism in the Nile Valley around 1800 and accelerated after the Turko-Egyptian conquest of 1821 (Hale, 1996, p. 196). However, the economy's shift toward capitalism through the process of supplying cash crops and raw materials for British industries and serving as a market for European manufactured goods came during the period of British colonialism. Women were also subjected to the discriminatory gender ideology in education and in work, which identified men as workers and women as wives. The gender regime during this period was constructed on the basis of a male-breadwinner and female-homemaker roles, an arrangement sustained by the traditional patriarchal structures of family and society.

Like other women's movements in Third World countries, the women's movement in Sudan began by gaining support and momentum within the nationalist struggle for independence. Nationalists saw independence as a step toward improving women's lives. Men of that time imagined women as carriers of authentic culture, and the nationalists advocated that a developing modern Sudan needed emancipated women.

The British colonial administration kept women in a secondary position, especially with regard to education. Girls' education started in 1907, when Babiker Badri, himself a nationalist,

established a school for his daughters and nieces in his own house (Badri, 1986; Hall & Ismail, 1981).[16] One of his granddaughters told this story in my interview with her. She said,

> Babiker Badri, who supported women's education and opened the first school for women in 1907, was from a religious background in the Ansar religious sect; he wrote in his memoirs that the British won the battle of Karrari against Al Mahadi and Ansar because they are well-educated and have the knowledge and power to have weapons and, although we had stronger determination, we lost the battle. That is why he was so interested in education, because he believed that it was a tool for prosperity. He got permission from the British Governor General to open the school in his house and at his own expense.

Asma Abdel-Halim (2010) states that,

> The Ahfad University for Women (AUW) internet site quotes the statement of the British administrator who granted sheikh Babiker approval to start the school, "I would myself prefer that the government should not undertake the task [of girls' education] for some time. But … I cannot see that any possible harm can accrue from starting something [girls' education] here [at Rufu'a]. (p. 173).

Only in 1921 did the colonial government open five schools for girls, followed by the Omdurman Girls' Training College for Teachers (Badri, 1986; Hall & Ismail, 1981). In South Sudan (frequently referred to as "the South"), British authorities trusted the missionaries to establish the schools and, in 1930, the South witnessed the first girls' school (Hall & Ismail, 1981).

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[16] Babiker Badri requested permission from the British Minister of Education Sir James Carry in 1905 to open a school for girls in Rufaa' City, but his request was rejected. He insisted, applied again, and threatened to resign from his position as a teacher. In 1907, he was given the permission under the condition that he funded this school with his own money. He did open the school and continued to fund it up to 1918, when the British colonial government accepted the responsibility to financially support the school.

However, women's education at that time had consolidated women's traditional roles in society and didn't encourage women's emancipation. Historians have documented that the content of the programs for girls' education in 1920 was different from that of boys' schools; the girls' schools also had lower academic standards and included courses such as home crafts and needlework (Badri, 1986; Hale, 1996; Mahmoud, 2002). The policies of promoting women's education were oriented toward the preservation of patriarchal norms and values and did not address the basic question of women's subordination within the family and in society. Also, only the girls were supposed to pay fees to the government; the boys' education was free (Mahmoud, 1984).

Despite the aforementioned, education was the first step toward furthering women's rights to employment and political participation. One of the Pioneers[17] said that,

> We struggled on all fronts; even the kind of education available for women was
>
> different than the education given for men. We believed that education is the main
>
> gate for women's rights and development.

The efforts of educated Sudanese women who graduated from the Teaching and Nursing schools (opened in 1907 and 1924, respectively) marked the beginning of women's activism in Sudan; these women planted the seeds that grew into the first women's associations (Badri, 2008).

The first women's organization in Sudan was the Educated Girls Association, made up of the girls (now women) educated in Omdurman in 1947 with the aim of gathering educated women to work together for the advancement of their society (Abdel-Al, 1997; Badri, 1986, 2002; Hall &

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[17]It is worth mentioning that the pioneer women in the movement were well-known to each other as a result of being together in one school (Omdurman Secondary School) and through family ties. Khalda Zahir, Fatma Talib, Nafisa Ahmed El Amin, Nafisa Al Meelaik, Saud Abdel Rahman, Thorya Al Drdiri, Fatma Ahemd Ibrahim, Hajja Kashif, Aziza Mekki, Mahasin Jaylani, Thorya Ambabi, and Suad AL Fatih all participated in the first struggle against colonial authorities at the school of Omdurman and accused the head of the school of being unjust to them in 1951 (Abdel-Al, 1997; El-Amin, 1994).

Ismail, 1981). In 1951, these pioneer women, who were the first students to be graduated from Omdurman High School, wrote a memorandum requesting books, educational materials, and teachers. In response to this the head of their school expelled them all from the school. All of the students then went on strike until the colonial authorities responded to their requests and the expelled students returned to school (Al-Haj, 2007, p. 45). This was an important historical event which documents women's struggle against colonialism in support of their education rights.

Also, these pioneer women of the women's movement organized classes that went beyond home economics and childcare, where women could learn to read and write with the purpose of improving the conditions of their uneducated sisters (Badri, 1986). Indeed, this spirit of collective solidarity was one of the distinguishing features of the beginning of the Sudanese women's movement (Mahmoud, 2002). The Pioneer medical Doctor Dawla said, in my interview with her,

> We were friends, we lived in the same area, we studied together at high school and some of us worked together. Our goal was to educate our sisters to know their rights. We started with a night school and we opened a class for sewing to attract women and encourage their parents to send them to the school.

The Pioneer women were aware that they needed to not only to start with educating "their sisters"; they introduced classes for sewing to convince the parents to send their daughters to school to learn how to be "good wives and take care of their homes." This was one of the strategies used by the pioneer women to manipulate the patriarchal structures of society. They also had to deal with a scarcity of resources and became creative and determined about how to move on with what they wanted to achieve. In my interview with another Pioneer, she said,

> I joined the Women's Union in the 1960s. I was so much concerned with educating women. I went to my village on vacation and I decided to open a literacy class; we

had no material; we brought the piece of flat iron used for carrying mud for

buildings and used it as a board and we used the coal as a marker. The women were

so happy.

Women joined the labor market as nurses, teachers, and clerks; they subsequently formed

their own teachers' and nurses' trade unions (Badri, 1986; Hall & Ismail, 1981). The Teachers'

Union was established in 1949, followed by the Nurses' Trade Union in 1951. The Nurses' Trade

Union guided the first public women's protest against colonialism, as confirmed by El-Amin, who

wrote "on the 26th of August 1951, women nurses walked out in a demonstration with their

colleagues the men nurses against colonial policy" (El-Amin, 1994, p. 10).

In 1952, the Teacher's Union sent a memorandum to the Director of the Department of

Education, requesting rights equal to those of their male colleagues. The introduction to this

memorandum stated that,

As we are aware of the duties of female teachers in government schools and how

these teachers face great difficulties due to the inadequacy of the government

regulations, and how they are applied to them, we feel that our duties are not of less

importance than those of males… (Badri, 1986, p. 110, Annexure 1)

It went on to list 23 requests and ended by giving 31 December 1955 as the deadline for the

Department of Education to respond to these "fair demands which represent some of the rights of

Sudanese women teachers" (Badri. H, 2002, p. 110, Annexure 1). This was a thoughtful and well-

presented means of communicating demands on the part of the Sudanese women teachers at that

time and reflected a considerable level of awareness of not only their rights but also of how to

approach the authorities with regard to their rights.

In 1952, a group of pioneering women established the Sudanese Women's Union (WU) which from its start was supported by the Sudanese Communist Party, trade unions, and workers (Badri, 1986; Hale, 1996; Hall & Ismail, 1981). The support of the Communist Party for women was confirmed by my interviewees. One of the Pioneers, said,

> We were part and parcel of the national movement. At that time, the world was divided into two camps: Eastern, under the leadership of Soviet Union and Western, under the leadership of the US. The Eastern Camp was supporting liberation movements around the World; it was natural to get the support of the Communist party as a movement for liberation of women.

Elamin (1997) describes that, "The Women's Union calls for a meeting to declare the union and explain its objectives on the 31st of January 1952. That day was historical because 500 women attended" (p. 11). One of the Pioneers said of this meeting,

> I was a teacher. We came together and our first meeting was at the house of one of us and that was the beginning of women's organizing. We believed that we should be like others who formed unions, like youth and laborers. We created a preliminary committee with 10 women to establish our constitution and program; then after official registration, we did our first public assembly meeting in April 1952.

The WU called for an end to traditional, "backward thinking" in society, which hindered women from attaining their rights. Men and women were viewed as partners who should work together to solve the problems of their society and their nation. Women's problems were considered part of society's problems, although they had some of their own specific concerns as women; but they believed that all issues should be solved within the social and political milieu of the nation (Abdel-Al, 1997, p. 40).

The WU aimed to encourage women to participate in the social life of the community, to demand equal rights for women and girls, and to promote women's lives socially, economically, and politically. Branches were established in the larger towns of Sudan such as Wad Medani (Central Sudan), EL Obied (Western Sudan), Atbara (Northern Sudan), Juba (Southern Sudan), and Port Sudan (Eastern Sudan). In my interview with Amna, a member of the second generation of the Women's Union, she said,

> We had a clear structure: Central Committee, Cities Branch Committees, and Town-Sections Branch Committees; it was a pyramid hierarchy. I was working in a section-branch because of my early political work as a member of the Sudanese Communist Party.

One of the objectives of the Union was to open its membership to all women of Sudan, regardless of their level of education, religion, ethnicity, or class. El-Amin confirmed the positive role played by the WU in support of South Sudan and wrote that, "Khalda Zaher played an active role in the Students' Union and she was arrested because she was a member of the Peace Committee" (El-Amin, 1997, p. 11).

In 1954, the WU established a women's monthly journal called the *Voice of Woman* (Badri, 1986, p. 106). The Women's Union further extended its relationship with the Arab Women's Union and the African Women's Congress and gained membership in the International Democratic Union in 1957. The WU participated in the women's international conferences in Helsinki and Berlin during the 1960s (Abdel-Al, 1997; Badri. H, 2002; El-Amin, 1994). It also established branches in Cairo and London (Mahmoud, 2002, p. 268) as there were a considerable number of Sudanese families in these two cities. This indicated an early consciousness of the importance of transnational ties and the willingness to accept and respect differences in women's experiences. It

laid the groundwork for future transnational ties in the international women's movement that affected its evolution.

Many other women's organizations and groups were formed during the 1940s and 1950s,[18] and this reflected the growing awareness among Sudanese women of the importance of organizing. Despite women's efforts, the first new constitution in Sudan in 1954 restricted a woman's right to vote to educated women, even though illiterate men had the right to vote (Badri, 1986; El-Amin, 1994; El-Bashier, 2003; Hall & Ismail, 1981). One of the pioneers recalling the restrictions on women voters said, "At the first national government, only educated women were given the right of voting, although this was not the case for men." Despite the fact that the educated women were few and only 15 women graduates participated in the first elections, this was important first step as it established the principle of a woman's right to vote (Abdel-Al, 1997).

Truly the Sudanese nationalist restricted women rights and "excluded [them] from formal power at the conclusion of the struggle" (Jacobs, 2000, p. 225). They adopted a contradictory discourse in dealing with women. This contradiction was manifest in a particular combination of traditional and modern gendered practices and beliefs that opened opportunities, though restricted, for women to participate in public life. For example, women were able to go to school and work outside the home, as long as they adhered to spiritual and traditional practices inside and outside the home.

I maintain that women suffered from the gendered ideology and the patriarchy of both the colonialist and the patriarchal society with its tight grip on traditions and religion, which in turn makes it difficult for women to attain their rights. The pioneer women shouldered the burden and

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[18] These included, the Women's Club in 1944 in Wad Madani in Central Sudan; the Association for Women's Promotion in 1949 by El-Mahadi; House in Khartoum, the Women's Revival Society, in El-Obied in Western Sudan in 1952; the Charity Society in Port Sudan in the Eastern part of Sudan in 1953; the School Mistresses Trade Union in 1949; and the Nurses Trade Union in 1950. See details in Badri (1986).

benefited from the available scarce and inadequate opportunities. They had manipulated and bargained with the existing patriarchal structures.

One of the Pioneers said,

We needed to surpass two main obstacles; the British Law clause 105, which put on trial anyone who incited hatred of the government, and we had to find a way to deal with our heritage and customs. We fought against the patriarchy under the name of religion. This required a great deal of diplomacy and wisdom from our side.

Kandiyoti (1997) employs the concept of the "patriarchal bargain" to refer to strategies and specific forms of resistance used by women in a given society to contend with oppression. These forms are "susceptible to historical transformations that open up new areas of struggle and negotiation of the relations between genders" (p. 87). In the African context, Nnaemeka (2005) calls this bargaining a "balancing act" (p. 31), which means that women try to create a balance between society's customs and traditions and their struggle to achieve their rights.

Teachers and nurses demonstrations against the colonialist policies indicated an earlier consciousness of their rights as they compared their status with that of their male colleagues. Also, WU women's formal organizing was a further developed step along the path of the women's struggle. Women insisted on education as an initial and essential step toward improving their status in society. I argue that such "bargaining and balancing acts" can also be considered as necessary strategic moves by women in highly patriarchal societies to work against oppression.

Education and political participation can be considered among the gender interests that alleviate women's subordinate status and change gender relations. Molyneux (1998) explains that women differentiate between gender and practical needs:

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…in the formulation of practical interests there is the assumption that there is

compliance with the existing gender order, while in the case of strategic interests

there is an explicit questioning of that order and of the compliance of some women

with it. (p. 235).

Sudanese women have also worked for their practical needs and have benefitted from the

heritage of "collectivity" that exists in Sudan to form social networks and support each other. In a

conservative sex-segregated society like Sudan, women have emphasized their unity and solidarity

by creating social networks (Badri, 1986; Hall & Ismail, 1981). Indeed, women's employment and

education have undermined traditional patriarchal relationships and created a "new patriarchy."

These nationalist women have challenged the power of the patriarchal social practices, contested

the hierarchy of gender relations and opened spaces for continuing their long struggle to achieve

more rights.

Women's activism after independence:

After independence, the WU sent a memorandum on January 7th, 1957, to the Constitutional

Committee. In it, they demanded that the Committee "give women the full right to elect and be

elected; the right to work; the right to equal pay; family protection" (El-Amin, 1994, p. 17). This

was followed by an announcement of the memorandum at a public political conference which

included all political parties. It received the support of all parties with the exception of the Umma

Party[19] and the Muslim Brothers (p. 17). Moreover, members from both the Umma Party and the

Muslim Brothers used force to prevent women from attending a fundraising event organized by the

WU and attended by representatives from all foreign embassies in Khartoum in 1954 (Abdel-Al,

1997; Badri.H, 2002).

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[19] The Umma Political Party represents one of the main two religious sects in Sudan, the Mahdia, whose name refers to
Mohamed Ahmed AL Mahadi, who led the Mahadia revolution against the Turko-Egyptian rule in Sudan in 1821.

The grip of the patriarchy on society and religion at that time was very tight. The establishment of the WU was against the stipulations of both the religious instructions and traditions of Sudanese society of that time. The religious leader of the Khartoum Masjid (Arabic for "mosque") attacked the women of the WU in Friday prayer (Badri. H, 2002, p. 115) for acting against the traditions of Islam and Sudanese society by their demanding their rights. This and similar incidents reflect the nationalists' gendered attitudes and their contradictory approach toward women. Badri . H(2002) contends that, after the founding of the WU in 1952, the opposition was divided into two groups: one based on religion (claiming that the WU contravened Islamic requirements which called for women to stay at home, wear a hijab, and not intermingle with men) and another traditional Islamic group which at that time included two Islamic sects—Al Mahadia and Al Khatmia—that believed that it was against the values of society and good manners for women to go to work (Badri. H, 2002, p. 115).

Hale (1996) maintains that visions of women's emancipation took two forms in Sudan: that of the upper and upper-middle class nationalists, who viewed gendered social changes along liberal Western lines as the key to women's equality; and that of the lower-middle class nationalists, who opposed women's emancipation as being shaped by Western influences, arguing that Sudanese women's growing independence would weaken the family, considered to be the foundation of the Islamic nation (p. 106). However, I contend that the nationalist vision of women's emancipation had more to do with the Islamic, conservative, and patriarchal nature of the society.

On the other hand, the WU received support from the Communist Party, which was the first political party to open its membership to women. The Communist Party's ideology was considered by traditional forces as anti-Islamic and therefore was not accepted by traditional and Islamic segments of society. This had negative implications for the WU. The nationalists, the

Communists, traditional forces, and the Muslim Brothers did not want to challenge the patriarchal structure of society at that time. The Communists did not want to provoke the traditional and religious elements of society. Indeed, the Muslim Brothers (during the 1950s) believed that women had no place in public life. The Umma Party and traditional forces had their own vision of positioning women at home.

The WU members realized that direct confrontation with the traditional nationalist forces might threaten their struggle to achieve more rights. As Hall and Ismail (1981) argued, "Many realized the dangers of being overly hasty in demanding female emancipation and advocated a cautious approach to avoid inflaming public opinion and producing the opposite outcome" (p. 109). Activist women were caught between the allegations of the traditional nationalists, who denied them their rights because they were deemed to be "Westernized," and their struggle to pursue their interests as both nationalists and women. Members of the Union asserted their commitment to the values and the customs of Sudanese society in the way they dressed and behaved, mainly to avoid attacks and be able to move on with their causes (Abdel-Al, 1997; Badri. H, 2002; El-Amin, 1994).

I agree with both Badri. H (2002) and El-Amin (1994) that this cautious approach on the part of the WU was a strategy to allow them to continue their activities and realize rights for all women. Badri (2008) argues that, "they did not want to antagonize a society which was not yet mature enough to let go of culturally accepted patterns,… they may have wanted to safeguard the Union from possible attacks" (p. 48). This was also confirmed by El-Amin (1994), who maintained that, "This [the WU strategy] was due to the proper tactics it followed in its activities while complying with the psychological construction of Sudanese society without retreating or deflecting from its main objectives and principles" (p. 14).

The nationalists' unwillingness to challenge the patriarchy reflects their contradictory approach to dealing with the women's question and their reluctance to challenge the traditional patriarchal structures of their society, which undermined women's status. Resistance to Western cultural imperialism in the post-colonial state was and still is equated with preserving and perpetuating patriarchal control of existing gender relations (Al-Ali, 2000, p. 28).

Although women started their activism as a unified body, the opposition from Islamic and traditional leaders resulted in the resignation of two of the founding members of the WU. This marked the first split in the movement along political and ideological lines. As mentioned by one of my interviewees, Amna, "One of the contributions of the Women's Union was that it became an umbrella for all, until people dropped out because of the different political beliefs, like Fatima Talib and Su'ad Al Fatih."

Both Su'ad Al-Fatih and Thuoria Ambabi,[20] leaders in the nascent women's movement, were influenced by the emergent thinking of the Muslim Brothers (Badri. H, 2002; El-Bashier, 2003). Both joined the Muslim Brothers, whose work at that period was mainly devoted to spreading the Islamic mission, i.e., Da'wa ("call for Islam"), and curbing the influence of the communists (El-Bashier, 2003). Su'ad Al-Fatih said, "I agreed to join the movement, since I had been seeking an entity through which I could serve Islam" (as quoted in El-Bashier, 2002, p. 79). On a related note, women in the Umma party and the Mahadi family[21] formed the Association of Women's Cultural Promotion with the goal of promoting women's life based on religion, culture,

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[20] Su'ad Al-Fatih was one of the Pioneers of Sudanese Women's Movements. She graduated from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Khartoum in 1956 and was the first female College Dean in Sudan and the first woman to work as a consultant on Women's Affairs for the President of Sudan in 2001. Thuoria Ambabi was one of the pioneers of the Sudanese WU. She worked as a teacher, was a Secretary of the WU, and was one of the founding members of the Women's National Front in 1964, which was affiliated with the Muslim Brothers.
[21] These women are part of the Al Mahadia Sect and the Al Ansar group.

and taking care of family affairs with the aim of building happy families (Badri. H, 2002, p. 120). Such a split demonstrates that women may have different visions for pursuing their different goals.

These early years of the women's movement indicate that it started as an urban movement and came about through the efforts of educated women from the middle and the upper classes in society: "It was a movement of the cream who lived in the cities" (El-Amin, 1997, p. 13). Mahmoud (2002) also writes that "the organized Sudanese women's movement was established by the middle and higher class educated women who lived in cities" (p. 249). Despite this fact, these pioneer women did not isolate themselves from the daily life of their uneducated counterparts. The strategic and cautious approach they used enabled them to reach out and connect to their lower class sisters. The WU called for a unified women's movement across the country, regardless of women's differences, with the idea that "this would create [a] strong women's front that could lead and channel women's struggle" (Abdel-Al, 1997, p. 44). However, it was also a call for a "global sisterhood" at the local and national level, the invalidity of which was soon realized.

The initial splits in the women's movement were a result of an early consciousness of differences, religious or otherwise, in approaches to handling gender and women's issues. A failure to create unity coincided with an assertion of the heterogeneous nature of the women's movement in Sudan. However, as pointed out by Abdel-Al (1997), "although the Women's Union failed in building a unified women's movement, it succeeded in building awareness among different women's groups of their rights" (p. 44).

