

Institution: Newcastle University		
Unit of Assessment: 28 History		
Title of case study: Shaping Western Responses to Sudan's Civilian Uprising (2018-2019)		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: August 2016-April 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Dr Willow Berridge	Lecturer in History	August 2016-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: December 2018-December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact <p>Dr Willow Berridge's research has made her a leading commentator and activist on Sudanese politics. She has significantly shaped Western responses to the Sudanese uprising of 2018-2019 which ousted the Islamist regime of Umar al-Bashir, which had attracted international condemnation for its gross violations of human rights. Berridge's familiarity with the contexts and historical imperatives in Sudan supported a focussed period of research-led activism, including petitions and policy briefings. In part due to Berridge's intervention, the UK government changed its language around their response to the crisis, shifting markedly from a mild 'concern' to a more robust condemnation.</p>		
2. Underpinning research <p>In 2017 Dr Berridge published <i>Hasan al-Turabi, Islamist Politics and Democracy in Sudan</i> (PUB1), an in-depth study of the thought and politics of al-Turabi, the Islamist ideologue who engineered the coup of 1989 that brought about the thirty-year rule of Umar al-Bashir. This text explored how al-Turabi's worldview was shaped by colonialism, post-colonialism and Marxist politics, as well as analysing his diverse and controversial readings of jihad, democracy and the Islamic State. It represented one of the most rigorous and in-depth pieces of research on the internal dynamics of the 'Salvation Regime', for both before and after al-Turabi's split with al-Bashir in 1999. This research has been vital to understanding the revolution against that same regime of 2019. The research has also ensured that Berridge is one of the best-placed Western scholars to advise and consult on the developing political situation in Sudan. One of the arguments made by her text which is most pertinent to ongoing policy formation is that al-Turabi's Islamism was itself shaped by the multiple crises of the post-colonial state in Sudan, and that his removal (and by implication now also the removal of the entire Islamist regime in 2019) does not in and of itself ensure a stable and democratic society.</p> <p>Developing this research, Berridge produced a June 2019 'Crisis Briefing' on the Uprising in Sudan (PUB2), published in <i>African Affairs</i>, the top-ranked journal in African Studies. She highlighted a number of the challenges facing the pro-democracy movement in Sudan, notably with regard to the ambivalent role of the regional and international actors, the risk of Umar al-Bashir's removal leading to an in-house coup, and the debates over the length of the upcoming transitional period. The briefing explored the politics of civil protest in Sudanese history, drawing on an in-depth analysis of English and Arabic media accounts of the contemporary uprising and highlighting a number of important parallels with the two previous uprisings in Sudan, the October Revolution of 1964 and April Intifada of 1985.</p> <p>Berridge's continuing work (PUB3) traced the outlook of the recently departed regime of Umar al-Bashir to the emergence of the Islamist worldview in the late colonial educational institutions.</p>		

It argued that the 30-year Islamist regime founded in 1989 was established by a small elite who drew much of their ideological hubris and indeed the blueprint for their 'Civilizational Project' from their experience as undergraduates in some of the key institutions of the colonial 'civilizing mission'. Tracing the origins of the Islamist regime to the politics of colonial elite formation helps us understand why the Islamists, in spite of presenting themselves as a vanguard movement liberating the nation from the cultural legacy of colonialism, have now themselves been overthrown by another movement of liberation.

Berridge has also published a survey text on Islamism (PUB4) building on her research on Hasan al-Turabi. The survey's discussion of trajectories towards 'post-Islamist' political scenarios has shaped her engagement with international governments' policy forums.

3. References to the research

The three texts on Sudan each drew upon extensive Arabic language research and critical engagement with the literature on Islamist politics and Sudanese history. Each of the publishers (CUP, Bloomsbury) and the two journals are internationally recognised in their field. This research was peer-reviewed before publication.

PUB1 *Hasan al-Turabi: Islamist Politics and Democracy in Sudan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316848449>

PUB2 'Crisis Briefing: The Uprising in Sudan', *African Affairs* (published online 12 June 2019) <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adz015>

PUB3 'Colonial education and the shaping of Islamism in Sudan, 1946-1956', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 46 (2019), 583-601
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2018.1447441>

PUB4 *Islamism in the Modern World: A Historical Approach* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018) (available on request)

4. Details of the impact

In late December 2018, Sudan witnessed widespread protests against the regime of President Omar al-Bashir. In towns and cities across the country, people took to the streets calling on the president to step down after thirty years in power. These protests were triggered by the sharp rise in the cost of bread and fuel, but anti-government demonstrations have simmered in Sudan for several years. The 2018-2019 uprising in Sudan stands as the third major civilian uprising in Sudan's post-colonial history. Its objective was to bring an end to the 30-year regime of Umar al-Bashir – the first serving head of state to be indicted by the International Criminal Court – and install a civilian democracy in its place. Berridge's research expertise enabled her to make a series of interventions, in the form of her petition and policy briefings, aimed at pressuring the UK government to halt its 'Strategic Dialogue' with the Khartoum government and to pressure the regime and the military to allow a transition to a civilian-led democracy. Berridge's research-led activism had two key impacts.