On November 17, 1957, General Ibrahim Aboud[22]—who was supported by the Umma Party—assumed power in the first coup d'état in the history of Sudan. He started his rule by restricting liberties, dissolving trade unions and political parties, and subjecting the South to a

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[22] General Ibrahim Aboud was encouraged to assume power by the Umma Party due to the deterioration of the economy, the civil war in the South of Sudan, and the failure of the democratic government and the Political Parties to enact necessary reforms.

compulsory policy of Arabization and Islamization. In 1959, like many other associations and political parties, the WU was abolished. However, it continued its activities underground. In 1963, the regime tried to form a women's organization under the name of "the Organization of the Sudanese Women Union." All women were invited, including members of the former WU—who insisted on electing the Executive Committee, where Union members got eight out of the 10 seats of the Committee. The Aboud regime abandoned the whole idea and the cooptation failed (El-Amin, 1994, p. 19). Thereafter, the WU formed the Housewives' Cooperative Society and the Traditional Collective Cooperation and shifted its tactics to more of a social work orientation. The former WU members continued their political activism against the regime until the October Revolution in 1964 (Badri. H, 2002; El-Amin, 1994). One of my interviewees told me,

> The purpose of these associations was mainly to raise awareness among women and to implement literacy programs as women were eager and happy to learn reading and writing. There were also entertainment programs and [programs] raising awareness on political affairs and issues like personal status laws and compelling a wife's return to her husband.

Part of the efforts of the WU during the 1950s and 1960s to achieve more rights for women was a strong campaign for women's education as well as social and political pressure through public forms of education such as seminars, lectures, press releases, and other means of encouraging changes in voting rights and laws, as well as in the rules and regulations of service for women (Badri, 1986).

On October 21, 1964, under the leadership of the WU, women participated actively with men in political street demonstrations that came to be known as the October Revolution of 1964

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against military rule[23] (Badri. H, 1986, 2002; Hall & Ismail, 1981). Some women were injured and

one member was killed in this action. Women also participated in a civil strike at that time and

were members of the National Front, which was formed to organize activities for the success of the

revolution; this put the women's case and issues on the front lines (El-Amin, 1997, p. 20–21).

Alawia, said of her experience in October 1964,

> I went out on school demonstrations in October 1964 and joined the Democratic
>
> Front and the Communist Party during [my time at] University. I also worked in the
>
> community through the Association of Housewives.

This era witnessed a tremendous increase in the activities of the WU that culminated in women

gaining suffrage rights in 1965 and the right to equal pay for equal work in 1968 (Hale, 1996;

Mahmoud, 2002). Also in the 1960s, there was competition amongst political parties looking for

the female vote, causing them to embrace women's demands and make space for women. This has

been beneficial to women as it increases their consciousness about the importance of their

participation in public life.

Women's associations affiliated with different parties were formed, including the first

Islamic women's organization, al-Akhwat al-Muslimat (which translates as "the Muslim Sisters"),

the women's branch of the Muslim Brothers. As described in Chapter Two, its objectives were to

work for women's political rights and the establishment of educational and social institutions (El-

Bashier, 2003). Although the formation of women's political units within the political parties

implies dependency, women also seized the opportunity to practice their right to vote. Women

voters participated in large numbers during this period (Badri. H, 2002, p. 133):

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[23] The October Revolution was based on a peaceful civil strike that obliged the first military regime in Sudan to resign.

Also at this time, the Organization of Rural Women was formed (Abel-Al, 1997, p. 69). In 1966, women from Southern Sudan established the Southern Women's League as part of the Political Alliance of the Southern Front (Badri, 1986, Badi ,2008; El-Bashier, 2003; Hale, 1996; Hall & Ismail, 1981). It was headed by Elisabeth Morgan, Alawiya Farag, and Mary Basyoni; they played influential roles in resettling refugees and those displaced by the civil war (Badri. H, 2002, p. 132). In my interview with the Pioneer from the South, she said that,

Women from the South started their activism in early 1960s. One group worked with Ananya One,[24] small girls who were 10 and 12 years old were used to transfer information about the movement of the Government Army. Those who were living here in Khartoum, of whom I am one, we used to collect money for the people in the South. The other group worked with the Church; mainly they only learned how to take care of their families and their religion. I was also part of this group because of my mother's connections with them. Before I entered University in 1971, I used to know Mary Basyoni and learned about the Political Alliance of the Southern Front and attended their meetings. Then I became a member of the Executive Committee when I joined the University at the Faculty of Medicine. After the Ababa Peace Agreement, we worked with refugees to tell them about the Peace Agreement.

The increase in women's activism revealed the contrasting differences among women across the lines of ethnicity, region, and religion. Although the WU opened branches in the different regions, its work was mainly handled by the teachers and nurses who were mostly from the North. Besides,

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[24] Anyanya One is the organization which led the first war in the South against the government of Sudan under the leadership of Colonel Joseph Lagu who later, in 1971, led peace talks with Nimairi's Government and signed the Addis Ababa Peace Accord in March, 1971.

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The Union was trying to lay down the same program for the women from the North

on the [women from the] South regardless of the actual needs of [the women of] the

South; that is why its work in the South did not have much success, in addition to the

other political and economic conditions of the South. (Badri.H, 2002, p. 131).

However, Badri.H (2002) also confirms that the leaders of Southern women's associations that were formed after the October Revolution were from the South and were conscious of the problems facing women in the South (p. 131). In addition, the election of a democratic government in 1965 confirmed the split in the women's movement along secular and religious lines. The head of the WU entered the elections supported by the Communist Party, the trade unions, and the workers unions, while another female candidate—Thouria Umbabi—entered the elections supported by the League of Islamic Convention, the Umma Party, and the National Unionist Party. However, Fatima Ahmed Ibrahim—who entered the parliament as an independent candidate—won one of the 10 seats designated for "the Graduates" (Badri, 1986, Badri. H, 2002; El Amin, 1994; El-Bashier, 2003; Hale, 1996; Hall & Ismail, 1981; Ismail & Makki, 1981). Alawia, from the second generation, attended this event. She said,

That was a time of great development for women. Fatima Ahmad Ibrahim was

nominated, won, and joined Parliament as the first woman—that was an

unprecedented achievement especially in that she was a very convincing character

who was able to represent and defend women bravely.

This was the culmination of all women's efforts from restricted access to political representation in 1956 to parliamentary representation in 1965, the outcome of 11 years of struggle post independence. Abdel-Al (1979) confirmed that the report of the 1965 elections indicated that the highest percentage of women's voting was in Khartoum, where it reached 83%, while the

percentage of men's participation was 72% there; in all other provinces of Sudan, it was 72% for women and 74% for men (p. 76). Also, there was increase in women's participation in political parties, but not in leadership positions. This political success coincided with the increasing of the numbers of women in schools.

The percentage of illiterate women in 1956 with independence was 96% (Al-Haj, 2007, p. 41). The number of girls' schools increased from 370 in 1965 and to 1,149 in 1970 (Badri. B, 2002, p. 42). Also, the number of teachers increased from six in 1923 to 3,716 in 1970 (p. 89). The number of women in the medical field was 151 in 1965; it increased to 8,486 in 1970 (p. 92). Although this increase in women's numbers in education and in work marked their existence in public life, it was accomplished with great difficulty. Women struggled with the patriarchal nature of society. Badri .H(2002) confirmed that teachers used to go to work with their faces concealed by their Thob[25] with only their eyes visible (p. 88); women workers in offices were confronted by angry male colleagues who considered the women's presence with them in same office as against Islam; and many women used to go to work accompanied by a male relative or an older female relative (p. 94).

I agree with Badri .H(2002) that teachers and nurses travel and work in remote areas away from their families and that this confirms their dedication to service and to making a change in their conservative community (p. 9). However, all of these incidences did not stop women from continuing their education and work. Women were also represented on the Constitutional Committee, which was formed in 1968 to draft the country's permanent constitution. The expansion of capitalism created some benefits for women, although not on an equal basis with men.

Women's presence in the public sphere was mounting; however, they got less salary—four fifths—of their male colleagues' and they were not entitled to a pension. Badri.H (2002) confirmed

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[25] Sudanese women's national dress in the North of Sudan.

that the labor laws at that time were still the ones that were installed by the British (p. 100). Women managed to challenge these laws and enacted some changes in the socially-constructed gender hierarchy; this resulted in a "new flexible patriarchy" that allowed them some spaces but without similar changes in the private sphere, which continued to be the full responsibility of women without any kind of support from men. Women were overburdened; on one hand, they had to prove themselves at their newly accomplished work opportunities and on the other hand, they had to keep their image at home as good housewives and comply with the rules of the patriarchal society or they would lose both being workers and being housewives.

Moreover, both Muslim and non-Muslim women are subjected to customary norms and religious laws in all family and personal matters.[26] Women's rights in such personal matters are regularly subjected to various interpretations (Abdel-Halim, 1999). For example, in the case of marriage, according to the Constitution and as per Islamic religious conditions of marriage, a woman should give her consent; however, this was not acceptable in Sudan from a cultural perspective and cultural common understanding of Islamic regulations. In most court cases, such matters were subject to the rule of the Grand Judge. Non-Muslim women also did not escape religious interpretations or traditional practices of their own religious institutions that restricted their rights.

The women's movement, especially the WU in the 1960s, started pushing for changes to these personal laws. However they only managed to change some minor prejudicial provisions concerning marriage and divorce. For example, they successfully supported: the abolishment of

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[26] For a detailed review of women's rights under Islamic laws see A. Abdel Halim, "Reconciling the Opposites: Equal but Subordinate," in Courtney Howland (ed.), *Religious Fundamentalisms and the Human Rights of Women*, 1999, New York, NY, St. Martin's Press, pp. 203–213. It is still an issue that Muslim women are ruled by Shari'a laws and customary norms, even though these religious laws do guarantee them some rights.

"Bait Al-ta'a";[27] efforts to increase funds paid by a man to his ex-wife if she has children to half of the man's income instead of a quarter; denial of the right to allow a man to sell his house or land without the permission of his wife; and permission for a wife to divorce if her husband is absent and not maintaining her expenses for one year (El-Amin, 1997). The ways the WU dealt with family laws during the 1960s may seem like a minor success if compared to what was accomplished with regard to women's public rights. However, this work produced alterations in gender relations that laid the foundation for future changes.

I concur with Mahmoud (2002) that the rights of women in public life—like the rights to education, work, and equal payment—were difficult for society to accept (p. 264); these accomplishments created tension between traditionalists and modernists, which women used strategically to further their interests. The relative success achieved opened up spaces for resistance. Within the social and patriarchal context described by the Pioneers and imposed by the nationalists, the simple fact of the existence of women's organizations in public life and what this presence enabled women to do was indeed an accomplishment.

The Second Phase of Women's Activism from 1969–1990:

This era marked another period of activism where women witnessed, for the first time in the history of Sudan, state sponsorship of a women's organization. Many local and international changes occurred up to the end of the 1980s and coincided with globalization and the imposition of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), the increased power of Islamic forces, and the impact of Women's International Conferences and the United Nations' (UN) international support of women. This was an era of transition and tremendous change in women's activism that led to deep polarization between women across religious and regional divides, adverse impacts from Structural

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[27] It means house of obedience. A law according to which a husband can get his wife to stay at his house against her will.

Adjustment Programs (SAPs), the imposition of Shari'a Laws in 1983, the second civil war in 1983 between the North and South of Sudan, and women's active participation in NGOs and civil society organizations, as well as the state apparatus.

Nimairi's regime 1969–1984 and women's state-sponsored activism.

On May 25th, 1969, the second Sudanese coup d'état occurred under the leadership of Colonel Jaafar Mohamed Nimairi[28] with the support of the Communist Party. The WU submitted a memorandum to the President which requested equality in salaries with men, improvement of terms of services and pension rights, as well as the right of divorcees to financial support (El-Amin, 1994). Not long after, in 1971, members of the Communist Party in the Sudanese army enacted a failed coup d'état against Nimairi. Due to the affiliation of some of its members with the Communist Party, WU activities were then banned. President Nimairi's government formed the Sudanese Women's Union (SWU),[29] which continued women's activism during the 1970s and 1980s. This laid the basis for the continuation of women's struggles for change under new conditions. Some of the Pioneer women activists, who worked during the 1950s and the 1960s and had intellectual and professional experience, led the activities of the SWU during Nimairi's era or what was also known as the May Regime. Once again, the WU experienced a split along political and intellectual grounds that included a power struggle within the banned WU membership.

In my interview with Amina, who had a leading position in the SWU, she said,

Some members of the Women's Union chose to continue with the support of the

Communist Party and work secretly against Nimairi's regime. But some others and I

chose to work with the regime as we believed that this was the only way to continue

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[28] Nimairi governed Sudan from 1969 until 1985, and this period was known as "The May Regime." During this era, Sudan witnessed tremendous political, economic, and social changes.
[29] The Sudanese Women's Union was formed as part of the state and was able to mobilize many women in support of Nimairi's regime under the leadership of some of the prominent members of the WU. Its structure was similar to the original WU and its activities covered large parts of Sudan, including rural areas.

actively with our requests, especially because President Nimairi was supportive. We

had been accused by our colleagues of betrayal, but time proved that we took the

right path as we managed to realize many of women's rights, especially labor rights.

We decided to continue with Nimairi to continue and sustain women's rights; it was

a strategic move from our side. We managed to realize a lot of rights; laws of civil

service which gave women the right to a pension, the right of eight weeks of

maternity leave and one hour lactation, the cancellation of executing Bait AL Ta'a—

House of obedience—with the police forces, and the law that no man has the right to

sell his house or any property he has without having the consent of his wife. I

travelled across the regions of Sudan, North, South, East, and West by plane, by

buses, by trains, even by military planes, with my colleagues. We used to collect

donations and we worked with executive ministries and departments to implement

projects, especially in health and education in rural areas.

She continued,

Nimairi was supportive of women's rights despite his mistakes. The May Regime

was not a theocratic state, at least at the beginning; it is not like the current regime.

This was good because we were able to discuss and present our opinion inside the

government, although we could not do this publicly as were part of it.

I asked Alawia, a member of Communist Party who chose not to join Nimairi's regime, about this

incident and she said,

It was an intellectual political split affected by the split inside the Communist Party

as most members belonged to both the Women's Union and the Communist Party.

However, the Pioneer women who joined Nimairi's regime managed to realize a lot

of benefits for women, especially in the matters of labor laws and widow-confinement law, marriage and maternity leave, equal pay for equal work, and even in matters pertaining to Islamic law, like women's rights concerning compulsory return to a husband, and the upgrading of women according to competitiveness to hold high government posts, in addition to the 25% quota, which was a gain even though it was semi-artificial. In the private sector also, a lot of work was done and women reached the position of factory manager and work conditions for female laborers were improved.

Nafisa Ahmed El-Amin further argued in a paper she published in 1994 that, "in order to avoid the burial of the principles for which the Women Union struggled, it was necessary to respond to President Nimairi's invitation for the formation of a new national women's organization" (p. 27). Therefore, the participation of women leaders from the WU in the SWU during Nimairi's regime helped to realize some benefits for women and sustained some of the benefits realized before. But the SWU was to support Nimairi's regime and to participate positively in achieving its aims.

The structure of the SWU was similar to the WU. It was located in the basic units in the areas and villages, then in the divisions, districts, and provinces. It extended its activities, establishing the Southern Women's Union in the South after the signing of the Addis Ababa Agreement and achievement of Peace in the South (Badri.H, 2002; El-Amin, 1994). The SWU participated in international women's activities, including international women's conferences in Mexico and in Copenhagen, and the execution of the resolutions that resulted from these conferences (El-Amin, 1994).

Although women's autonomous organizations were prohibited, and the women's movement was co-opted by the state, this era was marked by a new gender regime under which women

enjoyed many rights. Women managed to push for some of the demands made by the WU in the 1960s; for example, they were given the right to vote and to be elected in all geographical areas (Mahmoud, 2002, p. 277). The Sudanese Permanent Constitution of 1973 provided equality for women in a number of areas: there was no gender distinction in the section that dealt with human rights and duties; women were given the right to equal education, to hold public office, and to unionize; and they were granted freedom of association, of speech, and of movement (Hale, 1996, p. 138).

Labor rights for women included duality in civil service hiring and promotion based on merit, equality in payment for equal work, equality of pensions, equal rights for training, and equal rights in obtaining annual and education leave. Women could take paid maternity leave for eight weeks; paid leave for a mourning period following the death of a husband for six weeks; paid leave of at least one hour from work for one year, or unpaid leave for the purpose of lactation; and the right to apply for four years of unpaid leave to accompany their husbands in travel for the purpose of education or work. Furthermore, "women could not be employed in positions dangerous to their health" (Hale, 1996; Hall & Ismail, 1981).

Suad, a pioneer who joined the May Regime said, "Women joined high profile offices as Ministers and seats were allocated for women in Parliament." Mahmoud (2002) confirms this, "Nimairi's government gave women opportunities to join leading positions in all political, executive, judicial institutions" (p. 284). Suad continued,

I believe that our involvement with Nimairi's regime enabled us to realize many

rights for women. We kept the old accomplishments and added to them. Women

were given the rights to assume leadership positions and for the first time women got

ministerial positions at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Youth and Sports.

Other women who were members of other political parties also confirmed the benefits attained by women during Nimairi's regime. Mawada, a member of Democratic Union Party, said that, "The May Regime, despite being an undemocratic dictatorship, realized many of women's demands; what was realized had not happened even under democratic elected governments." Aml, a member of a civil society organization, said, "During Nimairi's regime, the Sudanese Women's Union was only encouraging women's activities and the selling of handcrafts, but the regime introduced the schools in our area and I was one of those who benefited from those schools."

Despite the expansion of the activities of the SWU, a considerable number of women considered it a government organization and refrained from joining it. El-Amin (1994) confirms that, "the Union found itself so often supporting situations where it did not believe in the cause" (p. 33). Also, this era witnessed more polarization in the women's movement as it divided into three categories: Islamists, leftists, and others who chose to join Nimairi's military regime beginning in 1969 (Badri, 2008, p. 47). The Muslim Brothers and Sisters were alienated by the State at the beginning of Nimairi's tenure, and during the time when the Communists supported Nimairi's regime. The Muslim Brothers and Sisters therefore reverted to clandestine work, mainly in the *Da'wa* (call for Islam and working among people to spread the message and ideals of Islam), and in expanding their membership among students (El-Bashier, 2003). As mentioned above, the WU members also pursued their work in secret after the split between the Communist Party and the May Regime in 1971, until the April Uprising in 1984.

In 1977, the Muslim Brothers and the Umma Party signed a peace agreement with Nimairi called the "National Reconciliation." The Muslim Brothers changed the name of their party to

National Islamic Front (NIF), and Muslim Sisters to National Women's Front (NWF). The NIF and NWF strategically entered this reconciliation with the May Regime. The purpose was to be enabled to freely reorganize their membership and work to build their structure and recruit more followers among the public with the ultimate end of gaining more ground and fulfilling their target of establishing an Islamic State in Sudan. Awatif, one of the second generation leaders of the Muslim Sisters said that, "The reconciliation with Nimairi in 1977 was under the condition that the Islamic forces be given the chance to work freely in the society among people."

This reconciliation period was a strategic transitional period of reaching out to people and participating in state power by assuming some ministerial positions at the same time. Under the strategy of "Comprehensive Empowerment," the Islamists of the NIF aimed to expand their activities and use all possible opportunities offered by Nimairi's regime (El-Bashier, 2003; Al-Fadl, 1996). They also joined the government in the years 1977–1984, which gave them an opportunity to expand their activities. The NIF joined forces with the Sudanese Socialist Union (a government party) and participated in the national Committee for Amending the Constitution to fit in with the Islamic Shari'a Laws. The NIF penetrated the different institutions of the May regime. Islamic influence in public life, through the NIF and through the work of its affiliated organizations in the community and among women and youth in schools and universities, was strongly felt.

Many organizations were formed, such as Munazzamat AL-Da'wa Al-Islamia (Organization for the Islamic Call), Shabab Al Binna (Youth Organization), Al Wakala Al Islamia LLeghasa (Islamic Relief Agency), and Jamiyyat Raidat Al Nahda (Pioneers of Women's Renaissance). These organizations were working in all sectors of society to spread Islamic religious ideology by every means available to them. As confirmed by Al-Fadl (1996), "The May era was considered as an era of settlement and accomplishments for Islamic Movement" (p. 117).

This era also witnessed the reorientation of the economy, mainly toward exports, as well as an increase in Arab and Western investments in Sudan. Trade gained momentum over agriculture (Duffield, 1990; Woodward, 1990). By the mid-1970s, Sudan was declared the potential breadbasket of the Arab World. Accordingly, millions of dollars flowed into the country (Duffield, 1990; Khalid, 1990; Woodward, 1990). Most rural families were expected to produce for the cash economy. Women and children were forced into more capital-intensive agricultural activities at the expense of domestic crops. Improvements aimed at male farmers included better seeds, the construction of credit and marketing facilities, and agricultural extension services (Duffield, 1990, p. 17).

However, by the mid-1970s, the breadbasket strategy was deemed unsuccessful in terms of its overall effect on the national economy, mainly because the value of its primary products declined in the international market and oil prices dramatically increased. As well, administrative mismanagement led to this failure (Duffield, 1990; Khalid, 1990), causing serious problems in Sudan's balance of payments and aggravating its debt. Accordingly, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) stepped in to solve the economic problem with a stabilization program in 1987 (Abu Affan, 1991; Duffield, 1990; Woodward, 1990). This was the beginning of the era of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). According to these policies, the state no longer guaranteed employment and other social services; this had further direct gender consequences for women, men, and family income. The responsibility of unemployment was offloaded onto the individual. The withdrawal of the state from its social and economic roles and responsibilities weakened state structures and opened the door for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to step in and provide social services in health, education, and so forth (Hatim, 1992; Moghadam, 1998). This created a

new gender regime in which the family depended on a multi-earners rather than a sole male breadwinner.

The rise of the unemployment rate in the 1970s led to increased male labor migration that resulted in women taking on some traditional male responsibilities (Hale, 1996, p. 108, 122). To help support their families, women took over tasks that were previously their husbands' responsibilities, as well as working at new jobs in the informal sector (Hatem, 1992; Moghadam, 1998). Other impacts of SAPs included emotional stress as a result of belt tightening, as well as cuts in health services, shortages of food, and environmental degradation. Further, women's paid work was concentrated in nursing, clerical, service, and unskilled work sectors where they suffered poor working conditions (Hale, 1996, p. 134).

However, women began resisting the negative impacts of SAPs at various levels by adopting diverse creative strategies. El-Jack (1993) confirms that women's survival strategies included: borrowing, reducing consumption, increasing household production (which entailed long working hours), and selling personal assets (p. 57). The fact that women were able to shoulder the severity of these innovative strategies is an indication of their determination to challenge and change their position. Also, there were tremendous changes in family structure, including the rise of female-headed households, increased age of marriage for women, and decreasing family size, especially for educated and employed women. These transformations led to changes in gender relations within the family and in society at large, along with a loosening of the patriarchy's hold on society.

The IMF policies led to a further strengthening of the Islamists, who were strong proponents of capitalism. The IMF's fiscal changes helped to create the basis for large-scale speculation, which was mainly led by the Islamic banking system. Islamic banks were exempted from taxation

and had favorable access to government contracts and licenses (Duffield, 1990; Khalid, 1990). The success of Islamic banking helped give the National Islamic Front greater political and economic influence. The negative impact of the austerity programs of the IMF among the poor was offset to a large extent by the National Islamic Front's social services that included schools, literacy programs, and health clinics for the poor (Hale, 1996, p. 193). The deterioration of economic conditions consolidated Islamic influence and enabled the Islamists to spread their ideology. Batool, an academic and one of my interviewees, said that,

> Islamic organizations have their own resources which enable them to open schools, health centers, and other services, etc. They also established other organizations concerned with income generation and working women.

Al-Fadl (1996) indicated that "Jamiyyat Raidat Al Nahda [Women Renaissance Pioneers (WRP)] was given the necessary freedom to organize its activities and it has 67 branches all over Sudan including the South" (p. 100). As previously mentioned, WRP was established in 1979, and was one of the organizations of Muslim Brothers and Muslim Sisters. It is a good example of the Muslim Sisters' activism in public life. Among the major reasons behind the establishment of this organization was the community need for social services, especially with regard to health; orphans, displacement, and poverty; the spread of the understanding of Islamic values; and the harnessing of women's power for volunteer and charity work. Its objectives as per its constitution were as follows: reading Islamic ideology and awareness; fighting harmful traditions and improving women's social and economic conditions; taking care of religious Islamic upbringing of children and protecting family from disintegration; and spreading a culture of volunteer work among young women and students (e.g., helping the poor, disabled illiterate, displaced, and the refugees, especially among women); and supporting the eradication of the consequences of natural disasters.

The WRP was encouraged to use all means to realize its objectives including: lectures, seminars, cultural exhibitions, festival weeks, brochures, media recordings, financial and in-kind assistance, and the establishment of education and rehabilitation institutions.

Its extremely well-organized structure enabled it to effectively handle many activities. During the drought and desertification problem in 1984, the WRP supported affected people by providing shelter, food, and medicine. They also provided training for voluntary work and created awareness among women of the importance of this work. The work of the WRP includes training for poor women in handcrafts, women's sports clubs, support for women prisoners and their families, and support and relief for the displaced.

This era witnessed an enormous increase in the activities of the Muslim Sisters. Those women who were part of the Islamic movement in Sudan were active agents in consolidating their own interests in the authentic political project of the Islamic state. They supported the state in consolidating Shari'a laws and in elevating them as symbols of what they considered to be its authentic discourse. Fatima, one of my interviewees, said that, "The Islamic movement in Sudan gave women the chance to come out as an active Muslim woman in public life and considered a woman's work in this regard as part of the Islamic belief." Asia, a member of the Muslim Sisters, confirmed that, "The Islamic movement guaranteed more rights for women in public life. Women from both urban and rural areas joined in different Islamic associations like the Association for Islamic Girls and the Renaissance Pioneers."

The influence of the Islamists led to the state adopting conservative policies toward women in the 1980s. Legal means were used to discourage women from some areas of work. Although the Islamists supported women's education, they considered it as a means of producing good mothers; indeed, they believed that a woman's national and religious duty was to raise future generations

(Hatem, 1992; Karam, 1998). The Islamist ideology toward women in employment restricted women to certain fields. Hale (1996) provided the example of female doctors who had been channeled to certain specialized fields in medicine, namely child and maternal health clinics, as the fields of obstetrics and surgery were considered completely inappropriate for women (Hale, 1996, p. 198).

September 1983 was an important date in the political history of Sudan. Shari'a laws were declared and enacted as per the understanding of the Islamist members of the NIF, which applied conservative laws to all women, Muslim and non-Muslims alike. They were also known as the "September Laws." Islamic courts applied harsh *hadud* (Islamic criminal punishment); income tax was replaced with *zakat* (alms-giving or the practice of charitable giving that is based on accumulated wealth), all banks were Islamized, and all interest was banned. The Evidence Act applied conservative laws of evidence to women and non-Muslims, making the testimony of women in major crimes inadmissible. Two women witnesses were needed to offset the testimony of one man. Women in the streets were harassed over their conduct or dress by self-appointed male moral guards (El-Bashier, 2003; Hale, 1996). Indeed, "poor women such as vendors of local brew bore the brunt of moral guardians" (Hale, 1996, p. 149).[30] The ramifications of the implementation of the Islamic Shari'a laws were disastrous not only for women and non-Muslims, but for the whole country. It was one of the main reasons for the eruption of the war in the South of Sudan again.

Nimairi's era started with the accomplishments of women's labor rights and women managing to achieve some of their gender-strategic goals. The number of the schools for girls increased from 87 in 1969 to 595 in 1983 (Ali, 2012; p. 110–111). The number of girls getting a university education increased from 12% in 1967/77 to 50% of the total number of students in

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[30] Actually, a large percentage of these women were the displaced women from the South who made and sold local brew to maintain their families (Abdel-Halim, 1998).

1985/86 (El-Amin, 1994, p. 4). Women's representation in Parliament increased from 5.1% in 1972 to 7% in 1982 because women were granted a certain number of seats. Women entered new fields of work like in the Judicial Corps, where the number of women judges increased to 66 in1989 (p. 24) and the number of women in the diplomatic corps increased from two in 1970 to 22 in 1989 (p. 34). However, it ended with women losing many of their rights due to both the gender ideology of the Islamists and the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs).

There was a deep split in the Sudanese women's movement between the women members of the NIF—who supported the political agenda of the Islamic movement in Sudan—and the other women's groups, who were against the September Laws and included Muslim women who were members of other political parties, Muslim women who were members of civil society organizations, and the non-Muslim women mainly from the South of Sudan. Aya, a member of the Republican Brothers and Sisters, said that,

> In 1983, after the September Laws, there was a big setback and women were
> targeted and chased and imprisoned; the heaviest hand fell on the neediest who had
> no other source of income than making and selling local wines. We were also once
> arrested with these poor women because of our different political stand.

Abrar, a member of the Communist Party as well as multiple civil society organizations, attacked the women who joined Nimairi's regime and said that,

> I don't believe that the existence of women in totalitarian regimes added to women's
> accomplishments. Women of the regime could not stand against the September
> Shari'a Laws or the unfair dismissal of women from civil services because they were
> part of the system.

However, the history of this period is seen in a completely different light by Islamist groups and Islamist women. Al-Fadl (1996) maintained that the "Women and youth sectors in the Islamic movement had demonstrated in the streets in support of the Islamic Shari'a laws in what was known as '*Al Masira Al Milyonia*' i.e., 'a Million Walk'" (p. 113). Nimairi's regime collapsed under a popular uprising in April 1984. A transitional government was formed for one year followed by a democratic era, which lasted up until June 1989.

Women: The interplay of nationalism and transnationalism 1985–1990.

The NIF entered the elections in 1985 as the most organized and well-established political force with its well-identified political and social objectives, unlike other political parties. One of its social objectives, Clause 15, was devoted to women and stated that,

> The National Islamic Front cares for all women's affairs and works to end social injustice to empower women and enable them to handle their religious responsibilities, perform their role in public life, build the Muslim community, carry out their functions within the family, exercise their legitimate rights and duties and maintain their qualities.

The women of the NIF had led many activities at the grassroots and community levels. They opened health centers; trained young women in first aid; encouraged women to participate in raising the living standards of their families by training in handcrafts; established special stores for selling basic everyday and foodstuffs at reasonable prices; built education centers in *msajid* (mosques) for teaching religious principles; established education classes for students and kindergartens as parts of all NIF offices; and established charitable funds to support widows, orphans, and the poor in society. All these programs were effective, and consolidated the presence of the NWF in Sudan.

The NWF succeeded because it directly responded to the needs of women at the grassroots level, as well educated middle-class women who aspired to have influential roles in public life, while fulfilling their religious duties. The Islamic movement in Sudan depends on both students and women, who currently represent the two most important components of Islam. Both are expected to lead the collective social and volunteer organized work in the new Sudanese Islamic society. Most Muslims in Sudan were used to individualized Islamic charity work up to this time.

During the 1980s, the NWF membership increased tremendously across the regions of Sudan, adopting a decentralization policy that allowed its members in the regions freedom of movement and the right to hold regional conferences and carry out organizational work without interference from Khartoum. Women's membership increased in the *Shura* Public Authority[31] of the movement to reach 10%[32] (El Bashier, 2003, p. 100).

All of these efforts on the part of the women of the NWF culminated in the successful election of two women Parliamentarians into the People's Assembly in 1985. This era witnessed political instability, with three successive coalition governments in a very short period of time. Political maneuvering on the part of the political parties with regard to issues that seriously affected the stability of the country—war, economic deterioration, and the drafting of the Permanent Constitution—all resulted in a military coup in June 1989. This was accomplished with the support of the NIF. The new government called themselves the Government of National Salvation (GNS). Activities of all other political parties were banned and a large numbers of employees in government, both men and women, were dismissed from their work, especially among Communist Party members. The priority for working in the public sector was no longer based on qualifications,

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[31] This is the body which acts as an Advisory Council of the movement. *Shura* is an Arabic word which means advise.
[32] The organizational structure of the Islamic movement is composed of Public Conference, *Shura* Public Authority, Executive Authority, and Secretary-General. The *Shura* is composed of 300 members representing all regions of Sudan and governed by a Secretary-General. The NWF met every three months, its membership lasted for two years, and it had the authority to approve policies of the NIF and elect the members of the NIF to its Executive Authority.

but on loyalty to the Islamic ideology of the state. Women joined nongovernmental organizations (NGO) in large numbers. One of my interviewees—a member of an NGO—said,

> Women faced the political oppression of the current political system; women who
> were dismissed from their jobs because of their political loyalties found their way to
> NGOs and started their work.

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) was formed in October 1989 from all other political parties, including the Umma Party, the National Union Party, the Communist Party, the African Sudanese Conference Party, and the Sudanese Liberation Army and Movement (SPLA, SPLM) from the South of Sudan, which joined in March 1990. The purpose of this Alliance was to work against the Islamist military government and to bring back democracy. The NWF and other Muslim Sisters organizations were the only groups which were allowed by the government to continue to expand their activities internationally. As confirmed by Badri (2008), "The government established the Sudanese Women General Union in 1991 and founded the International Muslim Women's Union and the International Women's league with their headquarters in Khartoum" (p. 52). Amal, a member of the General Women's Union, said that,

> The Sudanese Women's General Union has branches all over the country. The
> women's conference in 1990 included 1,200 women from all over Sudan. Also, the
> women's conferences at the provinces' level played a great role in getting women
> together across Sudan.

Islamist women of the government heavily supported the civil war between the North and the South of Sudan. Elsawi (2011) argues that,

> The SWGU [Sudanese Women General Union] members would gather to sing songs
> in support of the soldiers, spontaneously give their gold to support the war with a

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campaign named the "mountain of gold", organized food for the mujaheddeen, the

soldiers of the holy war. Women were also encouraged to send their sons to war and

the death of young men would be celebrated in the "wedding of martyrs" ceremony.

(p. 6)

They joined what was known as "Popular Defense Forces," and entered the camps that were

established by the Government Army to acquire military training by mid 1990s. A member of

NWF said,

One of the big accomplishments was our participation in Jihad and war. We

participated in military confrontations defending our nation against the rebellions of

the South

Women members of these parties continued their activism against Islamist government policies.

Amna—a member of the Communist party—said that,

In 1994, I together with other women formed a women's association at my

residential area. We used to meet in my house secretly to avoid the security men of

the government. We discussed issues of concern like family law, gender, and we

organized and went out in demonstrations against the militarization of the students

for the war in the South.

Women from the South also joined the war. One of my interviewees said,

Women and girls held many jobs in the army; they were fighters, messengers, and

war supporters with both funds and information. The message we started to convey

to the world was that we weren't fighting the war only for power but for our religion

and race. Now our numbers multiplied and we all joined our work in church, in

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politics, and in public work together and this gave us even more strength. War was

still our main problem and liberation was given priority.

Samah—a member of the Umma Party—said,

We used to organize groups at the level of city sections to collect data on social

problems and distribute pamphlets and enhance directives for resisting the Islamic

Government; we worked against the forced militarization of our high schools

students at this young age who were put in camps, then taken to fight in the South.

There was the sad event of some dying in attempts to escape from the camp. We

arranged walks like the one from the UN Square to the UN office to hand them a

memo against this. We were chased and women were beaten and treated with

cruelty and we were detained and brought to trial in front of a judge at 01:00 a.m. I

told the judge that I never heard of a judge-on-call like medical doctors.

During this period, women followed the nationalists' divisive agenda, which threatened the

possibilities of collaboration among them. At the same time, starting from the mid-1970s–1990s,

women's activism in NGOs has increased tremendously with the mounting numbers of NGOs in

Sudan opening the door for a new episode of women's activism, as will be explained in Chapter

Four.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that women started their activism with the struggle for independence

alongside the nationalist forces, indicating that women's concerns were considered as part of the

national concerns since the inception of the movement. The evolution of the women's movement in

Sudan has been subjected to a contradictory nationalist discourse which forms part of the patriarchy

of the Sudanese state and society. Both tradition and religion have exacerbated the patriarchy in a society and which makes it difficult for women to achieve their rights.

Women have supported each other and strategically moved on with their rights in education, work, and suffrage as a preliminary step toward positive changes in gender relations and achieving more rights in private sphere. They have also used bargaining and balancing acts and cautious approaches to struggle against oppression and to sustain their activism. Women have struggled against these structures of subordination, realized positive changes in gender relations, and attained relative benefits for women. Such benefits have created tension between traditions and modernity, which women used strategically to further their interests.

Women who joined Nimairi military regime have managed to push for more rights for women. Family laws and *Shari'a* laws have tested the strength of the women's movement and honed their ability to tackle their legal system. Many conservative laws have exacerbated ideological divisions in the Sudanese women's movement. But changing family law is a process that requires not only the struggle of the women's movement, but the support of the state and other civil society organizations. When the state is officially promoting Islamic laws, winning this battle overnight is wishful thinking, especially when women lack the support provided by the women of the NIF, who advocate such laws as part of their vision for women's rights.

In the past, women's activism was confined to one dominant group at a time, i.e., the Communist Women's Union in the 1950s and 1960s, the state bureaucrats and the women who joined the Sudan's Women's Union in the 1970s and 1980s, and the Islamic women in the late 1980s, leading into the 1990s. From its inception in 1947 up to the 1990s, different women's groups that composed the women's movement in Sudan have not come together as a unified movement. Each group has been at the forefront of women's activism at a point of time; each has

excluded other groups for differences in political stands. However, the excluded groups at all times continue their struggle clandestinely. This helps to sustain women's activism and reflects positively on the continuity of the movement.

Many women's groups have come to exist alongside the political parties' affiliates. These groups include grassroots activists and women's NGOs, working both inside and outside Sudan. For the women's groups in Sudan, this huge diversity works despite their class, ethnic, and regional differences. The incorporation of ideological differences has shaped their debates concerning education, political participation, women's rights, employment, and family laws in unique and energizing ways. In the following chapter, I continue this exploration of Sudanese women's activism into a third historical era of the 1990s and beyond, when women deepened their transnational forms of activism.

Chapter Four

Localizing Transnationalism

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the era of the 1990s and the 2000s, which witnessed an expansion in the meaning of transnationalism beyond relations with international women's organizations outside the borders of Sudan to include the activism of transnational women at local Sudanese sites. This change was not only a response to existing transnational ties, but was also an adaptation of these international ties to local conditions and needs pertaining to women's rights. Paradoxically, transnationalism provided a space for women to practice their activism within Sudan, but beyond the limitations of the divisive Sudanese nationalist agendas. Such activism evolved to include many undertakings that responded to immediate needs, as well as gender/strategic needs. Sudanese women benefitted from the training offered by NGOs, and the exposure to and preparations for women's international conferences. Women in Sudan also adopted and customized international documents calling for women's rights, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), to raise awareness on women's rights. However, such benefits were limited in their ability to maneuver the patriarchy embedded in the Sudanese state and society.

Local transnationalism has brought forth new avenues for women's activism beyond their activism in Sudanese political parties. Women who were not satisfied with being members of political parties found an alternative in working with NGOs and this possibility opened wide a window of change in their lives. Women who continued working with political parties benefited from the cultural changes enacted by transnational activism and challenged their gender subordination inside the structure of the political parties.

In this chapter, the Sudanese women whom I interviewed express and reflect on their activism. I argue that many women's groups in Sudan have created space for local transnational activism. These women's groups have enriched the public space by their existence and activism and have challenged patriarchy in the private sphere. Further, these women consolidated their struggle against gender inequality by a variety of activisms with different views and diverse means. As I describe below, activist Sudanese women in NGOs; bureaucratic governmental offices; university and research centers; Islamic associations; and members of political parties all have their own "imaginations" and aspirations of/for nationhood as national and transnational women.

Historically, the preparations for this transnational era began long ago, as mentioned in Chapter Three, with the decision of the women activists in the early 1950s to extend their relations with their counterparts regionally and internationally. The WU established relationships with the Union of Arab Women (UAW), the African Women's Congress (AWC), and the International Democratic Union for Women (IDUW). The WU Secretary General Fatma Ahmed Ibrahim participated in the activities of the IDUW as confirmed by El-Amin (1994), "In 1954, Fatma joined the activities of the Democratic Union secretly as it was forbidden in those days in London, Paris and Berlin" (El-Amin, p. 17). This trend continued in the years afterwards (El-Amin, 1994), despite the fact that communication with the WU was disallowed by the government of Sudan due to its poor relationship with the Soviet Union and Communist countries during that period.

In 1957, women delegates from Sudan participated in the Conference of Women's Rights in Moscow, headed by Khalda Zaher, Sudan's first female medical doctor (Badri. H, 2002, p. 128). In the 1970s, one of the objectives of the Union of Sudanese Women (SWU) was to collaborate with UN organizations, as well as regional ones. The President of the SWU, Nafisa Ahmed Elamin, was elected Assistant Secretary General to the Secretary General of the General Union of Arab Women.

The SWU participated in the International Women's Year and the First Women's Conference in Mexico, as well as in the second conference in Copenhagen. They also participated in the execution of the resolutions of conferences in the national field (El-Amin, 1994, p. 30–31).

Women in NGOs

The UN Women's Decade, which ran from the mid-1970s up to 1985, witnessed an enormous increase in the activities of women inside Sudan as more connections were established with international organizations, and "the number of civil society groups and NGOs increased dramatically in Sudan especially women's organizations" (Dawalbaiet, 2006, p. 13). Also during this period, UN agencies and women's desks or departments at both these agencies and at some embassies—especially the Embassy of the Netherlands—played a prominent role in supporting women leaders in civil service and the academy by providing support for women's projects and scholarships for women to study abroad (Badri, 2008, p. 51).

During the democratic era (1985–1989), the liberty to form organizations plus the war and drought in the west of Sudan led to an increase in the numbers of NGOs with a mandate to address the needs of displaced people. Several local women's organizations were also founded. Badri (2008) confirms that, "In 1986 during democracy sixteen women's NGOs were registered" (p. 51). In addition to several local voluntary women's organizations such as El Fanar, El Manar, the Gender Center for Research and Training, and Mutaunat, other women's projects were established in other Sudanese states such as Gadarif, Kassala in East Sudan, El Obied, Darfur in West Sudan, and the South plus women's secretariats positions were established in political parties (Nouh & Badri, 2008, p. 172).

These women's organizations engaged in different projects for women that focused on development human and legal rights, awareness-raising, capacity-building, advocacy on issues of

violence against women, reproductive health, democracy, and peace. Women working for these organizations joined different training programs on gender equity and women's development; this enhanced their skills, levels of professionalism, and provided them with much knowledge on dealing with external donors, project development, evaluation, and reporting. Badri (2008) confirms that,

> Women responsible for these offices received training, attended international meetings and are expected to report to the international community on women's status in Sudan. They are expected to come up with plans of action and develop policy frameworks for women's empowerment and gender equality. (p. 58)

The multiplicity of activities handled by these activist women has had the dual impact of strengthening their own capacities while at the same time responding to women's needs at the grassroots level. I argue that what needs to be considered is to what extent the work provided by women activists goes beyond just satisfying the needs of poor women to challenge the gender inequalities in society. My interviewees reflected on how their activism positively changed the culture of society with regard to gender equality. Ekhlas describes her long work experience in a variety of activities in different NGOs and how this affects women:

> I started in late 1970 with the Babiker Badri Association for fighting harmful customs. We did a lot of work in fighting female circumcision. In the Aza Association and Peace Bridge Association we have clear structures, we have a constitution, and each project has a coordinator, trainers, and a project writer. We are involved in many activities in a program for the development of handcrafts, fighting HIV/AIDS, the food industry, and we also organize exhibitions for women's products to support them financially. In the program for peace, we organize

workshops to build a culture of peace. We work among the internally displaced, women in prisons, street kids, and the youth. I believe our activities have led to empowering women.