- (i) Change in language of statements by Troika (UK, Norway, US/Canada) and UK Government officials following Berridge's intervention

In late December 2018, during the first week of the 2018-19 civilian uprising in Sudan, Berridge authored a gov.uk petition entitled 'Condemn Sudan's use of lethal force vs protests, pressure for democratic change' (published 9 January 2019) (IMP1). The petition and Berridge's strategy for disseminating among interested groups both in person and online drew on her in-depth knowledge of both the regime and the politics of opposition in Sudan. For instance, her references to the consensus between the formal opposition and civil society were based on her awareness of the significance of co-ordination among these groups in past opposition movements; her call for firmer pressure on the regime was informed by the awareness her research had given her of the Khartoum regime's historic intransigence in face of internal opposition and ability to co-opt 'pragmatic' Western governments by presenting itself as

'reformed' and a potential ally in the 'War on Terror'. The aim of the petition was to pressure the UK government to halt its 'Strategic Dialogue' with the Khartoum regime and call for a transition to a civilian-led democracy. By 1 March 2019, the gov.uk petition that Berridge authored reached 10,000 signatures, which meant that it required a formal response from the government. (All gov.uk petitions close after six months; this petition closed on 9 July 2019 having been signed by 22,999 UK citizens (IMP1), making it the fifth most signed gov.uk petitions on an 'international' issue that does not involve the EU.)

Berridge's intervention contributed to a clear change in language on the part of the UK Government, one of the three international actors in the Troika that has shaped Western democratic engagement with Sudan. The initial Troika response was mild. On 8 January 2019, the Troika issued a lukewarm statement which read that 'The Troika ... continue to be *deeply concerned* [emphasis added] about the Government of Sudan's response to the recent protests in Sudan...' On 26 February 2019, a further statement read 'The Troika ... remain *deeply concerned* [emphasis added] about the situation in Sudan.' The statement speaks vaguely of 'political and economic reform' though it did criticise Bashir's state of emergency as 'allowing security forces to act with impunity.' (IMP2).

On 15 March 2019, in response to the petition after it reached 10,000 signatures, the UK Government released a statement saying: 'We have made clear our concern at Sudan's response to protests, and *condemn the use of violence and detentions* [emphasis added]. We continue to call for legitimate grievances of protestors to be addressed.' (IMP3)

Berridge also corresponded with the Minister for Africa in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Drawing on her unique research into Sudan's recent political history, Berridge outlined her concerns about the situation. In one email to the Minister (through her local MP), Berridge criticised the British response for not being robust enough, and for not condemning the use of force, as they had done in previous uprisings in North Africa, for example, the Arab Spring in 2011. In her response on 19 March 2019, the Minister stated that 'the use of lethal force by security forces and arbitrary detentions in response to peaceful protests is *unacceptable* [emphasis added] ... I am also deeply concerned by President Bashir's decision to call a state of emergency... I am following the situation closely.' The Minister wrote a further letter on 9 July 2019, with a more forceful statement: 'We *condemn* [emphasis added] the use of extreme force against peaceful protestors and the recent deaths in Sudan ... We call for the democratic rights of the Sudanese people to be respected and for a swift, orderly and peaceful transition to civilian rule.' (IMP4)

- (ii) Further advice and petitioning of Western governments to shape policy immediately before and during the transitional process

[text removed for publication]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

(IMP1): The petition is available at <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/236102>
The petition map emphasizes that it got a wide response throughout the country:
(<https://petitionmap.unboxedconsulting.com/?petition=236102>)

(IMP2): Troika statements:
<https://sd.usembassy.gov/statement-by-the-troika-on-the-response-to-continuing-protests-in-sudan/> and <https://sd.usembassy.gov/troika-statement-2/>

(IMP3): Government response to petition (March 2019):
<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/236102>

(IMP4): Emails to the Minister for Africa in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (via local MP) and responses from the Minister

(IMP5): [text removed for publication]

(IMP6): [text removed for publication]

(IMP7): [text removed for publication]

(IMP8): [text removed for publication]