Siza confirms the local impacts of other women, who initially launched their activism outside Sudan,

Large numbers of Southern women went abroad in the early 90s and we formed our women's network and did a lot of work from abroad, such as getting support for putting pressure on Sudan Government to move towards peace, support refugees, and trace those who were missing.

At the same time, the work of these organizations raised an awareness of gender equity issues, which in turn enhanced the abilities of women's organizations to lobby for women's issues. Amira—a member of a civil society organization—said,

I believe these new issues around gender violence against women, and women's participation in decision-making came as a result of the international impact of the UN conferences in Nairobi, Beijing, etc. Also, international evolution standards or indices of the UN and the World Bank refer to women's conditions. All this adds to women's rights and creates a global mutual or joint understanding of women's issues.

Abrar—a member of a civil society organization—said that,

UN conferences and UN programs have enacted a change and created a tendency toward dealing with women's concerns: Women were able to channel their views publicly through workshops and consciousness-raising campaigns. Such activities

are reflected positively on raising gender awareness in local settings about women's issues.

This is has been confirmed by Amina, who said that, "Civil Society organizations and NGOs have led to change in the culture of society with regard to women's issues. They raise the awareness of the society with women's concerns."

Also, women in NGOs have experienced new opportunities for sharing experiences and getting exposure to international conferences. A member of one of the NGOs said,

We also meet in conferences like Beijing+5 or 10 or 15, with African and Asian women with whom we exchange experiences, for there are many similar problems. We share in cases of emergency when signing petitions in the online events as needed.

Awatif—a member of an Islamic civil society organization—said,

I participated in the preparation for the Beijing Conference on Women, which witnessed a kind of collaboration between the women's organizations in civil society and the women of the Government.

Lubna, who has joined many civil society organizations since 1997, talked about her experiences and argued that the activism of women NGOs has enhanced leadership skills among women. She said,

The work of NGOs has created awareness among women and in the society about women's issues in the different fields and at the level of grassroots at residential areas. Also, women have played a bigger role as leaders of change in society.

Moreover, NGOs have started to come together in networks to address similar concerns. This has created another platform of collaborative work among different women's groups. Various networks

were established: Women and Development Networks, Sudanese Women Empowerment for Peace, FGM Network, Population and Health Network, Poverty Network, HIV/AIDS Network, etc. (Nouh & Badri, 2008, p. 173).

> Aml talked about the networking among civil society organizations. She said:
>
> There are a lot of Network organizations which get women to work together like Women from Darfur, the Platform for Women of Political Parties. Usually organizations share the chances for training and experiences and conduct joint workshops on different issues of similar concern.

Women in Islamic Organizations

The Islamic government established many civil society organizations and has supported them financially. The Sudanese Women's General Council has branches all over the country and is engaged in income generation and credit activities as well as political mobilization. Amani said,

> During the 1990s, we established a lot of small organizations at the level of residential areas: the Association of Women Who Recite the Quran, the Association of Orphans' Friends, the House of Costume and Zina, the Ajaweed Organization (which works on solving social problems among people), Health Organization (Afia), AL Takaful Organization for helping the needy, Peace Organization, and many others which I cannot recall.

Badri (2008) maintains that, "Most women Islamist NGOs concentrated their activities on teaching *Quran* and mobilizing for holy war[33] before the peace agreement was signed in January 2005" (p. 54). However, Muslim organizations also extended their activism beyond these activities, as well as outside Sudan, and established international organizations such as the International Women's

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[33] In reference to the civil war between the North and the South of Sudan.

Bond, whose aim was to attract even non-Muslim women, and the International Organization for Muslim Women in 1989 (El-Bashier, 2003). These international Islamic organizations include members from other countries such as Zambia, Tanzania, Chad, and Pakistan. They held international conferences to discuss many issues. The first women's forum was held in 1991 under the title of "Women: Present and Future Perspectives," the second one in 1992 under the title of "Women are the Leaders of the Building of Civilizations."

In December 1994, there was a women's symposium under the title of "Empowerment and Decision Making." Islamist women were working to reach out and connect with Muslim and non-Muslim women across borders to share their experiences and spread their message. Rogaia, said,

> I was the Secretary General of the International Organization for Muslim Women
> which has its Headquarter in Khartoum and it opened its membership to all Muslim
> women regardless of their political affiliation. We also participated in the Beijing
> Conference.

I argue that women's transnational activism has opened the door for women to work together on issues concerning women. The resultant empowerment of grassroots movements and the increase of leadership skills among women have enhanced awareness about the importance of gender equality, not only among women but in society in general. Such positive impacts have been supported by the activism of women who are working in the offices of international organizations as well as government offices and ministries.

Women Bureaucrats

Activities launched during the UN Decade for Women also supported the participation of women in public office. Indeed, the representation of women increased in Government Ministries beyond the Ministry of Social Welfare and those offices that focused on children and women's reproductive

health (Badri, 2008). Women's activities at the women's desks at international organizations have also played an influential role in supporting women's rights and women's basic needs projects. There were and are many international organizations working in Sudan—such as CARE International, Oxfam, Save the Children, Christian Norwegian Aid, and the Freidrich Ebert Foundation—all with programs targeting women's empowerment in various ways. UN agencies are also present, including: UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, FAO, the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), and UNIFEM. They have different women's programs according to each organization's mandate.

There are focal points for women at some embassies such as at the Embassy of the Netherlands and the British Embassy. There are other international NGOs in Sudan such as the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and Oxfam (respectively, German and British development organizations) working on women's capacity-building, empowerment, and development. The activities of women in these foreign organizations are of particular impact in supporting women's rights through their well-established local and international networks, as will be elucidated in the case studies in Chapter Five.

Women civil servants represent another category of women activists. Women's units in government ministries were established during the 1980s in the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Agriculture, and at the Directorate of Women and Family Affairs at the Ministry of Social Development. A member of one of the NGOs confirmed said that, "the international and UN conferences on women's issues have led to an increase in women's associations in civil society and women's desks at ministries." Other offices addressing women's issues were established during the 2000s at the government ministerial level, including: the Center for Women, Peace, and Development; the Center for Women's Rights; the Administration of Girls' Education at the

Ministry of Education; the Women and Agricultural Development Administration at the Ministry of Agriculture; the Human Rights, Women, Peace, and Child Administration in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Violence Against Women focal point at Ministry of Justice; and the Reproductive Health Administration at the Ministry of Health.

Fawzia—a former bureaucrat at the Ministry of Youth—said,

My plan is to abolish at least 80% of illiteracy among the displaced women youth. I also worked to establish small projects that suit their abilities in the camps. I visited them and felt their energy and eagerness to work. I designed a program but it needed funds to work.

Ejlal said,

We work to build a culture of peace in society; we have branches in West Sudan in Jinana-Darfur, in Kassala in the East and in the area of Blue Nile. We also work on generating income for women through micro credit projects with the support of the Bank of Sudan; we mediate between women and the bank so that women can get small funds to finance their products and establish their business.

These women who are part of the Sudanese government used the resources that are available to them to impact gender relations.

Various women's groups participated in international women's conferences and continued their participation in the aftermath of these meetings, such as the UN and NGO Beijing conferences. Such activities provided a platform for women to work together despite their political differences. In preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the Sudanese Women's NGO Forum was held in Khartoum, August 14–16, 1995, under the leadership of the National Preparatory Committee, which was formed on June 10th, 1993, to coordinate preparations

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at the national level. It included in its membership 35 national and international NGOs, as well as the women's sectors from different ministries, plus youth and academicians. The first item recognized by the Forum with regard to the status of women in Sudan was that women in Sudan are not a homogeneous group; women are different and have different positions as per their differences; and that women need to work together to elevate themselves from their secondary status. The Forum organized workshops to discuss CEDAW as well as other workshops covering the themes of the forthcoming Beijing Conference: poverty, health, education, violence against women, conflict and peace, media, law, and effective participation in decision-making processes.

The women bureaucrats also created a link between the government women's desks and NGOs and worked to obtain the necessary support from these NGOs for their clients. They also comprised a segment of women who were able to lead joint formal work between the government and UN agencies, including participation and preparations for UN Conferences. The impacts of their activism in raising gender awareness also helped to raise interest in gender training and gender studies at universities, as I describe below.

Women in Universities and Research Centers

Another segment of women activists who have also played a considerable part in this transnational activism are women who joined research centers that launched programs concerning women and gender studies.[34] All these research centers are still providing training and raising awareness, as well as increasing advocacy, research, and publications on gender and women's issues through

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[34] The Institutes include: the Women's Development Program at the Development Studies Research Institute, University of Khartoum; the Institute of Gender, Women, and Development Studies at the Ahfad University for Women; the Sudan Women's University College, Women's Health, and Child Center; the UNESCO Chair for Women in Science and Technology at the Sudan University for Science and Technology; Women and Urban Studies in the faculty of urbanization at the Al-Azhari University; Peace, Women, and Child Studies Center at Juba University; and Women and Islam at the African International University.

various degree programs. Some of the universities offer Bachelors and Masters Degrees in Women and Gender Studies.

> Amina, a University Professor said,

> Al Ahfad University introduced the Program for Women and Development with the support of the Dutch Embassy. We provide scholarships to women from the South, Nuba Mountains, and the East and we also give undergraduate scholarships to women in the camps.

The activities of women in these research centers provides a crucial academic and intellectual background around issues concerning women; raises gender awareness; and creates an interest among young women to study gender and women's studies.

Women in Political Parties

Some women members of the political parties were not satisfied with the political work inside the political parties and decided to quit. Marwa—a member of a political party who left to establish her own community organization—said:

> Political parties deal with women like a décor, not as influential participants; it became like a fashion: this party has this number of women; as if women's existence in a party is an evidence of progress and modernity.

And Aml continues,

> I was a head of one of the Islamic organizations representing my region, Darfur, in Khartoum. In 2003, with the beginning of fighting in Darfur, I felt that the party is incapable of serving people. I have seen a lot of organizations foreign and local who were doing better in supporting people. So I quit the party and formed my own

organization in 2004. I believed that raising women's awareness and working in promoting health and education would lead to peace.

Elham—a member a political party who quit her organizations to join an NGO—said, "The party has a narrow vision there is no room for development and it could not assimilate the concerns of the new generations." Despite the above critiques, many women inside political parties continue to struggle against the patriarchy of these parties and that of their male colleagues to shape a place for themselves and fight for their rights.

As I describe in Chapter Three, historically in 1953, the right to vote was restricted to educated women. It was only after the October Revolution in 1964 that all women would have the right to vote and the right to be elected. Women participated actively in registering and voting in 1965. Political parties worked among women mainly to gain their support during elections. In the 1965 elections, more women than men registered to vote in many of parts of Sudan. The first political party which opened its membership to women was the Communist party, followed by the National Union Party and the Peoples' Democratic Party (which belonged to Al-Khatmia Sect). After that time, all other parties—including the Umma Party (which belonged to Al-Mahadia Sect) and the Islamic Charter Front—formed women's branches.

Women used the opportunity to register for elections and voted in large numbers to consolidate their rights. They faced strong opposition on the grounds that they did not have independent political opinions, but rather followed their husbands and/or fathers, who by turn follow their religious sects. However, women inside Sudanese political parties worked hard against gender inequalities and oppressive gender ideologies, struggling to find a space to voice their interests. Women from the Communist party, the Islamic party, the Umma party, and the Union

Democratic Party described their exclusionary experiences within political parties that do not offer women their rights, despite their vigorous work inside these parties.

One of my interviewees—from the Communist Party—said,

Although the Communist Party was the first to support the women and it is well-structured, but as women we are also sometimes faced with the patriarchy of our colleagues inside the party. At home, I am the one who is supposed to enter the kitchen and prepare food to the family, although both of us, me and my husband are members of the Party. It is not easy to change men's mentality. It needs a lot of work and patience.

In her testimony about the Umma Party, my interviewee described that the position of women inside that Party gradually improved for the better, especially with the support of the Leader of the Party:

In 1985, we had our political office formed of 50 members and we were three women in the Executive Council. In 1986, we decided that 10% of all the offices must be women. In 1988, another amendment was made and the rate of women went up to 20%. All these amendments were met with resistance but we managed to pass them.

Women in Muslim Brothers Party have benefited from the support of the party leader Dr. Hassan Al-Turabi. Rogaia—a member—said that,

Dr. Hassan Al-Turabi has a philosophy which calls for equality between men and women because they are equal before ALLAH -God- in both rewards and punishments. This kind of thought is even rejected by other Muslim philosophers.

Also, women participate in the well-organized structure of the party, as Awatif said:

The structure of the Muslim Brothers and/or Islamic movement was well established. The small unit is called a family, in residential area there is a family for men and a family for women which is headed by a leader. Women have the right to assume 20% of the seats in all party's structures.

Women work to spread their understanding of religion in their communities, Awatif continues,

Although our parents and relatives are parts of the big religious sects in Sudan Mahdia and Khatmia, but the call for hijab[35] was strange for the society. I remember that when I was at the school in 1975, the number of the girls who wore hijab was six. It was very difficult to convince our parents to wear it. It was not acceptable in society at that time. Our work among people created "social shock" not only in regard to hijab but also fighting drinking liquor which was considered normal among men.

However, she confirmed that inside the Party, it was not easy,

For some traditional men inside political parties, a woman who stands for what she believes would be considered "*Qahir*" (i.e., to have no respect for society values and traditions). When I entered University of Khartoum during the beginning of the 1980s, the one who is responsible for the female students' affairs in the movement was a male. We work hard against this and push for one of our colleagues women to handle this position until we got it.

However, a different image exists for women's participation in the Union Democratic Party which is also one of the big political parties in Sudan. Mawada said that:

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[35] Hijab here means the cover for the head as well as a long cover for the entire women's body. In earlier times, Sudanese women wore a traditional costume known as a *thob w*hich covers head and body.

Our party is not progressive in handling women's issues. In the party conference in 2004 in Cairo to elect the political office of the party, only 22 women attended. I stood up and said that we as women will not accept the fact that we vote for the party by 80% then our representation at the political office is zero! Members were afraid that this may create a division inside the party so they agreed to include 10 women at the political office.

However, there is an agreement among most of the interviewees that women inside the parties have worked mainly for their party's national agenda because they also believe that women's issues cannot be solved in isolation from solving national issues. In a confirmation of some of their accomplishments for women at the national level, Amal—a member of Islamic party—said,

I participated at the Constitution Committee in 1991. We worked for the drafting of the law of family affairs as there was no law before. Despite the opposition of some of our male colleagues in the party, we succeeded in giving the woman the right to pass her nationality on to her children in case she is married to a foreigner. We also fight to cancel a law which forbids women from driving government cars. As an employee in any of the Ministries or government organs, and as part of the package or benefits of the job, an employee may be given a government car to use.

However, working for women's issues is also subject to political competition among political parties. Marwa said that,

Although the Family Law of 1991 was the first in the history of the country and this in itself is a step forward—it also does not come up to our expectations as women.

One of the activists and a member in one of the civil society organization which works in the field of women's rights and law said that,

I think that it is also important when laws or constitutions are drafted, there should

be a specification of the mechanisms which can support the application of these

clauses on the ground, whether at the level of government bodies or at the level of

society organizations, otherwise they would just be slogans.

Not surprisingly, there is a good deal of disagreement about the usefulness of working

within a political party amongst the women's movement in Sudan. Criticism directed by women to

their work in political parties indicates the different views of women with regard to different forms

of activism. On the other hand, some women in NGOs also express some ambivalence about work

in NGOs, Alawia said,

The question is that the civil society organization has the ability to change the

culture of society, but they don't have the ability to enact political change. There is

a solution: if the civil society organizations collaborate with political parties. I

believe that political parties are the political instruments of change while the

organizations of civil society are only helping organizations.

There are other criticisms directed against women working in NGOs, which center around

the financial benefits that those women gain from their work in NGOs versus the benefits of their

work for women at the grassroots level. Does this work consolidate the image of women of Third

World as victims in need of help, an image that supports the neoliberal agenda? Is earning money

the only reason driving many women to join NGOs? When I asked my interviewees why so many

women joined NGOs, they gave a number of reasons. Sumaia said,

Women were dismissed from civil services in large numbers by the Islamic

Government in 1991. At the time, the parties couldn't continue their activities and

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were greatly oppressed. Civil society organizations opened the door for us [for women] to join and practice our activities and find new sources of living.

Ekhlas said,

We find that most parties have no clear programs or structures, we feel useless, neglected, and feel degraded by the men in the absence of democracy. NGOs are well-constructed and programmed organizations with their clear-cut objectives and scheduled work that makes us feels that we can work and be useful in a democratic atmosphere.

Dr. Ahmed said,

The civil society organizations attracted women because of their un-political nature. The cost of political activism is high; you can be interrogated by security and jailed, so women inside them feel they could effect change and still feel safe and protected from the Government whip.

So these NGOs also provide a "safe and professional" space for these women to work and provide for themselves and their dependents. Some women were confident enough to open their own organizations and work independently.

Another criticism directed against women working in NGOs is that they are agents of foreign (read: Western) donors. This is mainly based on the question of foreign funding which represents one of the main challenges of work in NGOs. A member of NGO said; "Some of the foreign organizations impose certain conditions and the local organizations need financial support; that is why they comply with these conditions."

Ekhlas further describes the monetary situation,

We face some challenges with funding our activities. Foreign donors have programs each year. For example, they will say, "This year we support projects for fighting AIDS" or "…for building women's capacity"; so we need to respond to this by providing proposals in these fields.

A head of a local organization, said:

We received funds from foreign organizations and embassies; the more the organization succeeded in implementing projects, the more funds it can get. So, competition is also high among organizations for funding.

Even women at the grassroots level started to develop traditional types of community support activities and used them in new ways to sustain their living. One of the interviewees gave the following example,

I know a lady who attended a session on how to create your own business in one of the organizations. She started her own business which is to create rotation funds, *sandoog*, as per the need and get a percentage for it. Like if you need money for any purpose, you just go and tell her, she then will make a rotation fund for you with other ladies and you give her a small percentage for that.

However, the activities of NGOs have partially led to the strengthening of the neoliberal values of competition and individualism in society, as opposed to the values of collectivism, which were more prevalent in prior days. This has created tension and brings up the question of whether activist women in NGOs are able to produce structural social change through their activism, and provide alternatives that favor the alleviation of women's oppression and women's subordination. I believe that this tension and criticism creates change in society, ignites discussions, and may open new avenues for challenging gender inequality.

One of the tools that women activists in NGOs used in their work against women's subordination and for women's rights is CEDAW. However, it is neither signed nor ratified by the Government of Sudan, on the grounds of protecting Sudan's culture and religion from Western influence. The Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa is also not ratified (Badri, 2008, p. 23); despite this fact, CEDAW has ignited much discussion and advocacy work among the different women's groups in Sudan. Abrar—a member of the Communist Party—said that, "We advocate for CEDAW because we believe that it is a call for equality regardless of religion." However, Awatif, from the government Islamic group had a different view:

We assumed a different position with regard to CEDAW. I believe it is a political stand and part of the political struggle between political parties rather than anything else, because the other political parties in opposition use it against the Islamic government; that is why we supported our party in not signing it.

International conventions have always been subjected to local circumstances and their use is shaped by the political struggle and women's position in society. In Sudan, international conventions are even used as a mechanism to address political rivalry and political maneuvers. Despite the fact that these politics have prevented the ratification of CEDAW, women's organizations used it successfully to spread awareness of women's rights. However, I found that women in NGOs are critical about aspects of women's rights. One of my interviewees—who is a member of NGO—said, "We follow the CEDAW Convention. But I have reservations regarding things like the right to abortion and other non-Muslim issues; the rest is all good."

Batool said,

The international documents raised human slogans without referring to the specialty
of each situation, but in the end they are good to be used as a common language and
in raising awareness.

One of my interviewees also commented on the program for violence against women. Lubna said:

The program for violence against women needs to be adjusted, if you yell at your
child this is violence, women's circumcision is also violence, these things cannot be
changed by law but by changing the culture of society. I can give another example
one of the organizations working on productive health required to distribute
contraceptive pills to the girls of the high schools. What is the meaning of this? Go
and do whatever. Since you are using these pills, you won't get pregnant. This is
against our religion and our culture!

Marwa said:

Funds are available only to respond to crisis, for example, in violence against
women in camps. They deal with women as victims; they don't consider their real
needs. OK, these women pass by violent experiences, [and] now we need to work
for the future and channel funds for building this future.

Criticisms by some of the women interviewed of some of the methods used by international
organizations indicate that women activists are aware of the difficulties of fitting foreign
conventions and interventions into the context of Sudan.

Also, women in these organizations also seek to change unequal gender relations in society;
on issue of violence against women, Ejlal said,

We don't dismiss important issues like violence against women by saying that we
don't have such things in our societies; we need to be critical. I went to Darfur and
met women working in the red-brick ambushes with their little girls while the men
with the boys are comfortably resting in the shade. Then they take the bricks and
sell them and give those women no money! I believe this is violence. When I talk
to women and men that this shouldn't be, the men complain by saying that I come
from Khartoum to make their wives revolt against them. A lot of work is needed to
change the culture of gender relations there."

When I asked Ekram from the Nuba Mountains how they talk about gender in such highly
patriarchal settings, she said,

We don't start by saying gender. For example I start the training session, which
includes both men and women, by asking them all to list the tasks of the day.
Usually women's list go far beyond men's list as women go to the farm, get water
from far places, cook and feed their family… etc. Then I asked what if a woman is
sick, can men take care of the kids? Would this do men any harm? I use local
dialect and get the support of the local leaders to have more influence.

Ekhlas said:

We discussed in gender workshops the importance of the freedom of women to
choose their husbands, the double burden of women working inside and outside
homes, and the importance of women's careers. I believe we started to disturb
things which have been taken for granted for long time.

Amina said:

> There is big change in Sudanese Society: domestic help is even more prominent, and
> it is turning into shared responsibility of house chores. The nuclear family lost the
> support of extended family due to the new form of living. One student told me she
> leaves her baby in the care of her grandfather! So, working mothers who contribute
> to the cost of living and other factors forced men to play a new role in the family.

Thus the influences of transnationalism are subject to local understandings and circumstances and they are not applied blindly. One of the roles of transnational women activists has been to adapt foreign/international conventions and tools to local conditions, then apply them in ways that may generate and enact gendered change in society as well as working in society to change the unequal gender relation.

The 1990s and the 2000s have opened the doors for women's activism under transnationalism. As per the National Consensus of 1993, the total number of women is 49% out of the total population and women's participation in economic activities has increased up to 30% while 27% of households were headed by women (Badri, 2008, p. 19–21). A presidential decree issued in 2002 gives mothers two years of a maternity leave with a basic salary and confirms that employment in both public and private sector is open for competition by both men and women based on their qualifications. Despite the fact that this decree is supportive to working mothers, it opens the jobs for women and men on a free competition basis and gives no consideration to women's possible lack of access to education and training. This has resulted in women joining activities in the informal sector and taking on less secure jobs[36] due to increasing levels of poverty.

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[36] For more details with regard to gender gaps in economic activities, see Ali's article "A Brief Overview on Women Economic Participation and Employment" in Badri (ed.) (2008) *Sudanese Women Profile and Pathways to Empowerment*.

In terms of political participation, the number of women who participated in the Parliament before 2005 increased to a large extent. All these parliamentarian women come by appointment and belong to the National Congress party. In 1994, there were 25 women; in 1996, there were 21 women; and in 2001, there were 35 women (Al-Haj & Abd-Alhafeez, 2010, p. 18). This reflects the outcome of the struggle of women inside the Islamic government for their rights. Also, the number of girls in preliminary education reached 45% out of the total number of students in 1994–1995 and in the same year, the number of girls in the secondary schools reached 49% out of the total number of students (Ali, 2012, p. 115–116). The number of girls in public and private universities and higher education amounted to 52%, while the percentage of boys was 47.8% in 2001 (El Fatih & Badri, 2008, p. 95). The percentage of girls is higher than the percentage of boys because boys left the school to join workforce due to poverty, while the girls continue. However, it is also true that due to poverty, many girls lose their opportunity to access education because preference is given to boys' education over that of girls'. At the same time, this era also witnessed the issuance of many rules and laws by the Islamic State, which severely curtailed women's freedom and mobility.

In 1991, and for the first time in the history of Sudan, a personal status law was issued under the name of the Family Law Act. Despite the fact that the women of the Islamic movement whom I interviewed are proud of this law and consider it as one of their accomplishments, it was received with great disappointment by other women's groups, who consider it as confirmation of women's subordination in family life. Many women's law groups have challenged this law and requested amendments, while other groups call for its cancellation. This law provides a shallow definition of marriage that restricts it to sexual enjoyment between a man and a woman; it also denies women their rights to financial support by their husbands in cases where women disobey their husbands; it

provides conditions under which women can go to work with their husbands' consent; it defines 10 years as a suitable age for marriage; and it puts no restrictions on polygamy. This law has been challenged from within the Islamic circles as it is not a response to the higher objectives of Islam. The writings of women who reread the *Quran* and provided interpretations for the meanings of marriage in Islam confirm their opposition to this Law (Atabani, 2013; Salem, 2013).

I argue that the controversy over the Family Law is a reflection of both gender and religion at the same time. This case proves that as Joseph (2001) claims, women side with men of the same religion, ethnicity, class, and religion as their own, more than they side with other women across these axes (p. 10). Women of Islamic groups managed to get this law passed and thereby sided with a patriarchal understanding of the Islamic State. Transnationalism opened the space for negotiating the different understandings associated with manhood and womanhood beyond the secular/religious divide. This has enabled women to continue challenging this law despite the support for it by the Islamic State.

Also, women in NGOs have experienced many difficulties as the result of restrictions imposed on their activities through laws such as the Security Act and the Civil Society Registration Act, which require that all women in NGOs receive permission from the authorities to establish and to implement their activities (Badri, 2005, p. 4). Furthermore, in 1995, women were forbidden to travel outside the country without the consent of a male guardian, i.e., a father, brother, husband, or a son as per the stipulations of the passports and emigrations regulations and rules. In 1996, the Public Order Law was issued; it requires that 10 seats at the back of a vehicle and one door be specified for women in public transport, forbids mixed dances, and regulates women's work in the hair dressing industry. It also prohibits men from working in jobs such as tailoring for women. This law was consolidated by the appointment of what is called "The Police of Public Order," who

mainly function to threaten women in the streets. Women are harassed because of their clothing and their conduct *if it is not Islamic*. This was justified by the Islamic principle of "Al-Amr bi Al-Maroof and Alnahi an Almunkr," i.e., "the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice."

History repeats itself, as with what happened during the early 1950s, when the pioneer women (or the newly emancipated women) were attacked in the Masjid during prayer. They responded by "bargaining and balancing" to sustain their activism. Again women are attacked, but this time by the Islamic State, which has institutionalized gender-based discrimination. However, the response this time by the "transnational women" was different. Women in NGOs were frank when they challenged these rules. Badri (2005) documents that, despite the restrictions, the number of registered NGOs dealing exclusively with women's rights issues rose to 37 by 2003 (p. 11). Women who were expelled from their jobs in 1991 by the current Islamic government have managed to surpass their grievances by joining the NGOs. They benefit from their experiences in civil services and draw from the past legacy of the previous accomplishments of the women's movement. Further, they are able to give new meaning to their work by referring to transnational documents that support women's rights and they thereby transform the culture of society, making its members more aware and its atmosphere more conducive to changes in the unequal gender relations.

Conclusion

Women of Sudan during the 1990s and the 2000s expanded their transnational activism to include not only their relationships with international women's organizations outside Sudan but also their local activism in response to international conventions that support women's rights. Local transnationalism has opened the doors for new forms of women's activism. Women in NGOs, in bureaucratic government offices, in research centers, and in political parties have enriched the

public life with their variety of activism which ultimately resulted in raising gender awareness and increasing women's ability to tackle women's concerns. Women have adapted international conventions to local understandings to gain more rights and benefits.

This era witnessed contradictory effects in terms of challenging patriarchal structures and unequal gender relations. Women continue to challenge the gender-based discrimination laws. I concur with Moghadam that, "The very existence of women's NGOs challenges the patriarchal order in profound ways" (Moghdam, 1998, p. 216). Transnational activism and the appropriation by women in Sudan of new ideas around women's rights have resulted in the disruption of the dichotomies maintained by the nationalists, of tradition versus modernity and public versus private spheres.

The public sphere has become an open space for the promotion of international ideas of women's rights, while the private sphere has been exposed to candid challenges by women's advocates to change Islamic family laws, including patriarchy inside the family, as well as issues of violence against women and other "taboo" issues, together with the position of women in Islamic Shari'a Laws. These practices and ideological positions are being openly questioned and subjected to intense debates by Sudanese women's organizations. The transnational activism of women has created tensions and contradictions, the outcomes of which are still in process; it has blurred the divisions between public and the private spheres. Transnational activism conducted by "transnational women" has also opened the door for more positive changes in gender relations.

Issues concerning women's rights, family laws, violence, and peace have brought women together across ethnic, regional, and religious divides in Sudan and across the globe for Sudanese women's organizations in exile into strong networks. The "transnational woman" adapts successfully to international laws and conventions, and at the same time is able to reach out to

solidarity networks locally and internationally. This ability to connect with local solidarity networks is exemplified in new alliances between different women's groups that compose the women's movement in Sudan and that have brought women together despite their differences in terms of ethnicity, region, and religion. This dissertation provides examples of women coming together in solidarity networks that call for resistance to women's subordination and collaboration to change laws and to work together for peace. A detailed explanation of these solidarity networks is provided in the next chapter.

<center>**Chapter Five**</center>

<center>**Building Complex Alliances**</center>

<center>**Two Case Studies:**</center>

<center>**The Decree of the Governor of Khartoum**</center>

<center>**and**</center>

<center>**Sudanese Women's Empowerment for Peace**</center>

Introduction

This chapter explores the steps that transnational women of Sudan have taken towards working together in alliances for the achievement of women's rights. I will explore, highlight, and concretize these steps through two case illustrations. The first describes how women came together against the Decree of the Governor of Khartoum in 2000—a decree that restricted women's right to employment. The second case study reveals how women in Sudan collaborated with international feminist activists—led by representatives of the Embassies of the Netherlands in Khartoum and Nairobi—for peace in 1998, in the midst of the civil war between the North and the South of Sudan. I intend to show how women can work together and across two different and similar contexts at the same time. The first case study is a description of a struggle to sustain women's right to employment. This was originally one of the main achievements of the women's movement when it began to formally organize in the 1950s. The second case study concerns peace-building, a new area of Sudanese women's struggles that arose alongside the mounting suffering of the people of

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Sudan caused by the civil war, and with strong support from the UN and international community during the transnational era of the 1990s and 2000s.

I argue that the transnational era has brought about new avenues for women's activism but also new challenges which threaten not only the possibilities of achieving more rights but also maintaining those already achieved. The international support provided by the UN for women's rights has in some ways raised the reservations of the traditional forces to work against (for example), CEDAW, under the banner of protecting Sudanese culture and religion against the West. Such reservations are not new; they were raised in earlier times, at the beginning of the movement in the 1950s, against women's rights of employment and suffrage. However, the Pioneers' pioneers' nonconfrontational strategy of outmaneuvering the traditional forces succeeded in counterbalancing such efforts in those early days.

What is new in these current reservations is that they are supported by the Islamic government in Sudan; they have come to be part of "we, Muslims versus them, the West." It is no longer confined to a women's issue or concern. Sudanese women launched their contemporary struggles both to maintain the rights for which the Pioneers fought a long time ago, as well as to enter new avenues of struggle in a transnational arena that is crammed with obstacles, challenges, and new opportunities. I believe the two case studies are important because they reflect two different scenarios: in the first, women collaborated to fight for their rights at the local level by taking a direct lead and using international documents, agreements, and conventions as tools to achieve women's rights and benefit from their international and transnational ties to support their case. In the second, women formed international peace coalitions supported directly by transnational forces based on UN Resolution 1325.[37]

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[37] See definition of this Resolution as described in footnote 14 in Chapter Two.

Women were successful in adapting and using international documents, agreements and conventions that support women's rights (e.g., CEDAW and Resolution 1325), as well as the transnational ties and networks made available by the UN; they benefitted from their experiences working in civil society organizations and NGOs to build what I describe as complicated transnational alliances. Such alliances were critical in sustaining women's rights and realizing peace, and they had to withstand political rifts and differences among women themselves, the agenda of nationalists' forces in political parties, as well as local political, economic, and social contexts and global neoliberal pressures. The conditions for the sustainability of such alliances thus go beyond women's willingness and efforts to come together and extend to the interplay of both national and international forces with the political and economic circumstances of specific points in time.

Case Study One: The September 2000 Decree of the Governor of Khartoum

As stated in earlier chapters, women in Sudan achieved their right to employment in the 1950s as part of their struggle alongside nationalists fighting for Sudan's independence. In the 1960s they fought for equal payment, because at the time, women received only one third of a man's salary even if they were doing the same kind of job. They received this equality in pay in 1973 along with the other labor rights of maternity leave and pension. All these rights consolidated women's existence in public life and were considered to be the main accomplishments of the Pioneers of the women's movement in Sudan.

However, on September 4th, 2000, the Governor of Khartoum turned back the clock on women's rights by issuing Decree Number 84 for the year 2000, in which he banned women from working in gas stations, restaurants, hotels, and other public service sectors with the exception of a service provision for families. This Decree was issued with a recommendation to those service

providers to hire those women in other places and with clear directives to the authorities of social affairs, local governments, and the police and security forces to put this decision into immediate effect. It was circulated to all government newspapers. The justification for this pronouncement was presented in a foreword to the Decree and maintained that,

This is in consideration of the state which sought to honor and keeps safe the dignity of women and situates women in the right place which they deserve as per the civilized project of the nation and in line with our traditions and the values of our religion.

On September 6th, 2000 there was a meeting among a number of civil society organizations to discuss preparations for Beijing +5. The Governor's Decree was thoroughly discussed and it was clear that it affected a large number of women who were the breadwinners or the sole providers for their families. A committee called the "Women Solidarity Network" made up of women from the civil and women's society organizations was formed to work against this Decree. They made plans to follow up and to hold regular daily meetings in this regard.

Women took several steps against this Decree: they wrote a memorandum condemning the Decree and got it signed by 34 civil society organizations and encouraged these organizations to collect information about the affected women and supported them by all possible means; they raised a constitutional motion to the Constitutional Court against the Decree because it was unconstitutional and incompatible with international treaties and conventions as well as the Constitution of Sudan for the year 1998; they coordinated with media agencies, TV, and newspapers to publicize the Decree and held a press conference on September 8th, 2000 about its ramifications; and they started a program for raising awareness among women about their constitutional rights.

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Women in Sudan created a permanent committee to challenge all such decrees which may come up in the future and have written proposals requesting funding for this committee from the concerned international agencies and local entities. Indeed they have attracted the support of men in Sudan who are concerned about women's inequality issues. Women activists are documenting all steps and activities taken by women against this Decree.

This proposed memorandum against the Decree was issued on September 7th, 2000, and copies were sent to the President of the Republic of Sudan, the Head of the Ministerial Cabinet, the Association of Sudanese Workers Union, the Ministry of Justice, the Advisory Council for Human Rights, the General Union of Women of Sudan, and the *Sudanese Daily Press*. This memorandum requested the immediate cancellation of the Decree and drew attention to three important points:

- *This Decree contradicts the International Convention of Political, Civil, Economic, and Social Rights which the Government of Sudan ratified.*

- *It contradicts the country's 1998 Constitution and the clauses which respect women's rights in employment.*

- *It stressed that the women were targeted by this decision are responsible for the livelihood of their families.*

Another memorandum was also sent on September 11th, 2000, to the President and members of the Ministerial Cabinet signed by the National Women's Democratic Alliances, which also came under this Solidarity Network as a step to create more local and international pressure on the Government. This memorandum stressed that the Decree contradicted international conventions which support women's rights, as well as the constitutional women's rights of employment, and stated that the Governor should instead find more employment opportunities for women in need and put in place Decrees which protect them from discrimination and harassment. Many women in

Sudan regard this Decree as a betrayal of all the accomplishments of Sudanese women, gained through a long history of struggle, and have requested its immediate cancellation, as well as the cancellation of similar decrees (for example, the Law of Public Order the Decree which is also against women's freedom). The women's memorandum concluded by calling for the long life of the Sudanese women's struggle and the unity of the Sudanese women's movement.

Copies were distributed to the representatives of the UN in Khartoum, the representative of the Arab League, the African Union, the Sudanese Human Rights Organization, the International Labor Organization, and all local and international media.

A short-term work plan was issued by the Solidarity Network. Smaller task groups were formed to handle different activities. The overall objectives of the network were set as follows:

- *To create a joint platform of action for the civil society organizations to work for the protection of women's rights.*

- *To enhance solidarity among Sudanese women through conducting joint activities.*

- *To consolidate Sudanese women's efforts in protecting their rights.*

The Committee for Women's Solidarity Network received requests to join the networks of other civil societies and women's organizations from other regions of Sudan. One example was the Women's Development Association from Kassala and Gadarif Provinces in Eastern Sudan, which included eight associations with a total membership of 5,000 women. The Committee also received a number of supportive calls from inside and outside Sudan and supportive funds for the women negatively affected by this Decree were also documented. In addition, the Committee called for the support of the UNDP, the UNFPA, and UNICEF in Khartoum-Sudan for the funding of the activities of the Committee.

A number of meetings were held with representative from different organizations and individuals, including for example, with members of civil society women's rights organizations to talk about CEDAW; Judges for the Ministry of Justice and representatives of civil society, including lawyers and human rights associations, to explain the constitutional rights of women; representatives from organizations of women from the South; and representatives from the General Union of Women of Sudan, the only official governmental representative of women; academics; and supportive men. Emails were sent from the different organizations of the Solidarity Network to their network contacts outside Sudan condemning the Decree and requesting support to pressure the government of Sudan to cancel it.

In my interview with one of the members of this Solidarity Network on the work they had done among the women affected by this decision, Ekhlas, said,

> This decision was unfair; we worked hard to stop it and other similar decisions as well. What is the difference between selling petrol or food or tea or even local wine? Has the government prepared alternative sources of living for these women? Is Islam forbidding women from working to feed their families?

In recognition and support of all these efforts, an announcement was circulated on September 8th, 2000, under the title "Sudan Blasted on Women's Ban" from Ethel Higonnet with the African Association of Human Rights Watch in New York. It was a clear condemnation of the Decree of the Governor and its publication coincided with the visit of the President of Sudan Omer Al-Bashir to New York for the UN Millennium Summit. It stated that the "Human Rights Watch calls on the President of Sudan, the Foreign Minister, and the Governor of the State of Khartoum to overturn the Ban."

This was a great accomplishment at the level of local and international civil society organization and community activism. At the legal level, three motions were presented against the Government of Sudan before the Constitutional Court from two legal offices in Khartoum with the names of women affected, and this was supported by a local women's legal NGO called "Muta'manat," which is a group of women lawyers. Another motion was raised by the General Women Sudanese Union—a government-sponsored women organization—on behalf of the affected women. The Constitutional Court issued its decision which directly stopped the execution of the Governor's Decree. The court sessions were published afterwards in a booklet by the General Women Sudanese Union and widely circulated. One of my interviewees, Ejlal said, "All women from different groups joined efforts against the Governor's decision, even members of the women of the government." Rogaia, a member of the General Women Union said,

> We also stood together with other women against the Governor of Khartoum's
> decision which forbids women from working at hotels, oil stations, and other small
> businesses where those women sell food or tea in different areas. Being part of the
> Islamic government does not forbid us from keenly following up on women's issues
> and opening our eyes wide for any attacks on women's rights.

Badri (2008) documented this solidarity event and said,

> Women in civil service stood in solidarity with all other women's groups against the
> passage of an act delivered by the Khartoum State Governor to forbid women from
> working after 5pm or their employment in work that can be classified by authorities
> as "indecent" or damaging to reputation, including working in hotels, petrol stations
> and cafes. This is conceived by all women as a regression to the old rights and an
> opening for increasing the list of forbidden actions for women. A coalition of

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women's groups was established, and the case was taken to the constitutional court. All women in spite of their differences were opposed to the act; the act was withdrawn and the Governor changed. This was one of the first joint activities of women. (p. 60)

This Solidarity Network included women from civil society organizations, women from political parties, and women who were part of the Islamic Government of Sudan. All of these groups have their ideological and political differences; they also represent various nationalist, Islamist, and international human rights projects. However, what actually united them was the attack on women's right to employment. The fact that they were able to surpass their differences and create this alliance in a direct and immediate response is an indicator that Sudanese women were able to work collectively to oppose a movement that threatened a basic right.

Also, the approach adopted by the women of the civil society organizations in terms of creating a coordination body and planning strategically to mobilize against the Governor's decision at the local and international levels simultaneously indicated a high level of professionalism. The immediate steps that were taken, which were directed towards different bodies at the same time—the government, the international community, the local press and the affected women at the grassroots level—indicated a high level of organization, consistency, and ability to lead. The language used in the official memos they sent followed a discourse on women's rights adapted from UN women's rights conferences. These women benefited from the training opportunities that were available to them, from their participation and attendance at international conferences and workshops, and from their work experiences with local women at the grassroots level. Their work channeled women's local concerns and plights to international sites.

The act of reaching out to the women who were affected by the Decree and the immediate provision of both financial and non-financial support indicated a commitment and direct responsibility toward women at the grassroots level. The efficient use of resources available among women's civil society organizations, such as the legal services provided by women's legal offices and associations, as well as the coverage provided by women in the press, played a great role in the elevation and coverage of the activities of the Solidarity Network in support of the affected women. Women working in the UN and international NGO offices in Khartoum also played an important role in circulating the news to their networks and providing support to the Solidarity Network's activities.

The two memoranda composed by the women were circulated to both local and international concerned bodies and the language used in them stressed that the Decree violated women's rights and the Constitution of Sudan. It further responded to what was given as a justification for the Decree in terms of keeping society's traditions and religious values "safe," and confirmed the strong and united stand of all women for their rights. This revealed the change in gender relations and the fact that the tight grip of the patriarchy on both society and religion was not loosening. The Sudanese "transnational woman" was beginning to adopt more confrontational tactics.

Also, women benefited from the support of men in a move toward the confirmation of the complementary relationship between men and women as one of the features of the struggle of the women in Sudan. Furthermore, the fact that this case was presented to the constitutional court under the name of the Women's General Union—a Muslim women's government group—indicated that the priority is for women's issues in this case. The Governor of Khartoum was part of the Islamic Government in Sudan and his decision was based on the "civilized Islamic Project"

promulgated by the National Congress Party and supported by the women of the General Women's Union. However, the women of the Union worked in collaboration with the other women's groups against this Decree.

Internationally, messages were communicated through the use of the Internet and international support networks; the fact that the Decree was issued on September 4th, 2000, and received international condemnation by Human Rights Watch on September 8th, 2000, indicated that the campaign led by women for their rights was a success. Women of Sudan adopted and adapted the international documents to safeguard previously accomplished rights. Despite this success, some critics argue that such alliances are scattered and isolated efforts which cannot be counted as building a sustainable coalition among different groups of women in Sudan. However, I maintain that such alliances prove the possibility of Sudanese women's ability to work together. The question of the sustainability of such alliances requires further efforts, and is part of a continuing struggle.

My second case study describes how Sudanese women again used international conventions and other opportunities provided by transnationalism like international networks, contacts, and knowledge to step boldly and jointly for the first time in the history of Sudan to help with the realization of peace between the North and the South of Sudan.

Case Study Two: The Sudanese Women's Initiative for Peace (SuWep)

The Beijing Platform of Action gave full recognition to women's role in peace-making. It called upon governments, as well as international, regional, and national organizations, to take action to promote the equal participation of women at all levels of peace activities, especially in the decision-making process and integration of gender perspectives into a resolution of the armed conflict. This

was followed by the 2000 UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security which provided a framework for women to participate in peace talks and peace negotiations. Different women's groups from Sudan attended the UN and NGO Beijing Conferences[38] on Women. Women representatives of the government of Sudan; women from civil society organizations, including NGOs; and Sudanese women living in exile from both North and South Sudan attended this conference. The first meeting between the women from the North of Sudan and the South of Sudan was at the Peace Tent[39] at the NGO Beijing Conference in 1995. Women from different groups described their meeting in Beijing:

> Lubna, a member of a civil society organization commented about her experience and said, In Beijing the disputes were due to the cloudy political climate. I would say it was the first move toward coalition, as we were on the same boat, calling for peace. Both women from the South and women from the North were suffering from the same wounds: negligence of our views concerning major issues, exposure of our sons to a vicious war at a young age, and other burdens of war thrown on our backs. Beijing supplied us with a united starting point. At the beginning, we got bad and aggressive expressions and looks, not only from women of the South, but also from other participants from Africa, and other countries. The image that women from the North of Sudan are the oppressors and women from the South of Sudan are the victims was dominant; we called for a round table debate which sounded difficult at the beginning but then it presented the chance to put all our cards on the table.

A member of one of the NGOs from the South said about her experience in Beijing,

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[38] For full details about the Beijing Conference for women please see this link; http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/
[39] The Peace Tent is described by my interviewees as the place where the women of the South and North of Sudan meet to discuss their differences and the problems arising from the civil war in Sudan.

In Beijing, in the Peace Tent, we had a big fight about the identity of Sudanese people. We found the official delegation that represented Sudan was from the Arabs of the North; this was offensive. But after that, we started working together in society organizations.

One of the interviewees from the Sudanese Government Islamic group said about her experiences in Beijing,

I also participated at Beijing Conference; we met women of Sudan from the opposition outside Sudan and from the South in the Peace Tent. It was tough at the beginning; it continued for two or three days. Women discussed their differences, but all I believe is that we as women used our wisdom and understanding that what can unite us is more than what can separate us and that women were not the ones who decided to go to war. This was the basis for all peace efforts which came after.

In my interview with Aya, a leading member at SuWep, she said,

I think that in 1995, the Beijing Conference planted the first seeds for bringing together the women of the South and women of the North. There were a lot of conflicts and emotions and positive and negative feelings. Some women from the South thought that anyone from Northern Sudan caused the war. To counter this view, both groups convinced each other to sit and talk about their losses in the war to reach an understanding that both camps were hurt and they agreed that their joint aim must be peace. That was a big development for which nobody gave due credit to women.

I maintain that the meetings in the Peace Tent in Beijing in 1995 signaled the start of the willingness of Sudanese women from both the North and South of Sudan to work together for

peace. In 1997, the Peace Talks between the Islamic Government in North Sudan and the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) started with the support of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD).[40] Margret Verwijk (2012) confirmed the international support for the IGAD peace process in Sudan was further enhanced with the formation of the Friends of IGAD in 1995 with members from the Netherlands, the U.S., Canada, Italy, Norway, and the U.K. (p. 118–119). Other international community supporters included the UN, and donors such as the Canadian International Development Agency CIDA, now the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development [DFATD] and the U.S. Agency for International Development [USAID]. The support of the international community for the peace process in Sudan can only be understood within a wider framework of the geopolitics of Sudan with its oil and water resources which attract the political and economic interests of international community. El-Jack (2008), confirmed that,

> Since the 1980s, Sudan has been of strategic interest to a range of regional and international powers including Canada, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Kenya, Kuwait, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Uganda and the United States. Regional, as well as transnational strategic interests, particularly, in oil exploration and development have directly implicated foreign capital in the domestic war, as well as extending and accelerating the rate of displacement in the oil territories. (p. 99)

In 1997, the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Khartoum (RNE)—in support of the efforts of the Ministry of Development Cooperation in the Hague to engender and support women's involvement in peace—started the *Initiative to facilitate the participation of women in the Sudanese peace process* that later came to be known as the *Sudanese Women's Empowerment for Peace*

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[40] IGAD was established in 1996. It includes Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda. It is a regional organization that works in fields of environment, development and peace.

(SuWep). This initiative was meant to "to build on and strengthen existing Sudanese women's initiatives and efforts to attain a just and sustainable peace in their country" (Royal Netherlands Embassy in Khartoum, 2000, p. 04).

Elsawi (2011) documents that the ideas behind the development of SuWep started in 1994 when Southern Sudanese Women in Nairobi (SWAN) met to discuss the possible ways and means to stop the war between the North and South of Sudan, and in 1998 SWAN initiated communications with women's groups in the North (p. 6). SuWep aimed to engage different Sudanese women's groups in building a culture of peace in Sudan after long years of devastating civil war and supported their efforts in this regard. It also provided international recognition for Sudanese women's particular concerns and their role in peace-building, as well as the importance of their actual participation in peace talks.

At the regional level, many African women's organizations indicated their support for the initiative, including for example, "Femmes Africa Solidarité" (FAS), Advocacy for Women in Africa (AWA), the Initiative of the African Women's Committee on Peace and Development (AWCPD) of the Organization of African Union (OAU), the African National Congress Women's League, and the All Africa Conference of Churches (Project Document: Support to Sudanese Women's Empowerment for Peace by RNE in Nairobi & Khartoum, May 2001, p. 33). Although the international pressure for the inclusion of women in peace processes also played a considerable part, the success of this initiative and its continuation depend primarily on Sudanese women and their willingness and interest to realize peace.

Margret Verwijk (2012) argues that,

Unlike other countries such as the U.S. which closed its embassy in Khartoum, or

the U.K. with its colonial history and postcolonial relationship, the Netherlands

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enjoyed a different relationship with both the Government of Sudan and the Sudan

Peoples' Liberation Army and was not considered as self-serving as other countries.

(p. 121).

Also, the Royal Netherland Embassy (RNE) was widely known in Sudan for providing

scholarships opportunities and training for women. This further enhanced its positive reputation

among women of Sudan. In my interview with Nosa, she said,

> Before the initiative of the Netherlands' embassy we also received an invitation from
>
> the British embassy to help us, but it didn't work for us because there was an
>
> insistence to hold the meetings at the Embassy building, and we needed those
>
> meetings to be held at one of our residential areas, [so as] to include the large
>
> number of other women who could not come to the Embassy. There were some
>
> reservations, and we felt that things might not proceed as we wanted, and so it
>
> stopped there.

In support of the role played by the RNE, Rowena, a member of a civil society organization, said

that, "Working with the Netherlands' embassy was good and encouraging because they have a lot

of projects for women in Sudan and they also give Sudanese women scholarships to study abroad."

SuWep represented the first peace initiative formed by Sudanese women, and included nine

women's groups from both the North and South of Sudan. The five groups from the North of

Sudan, which was known as Northern Sector, included:

i.   Sudanese Women Empowerment for Peace and Development network (WEPD), which is a

network of Sudanese women NGOs and civil society organizations.

ii. National Democratic Alliance groups (NDA), which is a group of women who represented

the political parties that were in opposition to the Government of Sudan.

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iii.   National Working Committee for Peace (NWCP). This group represented the women

   members of the Islamic Government of Sudan.

iv.   Nuba Women's Group for Peace and Development (NWGPD). The Nuba Mountains are

   located in South Kordofan, at the border between North and South of Sudan, and this region

   is thus deeply affected by the civil war.

v.   Southern Women's Group for Peace (SWGP) which includes women from the South of

   Sudan who lived in Khartoum.

The groups from the North were far more diversified with more opposing interests than the

southern groups. For example, the NDA openly and frankly opposes the NWCP. This created more

challenges for SuWep.

   The groups from the South included women who lived in Nairobi and was known as

Southern Sector:

i.   Women's group from the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM),

ii.   Women's group from the Sudanese People's Democratic Front (SPDF),

iii.   Nonpartisan women's groups,

iv.   Sudanese Women's Voice for Peace (SWVP).

In my interview with a member of SuWep, she said,

   Of the women of the South, about four groups are based in Nairobi and they have a

   better, freer atmosphere for work while the women of the North in Khartoum face a

   lot of difficulties with various government authorities. Most meetings were outside

   Sudan and the women reached a good level of understanding and accord. Their

   papers and other supplemented works for peace are very strong, and women

   struggled hard to push them into meetings.

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In March 1999, SuWep started its program with hearings on the experiences of the different women's groups during the civil war. This was a necessary step for women to share their stories and their anguish as well as to start a dialogue. May 1999 was the first exposure of the Sudanese women's efforts for peace to the International Community in the Hague Appeal for Peace. Women met with members from the Ministry of Foreign affairs in the Netherlands, members from the UN, NGOs, and members of the Sudanese opposition groups in exile. They also held a press conference. This experience was in itself an indicator of the high level of consciousness and achievements of those women delegates. Project documents from May 2000 described this experience by stating that, "discussions with the audience were highly emotional, and the atmosphere was tense, the manner in which the members of the delegation contained themselves and kept up their unity was impressive" (Royal Netherlands Embassy in Nairobi & Khartoum, 2000, p. 16). In my interview with Rowena, who participated in this conference, she said,

> In the Hague, we didn't say we would forget our differences but we said we wanted to work together for peace. This conference was in recognition of our efforts for peace. We made our voices heard. We succeeded despite all the difficulties involved; for example, the representative of the SPLM was a military woman and she was pressured not to pass some red lines; also, the Government of Sudan refused to send their representative who used to attend the preparation meetings because of her supportive position and sent someone else from the Embassy of Sudan to the Hague instead. But for the first time we came up with one document.

Erma, from the Nuba Mountains, said about her experience at the meeting in The Hague,

> The Meeting was so difficult; the women of the government and the women of the SPLM were exchanging accusations but we were also listening to each other and the

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meeting succeeded. When I came back to Khartoum, I was arrested by security and they took all my papers. I told them that, "I am only afraid of God, not of any of you." I was a member at the Peace Council which was established by the government, so I went to the Minister and complained about the behavior of the security forces and the head of the Security Office who interrogated me was transferred to another province.

The meeting in The Hague not only provided the Sudanese women with international exposure, but it was also a site for the declaration of SuWep and a place where the international community could hint at providing international support for the efforts of these women. The women of SuWep bore the burden of government and government security force threats in order to gain international support and pressured the Government of Sudan to pursue steps toward peace.

Thereafter, in January 2000 in Kenya, the women who attended the first meeting of SuWep (which included the nine groups) came up with a shared *Minimum Agenda for Peace*. This document emphasized the participation of women in peace initiatives, requested the fighting parties to stop the abduction of women and the recruitment of children, and asked everyone to respect the diversity of religion and culture as well as the implementation of CEDAW.[41]

April 2000 marked the first international conference in Maastricht in the Netherlands concerning SuWep. It was held with the purpose of attracting international support. The conference came up with the Maastricht Declaration, which called for an immediate end to the war between the North and South of Sudan and called for the international community to pressure both parties to realize peace. However, the members of SPLA didn't participate at this conference, "their absence diminished strongly the value of the 'Maastricht Declaration'" (Royal Netherlands

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[41] For complete version of the Minimum Agenda for Peace, please see Appendix D.

Embassy in Nairobi & Khartoum, 2000, p. 16). A member of SuWep from the NDA Group said in her comment on this incident,

> When we found that Women from the People's Movement didn't come, the ten of us
> decided to withdraw; a member from IGAD came and told us they were invited but
> that there was an organizational error that delayed them and he promised to convey
> to them our support, so we returned to the Conference. After long discussions, we
> reached the Maastricht declaration.

Erma, said about Maastricht that,

> We talked about how to stop war in Sudan; we raised the following points after long
> and tough discussions: immediate cease fire, stop the coercive militarization of kids,
> separation of religion and politics, and the stopping of selling weapons to Sudan.

When the peace negotiations between the Government of Sudan and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) started in 2002 in Machakos-Kenya, SuWep members supported the peace talks and formed a delegation of 10 women from both Northern and Southern groups to attend the talks. They were able to meet with the negotiators and present their views, but they were not allowed to officially participate in the talks. Aya, a member of SuWep said, "They did not allow us in. Even entering the meeting rooms was a big problem. But we were there and we communicated our views." However, despite the huge support of the international community for women's participation in peace, the implementations of the UN international documents that support women's rights have not succeeded. Women were not allowed to attend peace talks. They only managed to join peace talks informally and they were only able to meet with peace delegates outside formal peace talks to communicate their views.

However, efforts for peace continued. All groups held a meeting in October 2002 in Asmara-Eritrea where they announced the Asmara Declaration, which presented their views on the Machakos Peace Framework. Meetings continued between the two groups in Nairobi, Asmara, and Kampala. Finally, at Addis Ababa in 2003, a strategy on how to attain peace was developed. Members from SuWep women also joined the *Sudanese Peace Making a Difference Conference* in Washington, DC in September 2004, arranged by the U.S. organization: Women Waging Peace. This conference resulted in policy recommendations to the UN General Assembly, the U.S. Government, the Government of Sudan, SPLA, and IGAD.

All of the SuWep groups participated in various training sessions inside and outside Sudan, in Cairo, and in South Africa on peace, conflict resolution, mediation, facilitation, collaborative decision-making, human rights, good governance, and gender in addition to training programs concerning income-generating activities, community health HIV/AIDS, and trauma counseling. These capacity-building experiences helped the women participants to develop leadership and management skills and to engage effectively in all of the above mentioned activities—whether locally, regionally, or internationally.

Also, the Northern and the Southern groups both organized, each in its own capacity, workshops and seminars in different residential areas at the grassroots level, concerning peace and gender; they sent memoranda to UN representatives, IGAD, some ambassadors, and other influential regional and international bodies; and they met with concerned personnel to support peace. In addition, a newsletter was issued about the activities of SuWep and a website was launched in March of 1999.

SuWep's success can be measured in the resilience of its members as they continue to surpass the difficulties of distrust. This is particularly impressive as the group started at a time

when the war and militarization were intense among the civilian youth in the North and increasing numbers of children were joining the army in the South. SuWep's work at that time indicates a high level of commitment along with well-organized and well-planned work.

Further, members of SuWep assisted with writing the *Minimum Agenda for Peace* in Nifasha with regard to Western Sudan in 2003, which included,

> *...demanding gender equality, constitutional reforms for their rights, and articles of equality, legal reforms, a quota system of at least 30% representation in parliament, top level bodies in political parties, executive, and judiciary organizations. Ten percent of gross domestic product (GDP) for each social service sector and for reproductive health, water, and sanitation as well as 5% from oil revenue is to alleviate women's poverty. Other activities include services delivery, credit, income generation, awareness raising, studies amongst internally displaced persons in Khartoum, Darfur, and the Nuba Mountains as well as capacity building on counseling and gender awareness amongst other issues.* (Badri, 2008, p. 33)

In my interview with a member of SuWep, she said,

> In the peace issue in Nifasha, we wrote that we wanted 30% of the seats in parliament for women, and improvement of our children's well-being, and a guarantee that they will not be forced into the war. Civilians should not suffer, justice should be prevalent, and petrol revenue must be well distributed: 10% for education, 10% for health, and 5% for water. We thought this was the way to improve Sudan. We also called for the approval of CEDAW agreement and the African Charter and other international laws for women.

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There were many challenges. At the beginning, the war made the movement between the North and the South difficult. Also, during the 1990s, when the Government of Sudan banned all civil society organizations, the groups had to work and meet in secret; they were threatened by security forces. Women delegates to the Africa Peace Forum in February 2003 in Nairobi were forbidden from traveling, were arrested, and had their names added to security blacklists at the Khartoum airport. In addition to internal structural difficulties, the commitment of women in political parties in the NDA, the SPLA, and the Government to the agenda of their parties represented another challenge to peace. The adoption of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005 (CPA) ended the war. Verwijk (2012) summarizes the success of women of Sudan by saying that,

> Sudanese women entered into [a] dialogue with parties to the conflict in an inclusive
>
> fashion and advocated as well for peace and social change. They creatively sought
>
> both national and international support for their views, while protesting against
>
> continued warfare, continuing efforts to convince their political and military
>
> leadership that peace is better than war; while acting in close concert with their
>
> leaders. (p. 259).

I have argued that SuWep began as a locally-based initiative; more than 1,000 women were involved directly in SuWep activism not including those who benefit from it (Elsawi, 2011, p. 8). The local sites of the North and South of Sudan were already infused with the knowledge and experience that Sudanese women had gained from their globally-based transnational ties and the international human rights tools with which they have engaged and adapted for decades. Historic circumstances have transformed their local activism into a regional transnational form of activism across the borders of the two new countries.

However, this was only possible because of their recognition and respect for the differences among them (the women of the North and South of Sudan); their tenacious hold on peace; the resilience of their agential focus in the face of the unspeakable horrors of war; and their grasp of the strategic importance of transnational forms of action. But the continuity of such activism goes beyond women's willingness and efforts in coming together. Women members of SuWep from the North supported their counterparts from the South in their demand for a separate South Sudan in the referendum of 2011. SuWep groups from both the North and South believe that the continuation of SuWep activities under the banner of Salmmah[42] in fields of development, capacity-building, in addition to building a culture of peace, paved the way for more collaboration among the SuWep members in the two countries of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan.

Stopping the war is only one part of the story; the work for sustainable peace entails more effort and more resources. Sustainable peace

> …requires a transformation of gender roles, including a focus on women's political rights and participation, property rights, non-discrimination in employment, and the right to freedom from violence as well as addressing the gender-specific traumas of conflict. (Al-Ali & Pratt, 2009, p. 263)

Changes in gender roles and the unequal gender relations indicate fluctuating trends. The impacts of war have led to a major alteration in gender relations as El-Jack (2008) writes, "displacement has created new responsibilities for women that have enabled them to re-evaluate, reconfigure and significantly alter oppressive gender roles and relationships" (p. V). The peace process and the exclusion of women from the formal peace negotiations indicates that politics is

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[42] After the accomplishment of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the North and the South of Sudan in 2005, SuWep continued under the leadership of Salmmah in 2006. Salmmah is a local Women's Resource Center which was initiated by a group of Sudanese women in 1997 as a nonprofit civil society organization dedicated to support women organizations, human rights, and peace issues.

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still considered to be men's business, despite all the formal and informal efforts exerted by women to stop the war. At the same time and as a result of the CPA, Sudan had an interim constitution for 2005 that provided for a multi-party system and freedom of expression. Women got 25% of the seats in the Parliament. Women who were members of the Sudanese Women Empowerment for Peace movement (SuWep) assumed senior positions in the Parliaments and in the governments of the South and North of Sudan: "Following the CPA (2005), the number of women in leadership positions increased significantly in both Sudans" (Verwijk, 2012, p. 263).

As per the *Sudan National Human Development Report* by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 2012, Sudan is ranked number 161 out of 182 countries in the world using the Human Development Index as a measure. Eight and a half percent—that is 2.8 million of the total population—are poor in multi-dimensional terms, defined as mostly deprived in terms of living standards followed by health and education. If zero indicates complete equality between men and women and one indicates complete inequality between men and women, the gender related development index for Sudan is 0.527 as of 2008; that is the average of the achievements of women compared to men in education, health, and income (p. 31–43). As a result of these severe poverty levels, people who have a good education left the country, especially the men, because there were better opportunities and their mobility is not curtailed by the patriarchal society or the gender ideology of an Islamic State. El-Bashier (2004) elucidated on statistics from the Ministry of Labor which revealed that in 1996, 39% of medical doctors, 36% of engineers, and 58% of teachers left their jobs in the public sector and most of them left the country, leaving women as heads of households (p. 19). Moreover, the *Gender Review Report of Royal Norwegian Embassy in Sudan-Norad* from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (2011) documented the following gender disparities:

Literacy rates for men and women in North Sudan stand at 71% and 52% respectively, while it stands at 37% and 12% for men and women in Southern Sudan. The ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education is 53.9 to 46. Interestingly, in tertiary education there are 54.1% girls... Since the beginning of the 1990s, women's participation in economic activities has increased from 18% to 30%, but there are still major gender gaps in employment. Women comprise 38% of the work force. The proportion of working women in the private sector is 10%. ... The share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector is 17% ... Women's political participation, is among the highest in Africa, where 25 % of the seats in parliament were occupied by women after the parliamentary elections in 2010... An important aspect of the 2010 Elections is that 60% of the voters were women. Of a total of 36 ministers in the GoS [Government of Sudan], five are women. (p. 12–13)

Also, during the period of 2001–2010, the number of women participants in decision-making bodies employed as ministers and consultants increased to a large extent. The number of women consultants to the President of Sudan reached six, the number of ministers in the government reached 12, the number of ministers in the States reached 16; the number of consultants in the States reached 23. In addition to the women in the Judicial Corps and the women in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the number of women in the higher Court reached eight and the number of ambassadors reached nine. The number of women in the Parliament in 2010 is 114, while the number of men in the same Parliament is 450 (Al-Haj & Abd-Alhafeez, 2010, p. 13–18).

These statistics show some improvements in the women's share in education, in government decision-making bodies, and in political participation which wouldn't have been possible without

women's resistance and equality efforts, ongoing since the inception of the movement in late 1940s. But women are still lagging behind in education, health, and economic participation. The UNDP's 2012 report confirmed that eradicating gender disparities is a condition for human development, not only for women for also for men and the whole of society (p. 43). I argue that the achievement of gender equality and the change or transformation of unequal gender relations requires more than just the efforts of women. It must be part and parcel of all development policies and the development of an ideology of the State. It is difficult to talk about gender inequality in a local context like Sudan in isolation from the global inequalities associated with the functioning of the global economy and its neoliberal means and mechanisms.

Conclusion

The first case study provides an example of the meaning of transnational activism in local sites. The approach, dynamics, and the means of women's struggles for their rights of employment reflect an engagement and linkage with both the local and the international concurrently. The fact that they managed to build an alliance for their rights as women despite their political differences indicates that the nature of their transnational activism satisfied both their daily basic needs as well as their strategic goals. The intermingling between the local and the global further consolidates that the "transnational woman" of Sudan is more confident in going beyond the divisive agenda of nationalists and nationalism and strategically using all available means to support her aims, including a reaching-out transnationally to sustain local rights.

Transnational activism and reaching out internationally is also used by the women of Sudan in the second case study in their struggle for peace. However, in this case study they have gained great support from the international community. This is due to the international recognition of the role women can play in peace. Despite this huge support and the efforts of the women involved, the

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outcome in terms of women's participation in the peace negotiation and decision-making processes with regard to war and peace seems very minimal.

Also, the two case studies ignite another controversial discussion with regard to women's rights as human rights and the extent to which this neoliberal notion infuses and gives credence to ideas of global feminism, sameness of oppression, and women as autonomous individuals versus approaches that specify the experiences of women of the global South, including African, or Arab and Muslim women. The case studies indicate that Sudanese women resort strategically to the neoliberal notion of "women rights as human rights" to support their rights in the local context and to grab international attention and thus also international resources. However, at the same time, these women still retain particularities in terms of their cultural and religious conventions and nationalism.

There are tensions at the transnational-local level as well as transnational-international level between and among women using international documents to support their rights, such as CEDAW, open space for resistance against women's subordination. I claim that it is important to think about how women can use the resources available to them from within the neoliberal system to fight for their rights instead of thinking only about how women have been exploited by the mechanisms and institutions of this neoliberal system.

Similarities between the two case studies confirm the willingness of different Sudanese women's groups to work together for realizing their mutual targets. The differences between the two case studies indicate that women of Sudan are capable of utilizing and benefiting from different international ties and transnational opportunities. However, both case studies encourage one to ask: what is next? Is this enough to conclude that women of Sudan can form sustainable coalitions and alliances despite their differences?

When I asked my interviewees about the future of the movement and possibilities of solidarity they offered the following reflections: Suad, a pioneer said,

There is too much diversity across tribes and geographically across regions. The only way is for women to successfully come together across their divides is to come together as women away from any political color.

A group of activists believe in the fact that issues can bring women across their divides; among them, Nafisa, a Pioneer said that,

I believe that there is no way to have a unified women's body as was the case during the 1950s. The solution is for women to work on different issues through the organizations of the civil society which in turn need to have one coordinating body. We are part of a nation; if women leaders are convinced that our goal is to build our nation, then yes, no matter how different our views are, our objective is one.

Batool, a University Professor said,

Women can work together in poverty, education; they can come around these issues which affect their daily life.

From another group, who connected the possibility of a solidarity movement to the socioeconomic and political stability of Sudan, Samah said,

The future of women's movement in Sudan is connected to the future of the country; more precisely, women's issues are connected to the kind of political system that controls the political power of the country.

And Sumaia, a member of a civil society organization concludes,

You can't treat the Women's Movement in a way to say you have a vision of its future or where it is going to as an independent body from Sudan. What is going to

happen tomorrow cannot be predicted. If things are clearer and peace prevails, then the Women's Movement will progress; if not, then we live from day to day and just continue the fight.

As proven by the case studies presented in this chapter, gender issues and activism can bring women together. It is also true that the socioeconomic and political stability of Sudan is reflected in women's struggles to achieve their rights and in the possibility of acting as a solidarity movement. Women in Sudan and elsewhere have always been involved in society, throughout colonialism, through nation-state conflict, militarization, and peace-building. I argue that it may not be possible, as my interviewee confirmed, for all women with their different political interests to come together as a permanent unified body. Even the sustainability of women's coalitions—based on issues— needs to be visualized as part of the continuous struggle of women to achieve their rights. Their networks, coalitions and alliances cannot be isolated from the overall sociopolitical and economic conditions of Sudan on one hand and international neoliberal, sociopolitical and economic circumstances on the other hand.

Chapter Six

Women of Sudan Moving Forward

In this dissertation, I have explored the evolution of the women's movement in Sudan and contextualized their experiences struggling against oppression. These struggles began in 1947 with their engagement with nationalist forces against colonialism and continued into the 1990s and 2000s as they grappled with transnationalism. I maintain that the women's movement in Sudan, which includes a variety of women's groups and types of feminisms, stands as a good example for many other women's movements across the globe, but especially in similar contexts in Africa and those parts of the Third World where women's activism is not only informed by colonialism, imperialism, and nationalism, but also by transnationalism.

This long historical journey has featured the ways in which women in Sudan have worked against patriarchy and have worked through the inherent contradictions of nationalism for women, as well as how they have succeeded in changing the gender relations in Sudan over time and how they have dealt with their differences and endeavors toward solidarity. As part of the exploration, this dissertation questions the meaning of feminism in Sudan.

My research provides a space for women to voice their concerns and experiences. Its outcomes indicate that women's struggles in Sudan have passed through various stages. The first stage was launched by the "new emancipated woman" who struggled with nationalist forces to gain independence and the rights to education, work, and suffrage. The current stage witnesses the activism of a "new transnational woman," who is struggling for women's rights and who is adopting and adapting the International Conventions and opportunities brought by transnationalism to move on with her interests.

From nationalism to transnationalism, the women's movement in Sudan has struggled against the boundaries of old structures and built the foundation for changing gender relations. Such changes are paralleled by the continuous struggle women experience in their different capacities in NGOs, in bureaucratic governmental offices, in Research Centers, and in political parties. The skills and experiences women have gained from their participation in nationalist struggles have strengthened their capacity to organize, while their transnational activism has enabled them to gain the support of international feminists to launch and consolidate their rights and interests at Sudanese local sites. The case studies explored in Chapter Five illustrate that the women of Sudan can form complicated and difficult alliances to maintain their rights and their interests. However, the sustainability of such alliances is an ongoing part of Sudanese women's struggle for social change.

Theoretically, this dissertation has examined feminists' literature and feminist contributions to nationalism, transnationalism, difference, and solidarity. I argue for the need to reconsider the position of women as active agents in nationalist struggles who have their own "imagination" for their nation, especially with regard to the current challenges of transnationalism. I also call for the adoption of a wider definition of transnationalism not only as a link between global women's networks and women's local groups but also in reference to the activism and relationships among the variety of women's groups at local sites. This is important in order to investigate the meaning of transnationalism in the local context and its effects on women's local activism.

I build on feminists' recognition of and contributions with regard to issues of difference and solidarity among different women's groups and how this is reflected onto feminism as a project for a social change. I mainly argue that if we look at feminism as a political project for social change that is based on solidarity across the so-called commonalities of women's experiences (i.e., global

sisterhood), then the differences between women become a threat to and undermine building alliances. But if we conceptualize feminism as a political project for social change that is based on solidarity and evolves out of respect for and recognition of the differences in women's experiences, then those differences become building blocks for this project. It is important to consider that such alliances need to be worked for and women may come together around a "shared minimum agenda."

In summary, the main theoretical interventions within the experiences lived by women of Sudan that have been the main focus of my research for this dissertation are nationalism, transnationalism, difference, feminism, and gender.

Nationalism

In this dissertation I have argued in support of Ranchod-Nilsson's (2000) and others call for asserting the understanding of women's positive role and women's agency in nationalist struggles. Such a stand is necessitated partially by the current changes in terms of globalization and the rise of ethnic and religious fundamentalists plus the concurrent changes in gender relations. The "subject woman" has changed from the "new woman" described by the early nationalist men in anti-colonial nationalist struggles to the "transnational woman," whose activism transcends the nation's borders and nationalists' projections of women's roles.

Women join nationalist struggles in different capacities, from organizing or participating in demonstrations to active combat in national conflicts and wars. They have different experiences; this is why it is important to consider each case of women's participation in nationalist struggles within its concrete context. I do agree, however, with Jayawardena (1986) that women have only realized some "reforms" with regard to their existence in public life and that such reforms do not directly deal with women's subordination in society. Moreover, not all women have benefited in

the same way from such "reforms." But the women who have benefited from these "reforms" have used their advantages to strengthen their existence in public life, and this has led to positive changes in unequal gender relations. My research findings demonstrate that the women of Sudan participated in large numbers—numbers that were almost equal to men—in the first elections of 1968 (Abdel-Al, 1997, p. 76).

Sudanese anti-colonial nationalists were unwilling to challenge the patriarchy of state and society, which undermined women's status. This was reflected in a contradictory discourse toward women, which on one hand supported some rights for women in the public sphere and at the same time strictly clung to patriarchal and traditional customs. Such a discourse led to a dichotomy between tradition and modernity and between the public and private. Women of Sudan who participated with these nationalists resorted to "bargaining and balancing acts" and strategically adopted a nonconfrontational approach not only to struggle against subordination, but also to sustain their activism. This approach enabled them to benefit from the tension between tradition and modernity and move forward with securing more rights in public life. It is important to recognize women's activism and agency as engaged participants in Sudanese anti-colonial nationalist struggles so as to avoid an image commonly portrayed by nationalists that only frames women's participation within certain patriarchal parameters. Sudanese women's resistance and resilience in anti-colonial struggles exceeded solely a focus on gender relations.

Also, my research findings indicate that Sudanese women have been aware of their differences since the beginning of the movement and worked together to stop the civil war despite the influence of a nationalistic, divisive and "militarized" agenda. They have managed, despite these and other possibly disabling constrains, to go beyond their differences of religion, ethnicity, and region to form alliances and to sustain their rights.

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Transnationalism

This dissertation has contributed to redefining and re-contextualizing transnationalism, beyond the limitations of literal understandings of the word and its association with borders. Transnationalism refers to the linkages between global women's networks and women's local groups as well as the activisms and relationships among the variety of local women's groups. Such a definition also transcends what Friedman (1999) called "transnationalism reversed," meaning to consider the local as a site of knowledge production for the transnational. This is mainly in recognition of the embrace and the adoption by the women of Sudan of the International UN documents and their transnational ties to support their struggle for their rights and to also create solidarity alliances at both levels. Those levels are: local/local, i.e., among different women's groups in Sudan and local/transnational, i.e., across borders. Such observations may be helpful in considering those forms of knowledge that are "socially situated" in the local, while keeping in mind that transnational connections, UN Conventions, and legal instruments have distinct impacts on local women's groups according to local contexts. However, these transnational connections are capable of supporting the overall transformative feminist project.

Transnationalism provides opportunities for women to extend their activism beyond nationalist divisions in Sudan, and beyond their involvement as members in political parties to find alternatives in working with NGOs and society organizations. Transnational Sudanese woman have benefited from "transnational opportunity structures" and have joined the "women's policy machinery" (Ferree, 2006, p. 11) within state institutions as bureaucrats and as employees in offices of both international organizations and local NGOs. Also, they create links between the government women's desks and NGOs, engaging in advocacy networks inside and outside Sudan.

Furthermore, women participate in the development of knowledge and women's studies programs in universities and research centers.

Women's activism under transnationalism has resulted in many positive impacts on the women's movement in Sudan. A public space has opened for debates around women's issues: women's rights, family laws, violence against women, peace, and capacity-building are among the issues raised by a variety of women's groups. Working on these issues has led to a shift in the nature of women's activism towards a more gender-based activism. Women in NGOs joined different training programs on gender equity and women's development which have enhanced their skills, knowledge, and levels of professionalism. Moreover, emphasis on these gendered issues in turn has brought women together across ethnic, regional, and religious divides.

I argue that the overall impacts of women's activism under transnationalism have resulted in the disruption of the dichotomy between the public sphere and private sphere. The public sphere has become an open space for the international ideas of women's rights, while the private sphere has been exposed to frank challenges by women's advocates of issues around personal laws, violence against women, etc. The outcomes of these changes are still to come.

My research findings support the idea that NGOs have provided a safe and professional environment for women to work and provide for their families after being dismissed from their jobs. Despite the so-called NGO-ization of feminism, I argue in support of Basu (2005) and Chowdhury (2011) that the work handled women in NGOs is comprehensive and goes beyond provisioning women in need and the creation of dependency relations with "neoliberalism." The internal dynamics of these processes and their implications on women require a contextual analysis of local sites. I further maintain that these professional women also represent the group of women who can challenge the system from within. The outcomes of this study proves that women

critically understood, customized, and applied concepts like violence against women and women's rights as human rights, benefiting from the transnational to support the local.

The stories of my interviewees have confirmed that they have managed to use international conventions such as the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and their international connections to achieve rights for women, including the right to employment when threatened by the Decree of the Governor of Khartoum in 2000. I argue that such usage of these human rights tools has not only provided international support and legitimacy to local women's activism, but has also transformed these international tools into a form that is understandable by women at the grassroots level. Such tools have not been applied blindly, but are critically understood and subjected to local understandings and circumstances in their adoption. This has led to what Alvarez refers to as the "public visibility of feminism" (Alvarez, 2000, p. 38), which is facilitated by the development of communications tools such as the Internet, and made available timely international interventions in cases of violations of women's rights.

The building of alliances is another finding of this research. The women of Sudan have benefited from international support to create solidarity groups not only to fight for their rights but also to work for peace. Despite the fact that women have not participated in peace talks, they have struggled for and have gained more participation in the decision-making processes by gaining 25% of the seats of the parliament.

Transnational linkages to the local and the global have been used by "transnational women" of Sudan to confidently move beyond the divisive agenda of nationalists and nationalism, and to strategically use all available means to support their aims, including transnational outreach to sustain and consolidate their local rights. Opportunities that have been provided by transnationalism have enabled women to surpass their differences.

Difference

Difference has been fundamental in informing the entire research process and outcomes for this dissertation. I maintain that it is important to understand the role of difference not only in the development of solidarity, but also as a cornerstone in the success of feminism as a social project for change. Success can be achieved if we consider the fluidity of difference, the dynamism of difference, and the relational nature of difference, wherein it is important to avoid a "binary" way of thinking. Thus, instead of reflecting on terms of "oppressed" or "oppressor," we can consider what I refer to as a "complex power milieu" at both the macro social structure levels and the micro individual levels. Cognizance that this power milieu exists creates the basis for knowing the other and enables us to move forward and consider feminist calls for solidarity, beyond the limitations of "we" versus "they."

In Sudan, nationalist projects have resulted in essentializing women's differences across ethnicity, religion, and region, resulting in the deprivation of many women from different regions and endangering the possibilities of solidarity among women. Although activist women started their activism as a unified body, over time they split along political and ideological lines and adopted different visions for pursuing their goals, including women who believe in women's rights, Islamic women's groups, and other groups who are part of existing political parties. Islamist women of the government heavily supported the civil war between the North and South of Sudan, while other women's groups allied against the Islamic Government of Sudan during the 1990s.

However, the change in the nature of women's activism under transnationalism in the 1990s and the 2000s and its focus on issues such as women's rights, violence against women, and peace has helped to foster a renewed interest in gender concerns, bringing women together across divides. Women have managed to surpass the influence of the nationalists' divisive agenda and go beyond

their differences in religion, ethnicity, and region to form alliances and work for their rights and for peace. I have argued in this dissertation that transnationalism provides the "transnational space" to realize such "transnational complicated alliances." However, it is worth mentioning that although women have succeeded in working together for peace and for sustaining some of their solidarity through "complicated" and difficult alliances, it remains true that these alliances have not included all women's groups. They represent only the women's groups that lead the social and political activism, whether they are part of the political parties, NGOs, or the Government.

I further contend that the project for social change needs to consider all differences and all women's groups and to emphasize women's resilience from the vantage point of the specificity of their experience and their positionality. This emphasis is important in order to appreciate different strategies and methods of bargaining used by women in different contexts to advance their various causes, which may not be only be related to gender but also class, "race," and religion. Only in this case, can feminism as a project of social change succeed.

Feminism in Sudan

I maintain that the word "activism" provides a wider umbrella that gives a broader meaning for defining feminism in Sudan, one which also recognizes all aspects of women's activities and struggles. My research outcomes indicate that women in Sudan believe that their struggle not only revolves around achieving equality with men, but also includes their participation in the fight against colonialism as well as their struggle for their rights in other fields of life.

I also believe that both men and women suffer from some similar forms of oppressions that have led to and reinforced unequal gender relations. Consequently, visions of feminism must be expanded beyond equality of women and men because,

Third World women cannot afford to embrace the notion that feminism seeks only to achieve equal treatment of men and women and equal access and opportunity for women, which often amounts to a formula for sharing poverty both in the third world and in third world communities in the West. (Johnson-Odim, 1991, p. 320)

African feminist literature that emphasizes the complementarities of the relationship between men and women and collectivism has relevance to Sudan, as my research participants have confirmed. Also, the existence of women of the Islamic movement in public life and their visualization of their activism within the parameters of Islam gives relevancy to some of the conceptualizations of Islamic feminism. Furthermore, great numbers of women and women's groups waged their struggle for their rights under the banner of the UN Conventions for women and women's rights. The aforementioned reflects the heterogeneity of women's groups and women's activism in Sudan.

Such activism continues—with nationalists, under democratic regimes, and under military dictatorships—to respond to both the basic needs of women, as well as making more structural changes that impact unequal gender relations. I maintain that *the self* in the context of the women of Sudan is not equated only with *the individual self* but rather socially and more broadly with family, community, and nation—it is rather a *collective self*. This is why their struggle is waged across all these fronts: self, family, community, and nation. Such struggles have led to tremendous changes to gender relations.

Gender

In Sudanese society, both tradition and religion contribute to tightening the grip of the patriarchy, which makes it difficult for women to attain their rights. However, the state has played an important role in changing unequal gender relations across time. The WU worked from its

inception against backward traditions which hindered women's rights. Men and women were considered as partners who should work together to solve the problems of their society and their nation. Sudanese women attained rights of suffrage, employment, and education during the 1950s. I argue that these rights have enabled women's continued existence in public life. The contradictory discourse of nationalists and it promulgation of traditions on the one hand and modernity on the other has created tensions which Sudanese women have used strategically to push for more rights in public life—as an initial step to have more equal gender relations in the private sphere—and to continue their activism.

The UN Decade for Women as well as the increased number and geographical spread of NGOs during the 1990s and the 2000s have provided a platform for tremendous changes to gender relations. There has been an increasing participation by Sudanese women in NGOs, ministries, and governmental offices; a proliferation of women's research centers, where important work on women's rights, violence against women, capacity building, and peace is being carried out. All this has resulted in the empowerment of women at the grassroots level and in the enhancement of leadership skills among working women, which is ultimately reflected in an increasing awareness of the importance of gender equality not only among women but in society in general.

I concur with Blom (2000) that we need to understand gender relations as a process where the meaning of gender changes over time. Women's strategies of struggle in nationalist projects have created gradual changes in society with an increase of women working and acting in a myriad of ways in public sector life. The challenges brought by globalization in the era of transnationalism and the increase of women's activism beyond the boundaries of the nation to support their rights locally have resulted in demolishing the demarcation lines between the public and the private for Sudanese women.

The "transnational woman" is more courageous in challenging the patriarchy of Sudanese society and more supported by transnationalism to realize more benefits. The current dynamics of transnationalism necessitate a new analysis of gender relations that considers different forms of women's maneuvers and strategies in attaining equitable gender relations. This research is an attempt to explain how gender relations have changed through the efforts of women and their struggles to achieve their rights in education, work, political participation, and the implementation of more equitable Personal Laws. Indeed, further contextual analysis of gender that goes beyond numbers is needed in future research.

Questions for Further Research

This dissertation has opened the door to investigate further some of the current critical questions pertaining to women's activism; for example, the question of defining feminism and the extent to which such a definition should consider difference so as to maintain the sustainability of feminism as a project for social change. Can difference be considered positively as a base for "knowing each other" as opposed to conceptualizing difference negatively in the sense of "us versus them"? Can this positive thinking of difference pave the way for considering the difference in "non-competitive terms"? As well, what are the prospects for creating alternatives means for women's struggles against the oppression of a neoliberal system? Can such alternatives be based on the particularities of women's experiences as black women, women of the Third World, Muslim women, or African women? Can the local as a site of knowledge inform such an alternative project? How does "situated knowledge" bring new meanings and understandings to concepts of women's resilience and women's agency?

Despite the support of the UN and international donors (who provided financial backing for Sudanese women to participate in the Sudanese peace process) and their unprecedented efforts in

this regard, women were not allowed to formally participate at the Sudanese peace talks. This necessitates a new analysis of gender relations under transnationalism and represents one of the most important future research questions. I maintain that both nationalism and transnationalism have simultaneous impacts on the evolvement of the women's movement in Sudan. Women's activism within both frameworks has defined the contours of the meaning of Sudanese feminism, which is a direct response to the variety of Sudanese women's groups' resilience and struggles against different forms of oppression and subordination.

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Appendices:
Appendix A: List of Acronyms
Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)
The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
The United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
The United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA)
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)
The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS)
The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
The Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD)
The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
The UN Economic Commission on Africa (UNECA)
The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD)
The Organization of African Unity (OAU)
The International Monetary Fund (IMF)
Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs)
Union of Arab Women (UAW)
Women's Congress (AWC)
"Femmes Africa Solidarité" (FAS)
The International Democratic Union for Women (IDUW)
Advocacy for Women in Africa (AWA)
The Initiative of the African Women's Committee on Peace and Development (AWCPD)
The Women Union (WU)
The Sudanese Women's Union (SWU)
Jamiyyat Raidat Al Nahda [Women Renaissance Pioneers (WRP)]
National Women's Front (NWF)
National Islamic Front (NIF)
National Democratic Alliance (NDA)
Government of National Salvation (GNS)
Royal Netherlands Embassy in Khartoum (RNE)
The Sudanese Women in Nairobi (SWAN)
Sudanese Women's Empowerment for Peace (SuWep)
Sudanese Women Empowerment for Peace and Development network (WEPD)
National Working Committee for Peace (NWCP)
Nuba Women's Group for Peace and Development (NWGPD)
Southern Women's Group for Peace (SWGP)
Women's group from the Sudanese People's Democratic Front (SPDF)
Sudanese Women's Voice for Peace (SWVP)
The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)
The Sudanese Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA)
The Sudanese Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM)
The Government of Sudan (GOS)
The National Congress Party (NCP)

Appendix B: The Pioneers of Sudanese Women in different Fields

1	1940	First Female inspector for Girls Education	Madina Abdalla
2	1942	First Female singer	Aisha Mousa
3	1945	First Female to enter University	Khalda Zaher
4	1945	First Female Guitar Player	Jidawia Mousa
5	1945	First Female Officer	Hayat Rodwan
6	1946	First Female Novelist	Malikat Aldar Mohamed
7	1946	First Female Nurse	Dina Akasha
8	1947	First Female Broadcaster	Mahasin Osman
9	1947	First Female Journalist	Takwi Sirskian
10	1948	First Female University Graduate	Anjeel Jurgis
11	1952	First Female Medical Doctor	Khalda Zaher
12	1958	First Female to get a pension	Madina Abdalla
13	1962	First Female Lawyer	Sania Mostafa
14	1963	First Female T.V Broadcaster	Raja Joma'
15	1965	First Female Parliamentarian	Fatma Ahmed Ibrahim
16	1965	First Female in Judicial Corps	Ehsan Fakhri
17	1971	First Female Deputy Minister	Nafisa Ahmed El-Amin
18	1971	First Female Minister	Fatma Abd-Almahmoud
19	1981	First Female Nun	Fartona Kawashi
20	1983	First Female Dean of Women's University	Su'ad Al-fatih
21	1995	First Female State Governor	Egnis Lokodo
22	1998	First Female Ambassador	Zainab Abd-Alkareem
23	1998	First Female General Manager of Sudan News Agency	Ni'mat Bilal
24	2001	First Female Consultant to the President of Sudan	Su'ad Al-Fatih
25	2001	First Female Brigade in Uniformed Forces	Noor Alhoda Alshafie'
26	2010	First Female to be nominated for the Presidency of Sudan	Fatma Abd-Almahmoud

Source: Al-Haj & Abd-Alhafeez, 2010 "Outstanding Examples of Sudanese Women"

Appendix C: The Hague Appeal for Peace

THE HAGUE PEACE APPEAL-SUDANESE WOMEN'S APPEAL FOR PEACE
IN THE SUDAN- May 13, 1999

We, the women representing all sides of the conflict in the Sudan, have come together to participate in The Hague Appeal for Peace conference,
- Aware that the war in the Sudan is one of the longest-running wars in the world and often forgotten by the international community;
- Conscious that the war has caused untold suffering to the Sudanese people, particularly to women,
- children, and other vulnerable groups;
- Considering the magnitude of death, destruction, and displacement;
- Noting the deadlock in the peace process;

We are here despite all our differences -- social, political, and religious -- because we want to put an end to this war.
- We call on our leaders to declare, and out people to abide by, an immediate, comprehensive ceasefire, cessation of all hostilities, and to respect the human rights of all Sudanese, and this to be followed by an immediate, sustained peace dialogue.
- For the benefit of all Sudanese, we encourage our leaders to allow humanitarian assistance unhindered access to the needy.
- Sudan is a potentially rich country with many natural resources, which are currently not being utilized for national development, but instead to fuel a war which has claimed over 3.2 million lives – many more than in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rwanda, and Kosovo put together. It is our belief that in this war, there can be no winner.
- We urge our political leaders to facilitate the participation of the civilian population in the peace process to determine their own fate through democratic processes, based on their rights and interests.

We appeal to the international community and all peace loving peoples to:
- Strengthen existing mechanisms (IGAD – Inter-Governmental Authority on Development) in the Sudanese peace negotiations, support internal peace agreements, and other peace efforts;
- Assure women's participation in the peace negotiations to voice their concerns and enable them to reach a sustainable peace with justice;
- Create a conducive environment for warring parties to have a constructive dialogue;
- Clear landmines, cease arms sales to warring groups in the Sudan;
- Bring pressure to bear on the warring parties to reach a peaceful settlement to the conflict.

If we, the women of Sudan, having witnessed so much suffering, can work together for peace, it is incumbent on our leaders to commit themselves to ending this war.
Signed by
The Participants in the Initiative to Facilitate the Participation of Sudanese Women in the Peace Process
Source: Salmmah Women's Resource Center (2006)

Appendix D: The Draft Women's Minimum Agenda for Peace

The Draft Women's Minimum Agenda for Peace

Preamble

The Sudanese Women Agenda for Peace reflects the vision and aspirations of Sudanese women in the peace process. The Nine different women's group[s] from the Northern and Southern sectors represented by 25 women met in Nairobi between 26th - 29th January, 2000, and reached a consensus on a unified woman's agenda for peace. The groups promoted engendering the peace process initiative, facilitated by the Netherlands Government, [including]:

- Ensure the participation of women in all peace initiatives by at least 30%.
- Women's concerns should be mainstreamed in all peace negotiations/initiatives and agenda.
- Women should choose their own female representatives in the peace initiative.
- All the parties to the conflict must restrain from shelling and bombardment of civilian targets.
- The abduction of women and children must stop, and the violence against women in the war zones by all warring parties [must] come to an end.
- The parties to the conflict must stop recruitment of children under 18 years of age into the war.
- Cultural, ethnic and religious diversity must be respected.
- The implementation of CEDAW.
- Freedom of movement for all Sudanese must be guaranteed and the restrictions on the women mobility going out of Sudan must be lifted.
- Principles of inclusiveness (participation of women) must be adopted.

Source: Salmmah Women's Resource Center (2006)

Appendix E: The Maastricht Declaration

Maastricht Declaration of the Sudanese Women's Peace Initiative-April 13, 2000

1. **Preamble**

Our Sudanese women's initiative for engendering the peace process in Sudan was conceived in late 1997. It was officially launched in Khartoum and Nairobi in 1998 when the Committees were formed from the different parties to the conflict and other women's interest groups.

The main objective agreed upon by the committees included the process of consciousness-raising among Sudanese women on their roles and responsibilities in the peace process, at all levels of society and in particular within the conflicting parties. It was also decided that these committees would take on the responsibility of raising awareness of the leadership of the conflicting parties on the aspirations and potential roles of Sudanese women in the peace process.

To prepare ourselves for this important role, a series of workshops, training sessions, and meetings were organized. These include The Hague Appeal for Peace, May 1999; Cairo, 1999; Nairobi, March and November 1999; Nairobi, January 2000 and South Africa, 2000. We are very pleased that the IGAD Sudan Peace Process by the end of 1999 officially supported and continues to support our initiative, and that IGAD has made substantial contributions to the Initiative by convening this International Conference in Maastricht, the Netherlands, from 11 to 13 April 2000.

The purpose of our gathering here in Maastricht has been to advocate for our increased participation in the Sudanese peace process. To this extent, we have called on IGAD members, women leaders from IGAD countries, global women leaders, representatives of the international donor community, the European Union, IPF members, the OAU, the Arab League, and the United Nations to actively support our efforts for peace in Sudan.

On the basis of extensive dialogue emanating from the Sudanese women's Minimum Agenda for Peace, we have mutually agreed on the following:

2. Acknowledging
2.1 That Sudanese women are overburdened by the devastating effects of war which have caused enormous suffering, loss of lives, homes, and possessions since 1955, except 1972 to 1983 when there was relative peace;
2.2 That the costly war is destructive to humanity, to community life, to basic social needs such as health, education, and human security, thus destroying the prospect for future generations;
2.3 Our ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity;
2.4 That the war is against ethical principles of all religions in Sudan;
2.5 The international call for active women's participation in peacemaking, as clearly stated in Beijing at the fourth World Women's Conference, and followed by the EU meeting organized by the Government of Finland, and the Security Council statement of 8 March 2000, as well as numerous attempts by international donors;
2.6 The long strife and efforts of Sudanese women to attain peace and the vital role of women in traditional conflict resolution;

2.7 The need for a broader and increased representation of Sudanese women at the peace negotiation table and other peace initiatives to mainstream women's concerns in negotiations;
2.8 That women will continue to work at all levels in the peace process, specifically bringing together community women of conflicting parties across the country, and convincing leaderships and communities of the urgency for peace.

3. Appreciating
3.1 The Initiative to facilitate the participation of Sudanese women in the peace process;
3.2 The acceptance of the Declaration of Principles by all parties;
3.3 The on-going mediation efforts of the IGAD Sudan peace process in support of a peaceful solution to the conflict;
3.4 All national peacemaking efforts;
3.5 The efforts of the conflicting parties in search of a solution to the conflict;
3.6 The international support offered by the IPF;
3.7 The willingness of the parties who promote women's participation in the peace process;
3.8 The willingness to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women by all parties;
3.9 The establishment of a gender desk at the level of IGAD in Djibouti.

4. We, the Sudanese women, decide to immediately undertake the following actions
4.1 Develop a broad culture of peace at all levels;
4.2 Empower women to contribute to a just and sustainable peaceful resolution to the conflict;
4.3 Further develop the Sudanese Women's Minimum Agenda for Peace in relation to the Declaration of Principles; develop a plan for its implementation and communicate its contents to all parties;
4.4 Educate women in mediation and negotiation to enable effective participation of women in non-violent conflict resolution;
4.5 Establish links and networks with relevant international organizations and the media, to support and advocate for a just and sustainable peace;
4.6 Establish regular meetings with IGAD leaders and Secretariat for the Sudan peace process to ensure a women's perspective to human security, conflict resolution and development in Sudan.

5. We, Sudanese women, call upon the leadership of the conflicting parties
5.1 To end the war by means of peaceful negotiation to stop further suffering of civilian population, particularly women and children;
5.2 To actively support our peacemaking efforts;
5.3 To permit women to work unhindered and safely at the community level to establish a culture of peace;
5.4 To establish regular meetings with us to integrate women's perspective in peacemaking and good governance;
5.5 To provide and protect access to basic services, such as health and basic education, throughout the country in particular in war-affected areas;
5.6 To incorporate peace education into the school curriculum and Sudanese mass media;
5.7 To forbid and stop the admission and recruitment of children below the age of eighteen as child soldiers;
5.8 To keep war away from civilian population, to stop using landmines and other small arms, and to protect the environment and wildlife;

5.9 To value and respect diversity (culture, ethnicity, religion, and language) as an empowering resource for the Sudanese society as a whole.

6. We, Sudanese women, call upon the IGAD leaders and representatives of the IGAD Secretariat for the Sudan peace process
6.1 To establish regular meetings with women to include women's aspirations and concerns in the peacemaking process;
6.2 To actively search for creative ways to speed up the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Sudan;
6.3 To allow for a special envoy for Sudanese women in IGAD.

7. We, Sudanese women, call upon leading women in IGAD countries
7.1 To share information and engage in advocacy with their respective governments in support of the Sudanese women's peace initiative;
7.2 To promote empowerment and training of Sudanese women on human security, peacemaking, development and leadership.

8. We, Sudanese women, call upon members of the OAU, IPF, the EU, Arab League, and UN agencies
8.1 To further consolidate and support the non-violent conflict resolution efforts in the Sudan, such as the IGAD peace process:
8.2 To facilitate training, exchange of experiences, and the development of strategic plans and programs in support of peacemaking;
8.3 To provide active moral and material support to Sudanese women's efforts in peacemaking;
8.4 To accelerate the efforts to promote non-violent conflict resolution by the specialized UN agencies, such as UNIFEM, UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF;
8.5 To coordinate their efforts in the search for peace in Sudan and provide an audience for women's perspectives in the peace process in Sudan.

9. We, Sudanese women, call upon the bilateral donors
9.1 To raise the awareness of their citizens about the negative impact of the war in Sudan, and of the urgency for non-violent conflict resolution;
9.2 To provide financial and technical assistance to the peace efforts of Sudanese women;
9.3 To facilitate training in mediation, negotiation, and preventive diplomacy for all parties, including women;
9.4 To support inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue among women at a community level in support of non-violent conflict resolution.

10. We, Sudanese women, call upon the Global Women Leadership
10.1 To use their access to top level decision-making institutions to bring attention to the Sudanese women's peace initiatives;
10.2 To demand the active involvement of the global community in a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Sudan;
10.3 To put the conflict in Sudan on the agenda by visiting our areas and by meeting with us as well as the leaders of the conflicting parties;
10.4 To utilize their access to the media for statements in support of women's peace initiatives.

11. We, Sudanese women, will continue to work to seek agreement on the issue of arms flow.
Civil Society Working Committee
The National Democratic Alliance
National Working Committee
The Non Partisan Working Committee
Nuba Women Working Committee
Southern Women Working Committee
SPDF Working Committee
SPLM-United Working Committee
Note:
We regret that our sisters from SPLM were unable to join us at this meeting of which their contribution in the preparation has been of significance. The ideas contained in this document reflect the thinking of all the committees including the SPLM. Their name may not appear in this document but we are convinced that together we shall use the document as a platform for an even greater inclusive process towards finding a just and peaceful solution to the conflict that has ravaged our great and beautiful country.

Source: Salmmah Women's Resource Center (2006)

Appendix F: Women of SuWep in Decision-making Positions after the CPA

No	Name	Position	SUWEP Group
1	Rashel Nyadok	Minister for Gender, Social Welfare, Youth and Sports – Jongolei state	Southern sector
2	Awut Deng Acuil	Advisor to the President of South Sudan on gender and human rights	Southern sector
3	Grace Datiero	Minister of Education, West Equatoria State, GOSS	Southern sector
4	Rebecca Akwaci	Chairperson of Sudan Radio Service, GOSS	Southern sector
5	Ann Kemo	Deputy Chairperson, Commission DDR South, GOSS	Southern sector
6	Mary Apai	Advisor to the Governor of Central Equatoria, GOSS	Southern sector
7	Abuk Payiti Ayik	Chairperson for gender, social Welfare, Youth and Sports, GOSS	Southern Sector
8	Mary Danial Kodi	MP, Nuba Mountains-SPLM	Southern sector
9	Agnes Nyoka	MP, National Assembly	Southern Sector
10	Amna Mamoun	MP, Damazin Regional Coordinator for Blue Nile-SPLM	Southern sector
11	Bonguot Amom	MP, GOSS	Southern sector
12	Mary Nyaulang	MP, Chairperson for peace and Reconciliation, GOSS	Southern sector
13	June Malek	MP, Controller GOSS	Southern Sector
14	Monica Ayan magguat	MP, GOSS	Southern sector
15	Dr Priscilla Joseph	MP, Head of Human Rights Committee, National Assembly	Northern sector
16	Mary Hillary	Member in the Directorate of Finance, Ministry of Finance, GOSS	Northern sector
17	Roda Joseph	Director of Training Programme at Ministry of Housing GOSS	Northern sector
18	Joy Kwaye	MP, Commissioner Human Rights Commission, GOSS	Northern sector
19	Veronica Louise Renzi	MP, National Assembly	Northern sector
20	Margaret Arapal	MP, National Assembly	Northern sector
21	Shadia Ibrahim	MP, Damazin South Blue Nile	Northern sector
22	Awel Mawein	MP, National Assembly	Northern sector
23	Marsa Ahmed	MP Damazin South Blue Nile	Northern sector
24	Christina Gabrial Ali	MP National Assembly	Northern sector
25	Howida Shabo	MP, National Assembly- GOS/National Working Committee	Northern sector
26	Afaf Ahmed Abdarrahman	Member on the Advisory Council of Human Rights- GOS/National Working Committee	Northern sector

MP: Member of Parliament
GOSS: Government of South Sudan
GOS: Government of Sudan
Source: Salmmah Women's Resource Center (2006)

Appendix G: Form of Consent

Consent to Participate in Research Project

Respondents Code #_____

I agree to be interviewed for a study of the Sudanese women's movement; that is being carried out by Mawahib Ahmed as part of the requirement for the doctoral program in the School of Women's Studies at York University, Toronto Canada. I understand that this study will examine Sudanese women's movement accomplishments, pitfalls, and the prospects of solidarity and transnationalism.

I understand that:

1. information will be collected through unstructured interviews as well as documenting any personal data that I may wish to share;
2. I am free to withdraw my consent to discuss my experiences at any time and that I can discontinue my participation without negative consequences;
3. my anonymity will be preserved, if I so wish;
4. until all data are analyzed and used by the researcher for her dissertation and related scholarly publications, the data will be in the custody of Ms Mawahib Ahmed and only available to her;
5. five years after completion of Ms Mawahib's doctorate, and with the permission of the participant, the data will be offered to a university or other archive concerned with women's history/studies, that I can specifically exclude any material from that collection that I choose, and that I can decide when the material can be available to other researchers;
6. in case I do not want my material to be offered to the archive, it will be destroyed/shredded or erased from the digitally stored transcripts by Ms. Mawahib;
7. the are no risks to the participants ;
8. I may benefit from participating by having my personal history recorded or pictures appearing on the published materials or by knowing that I am contributing to the writing of the Sudanese women's experiences and activism;
9. I will be available to answer your questions and provide further explanations;
10. this research will be conducted at a time and place convenient to me;
11. total amount of time I will be asked to volunteer for this study is up to three hours;

12. The information I will provide will be used for the purposes of this research.

13. my identity will be treated with confidentiality;

14. I can refuse to answer some questions or decide to stop participating at any time, and

15. for questions about this research and the rights of participants, I can contact the *Manager of Research Ethics for the University at the Office of Research and Administration*, Ross s 414, York University, Telephone 416 736 5055.

I have read this informed consent form I understand what is involved and I hereby agree to take part in this study and that I have received a copy of this consent form.

_____

Name of Participant

_____

Signature of participant

_____

Address

_____

Date

_____

I agree for my participation to be recorded on audio tape.

_____   _____

Signature of participant   Date

I agree for my pictures to be taken for the purpose of this research.

_____   _____

Signature   Date

I would like the documentation of my participation to be stored in an archive and be available to researchers immediately/after….years.

_____   _____

Signature   of Participant   Date

I would like to have my name used in connection with the research material I provide.

_____   _____

Signature of participant   Date

I would prefer to remain anonymous and a pseudonym to be used when the research material is published/analyzed/archived.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

I certify that I have explained to the above participant the purpose and the procedures of the research study; that, any questions raised by the participant have been answered satisfactorily.

_____

  Principal Researcher/Investigator

_____

        Signature

_____

        Date

Appendix H: Interview Questions

Talk to me about yourself and your experience as a member of the women's movement, successes, and challenges? How do you define yourself? Activist, feminist, or others? Why?
What about the challenges of nationalist projects: Islamic, south, west, east? How SWM can overcome them? How nationalist recruit women for their cause? What is women's role in the nationalist fight/cause? What are the achievements of women so far after nationalist come to power?

What do you think are the successes of Sudanese Women's Movement (SWM) so far if any? What are the failures? In your opinion what things that are important to women and have not been realized yet? What is the most recent accomplishment of SWM?

What is the difference in SWM activities now and the past? What are the new activities, accomplishments and challenges? Have these activities bring women together across the divides of race, religion and boarders?

How do you evaluate the woman position inside her family? Do you think there is equality inside family? How do you project the women's position inside family now and in the future? How do you project women's position inside society now & in the future? Do you think family and society have not given the woman yet her true position?

Has the Sudanese Women Movement (SWM) manage to build alliances with each other and with other women's organizations non Sudanese? What benefits SWM gain from such alliances? Are there any effects of these alliances on building cooperation and difference negotiation among the SWM its self? What prohibits SWM from building alliances whether with each other or with other organizations?

Do you think SWM can become a one women movement with shared agenda? What will this agenda include among its clauses? What brings SW together? What separate them?

What strategies women used to handle different activities? What challenges? How do women bargain to achieve their cause? What do you think the efficient way to achieve women's cause is it by laws or by bargaining?