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The 'Revenge of May': The 'Salvation Revolution' of June 1989

Protests in recent years against Sudan's third and most tenacious military president, Umar al-Bashir, have raised hopes that the Sudanese people may be able to recreate the experiences of 1964 and 1985 and generate a 'Sudanese Spring'. However, for one prominent analyst of Sudanese politics, the nature of power politics in Sudan has changed so comprehensively since al-Bashir's coup in 1989 that it is unlikely that any 'third *Intifada*' can occur, at least not in the same way as the first two. De Waal lists four major factors – first, that the current opposition lacks the organizational capacity of previous ones such as the National Alliance of 1985; second, that Sudan's Islamists represent the most coherent political force within the country and a significant number of them still identify with the government; third, that the senior ranks of the army are dominated by 'Islamist-orientated' officers who are unlikely to 'side with the people'; and fourth, that the emergence of rebel movements in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile has made both the army and middle class protesters fear that any attempt to instigate a regime change will empower these rebel movements and lead to the disintegration of Sudan.¹

Those doubting the prospects of a third *Intifada* might add two other reasons: first, al-Bashir's coup was supported by the political forces that had opposed the National Alliance during the *Intifada* and 1985 Interim period, which ensured that the *putschists* of 1989 were not only hostile to multi-party democracy, but also knew exactly how to prevent the circumstances that facilitated the first two *Intifadas* from repeating themselves; and second, the political forces that helped to forge the first two uprisings were disillusioned with the failings of the democratic periods they brought about. Jizouli Dafa'allah now looks back upon the parliamentary period that his transitional government helped usher in with a certain amount of disdain. He concludes that the political parties were ill-prepared for democratic politics after 16 years in isolation, 'and as a result there was nothing new, and the parties brought back their hesitant attitude, and the country returned to the situation [that had obtained] before the *Intifada* amidst their conflicts and their problems as if nothing had happened.'² Jizouli Dafa'allah's somewhat resigned judgement indicates the gulf in outlooks that existed between the urban professionals who helped to engineer the *Intifada* and the political forces that benefited the most from the re-emergence of liberal democracy.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to deny that the third democratic period failed to achieve the aims of the *Intifada*. Instead, it witnessed an intensification of the conflict in the south and a stepping up of the policy of arming ethnic militias that would ultimately make the second civil war so destructive.³ The new government was unable to repair the economic situation, although this was at least partially due to Nimeiri's disastrous economic legacy. The government was left so heavily in debt that it was forced to negotiate adoption of a crippling austerity programme with the IMF, which in turn led to mass urban demonstrations in December 1988.⁴ These demonstrations witnessed violent clashes between armed Umma Party supporters and left-wing urban demonstrators, which evoked memories of the confrontations between the *Ansar* and the SCP after 1965.⁵ In this sense, there was a horrible feeling of 'history repeating itself' after the 1985 *Intifada*. Sudanese politics seemed to reproduce an apparently inevitable cycle of events, whereby an initially radical transitional government became slowly less ambitious and eventually ushered in a period of liberal democracy dominated by political parties relying on patrimonialism more than policy; the cynicism this experience generated then made it possible for the military to seize power once more, as it had done in 1969. Nevertheless, we should beware of accepting this cycle of democratic aspiration followed by weary resignation as the principal explanation for Umar al-Bashir's coup of 1989. It is worth remembering that Sadiq al-Mahdi was on the verge of signing a peace deal with Garang that would involve the full cancellation of the September Laws when al-Bashir intervened.⁶ What brought about the coup was the NIF's contempt for democracy, and not that of the general public, and it was facilitated by the growing economic and military strength of this particular party.

Umar Abd al-Ati characterizes al-Bashir's pro-NIF military coup of 30 June 1989 as being like 'the revenge of May'.⁷ This is in many ways a fitting judgement. The Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) established by al-Bashir's putschists immediately targeted all the forces that had helped to bring about the downfall of the May Regime. The army was systematically purged, with 2,500 officers having been rooted out by 1993, and almost the entirety of the senior police officer cadre was dismissed.⁸ Al-Bashir also acted ruthlessly against the civilians who had helped bring about the *Intifada*. Senior members of the major northern political parties were sent to jail, including Muhammad Ibrahim Nugd and Sadiq al-Mahdi, the latter being subjected to a mock execution. The workers' and professionals' unions were purged to an extent never witnessed before, and their members were imprisoned and tortured *en masse*. As seen in Chapter 5, al-Bashir and others in the Islamist cell in the military put particular pressure on Siwar al-Dahab in 1985 to ensure that 'communists' in the professional and labour movement did not seize control of the *Intifada*. In many ways, al-Bashir's coup of 1989 represented a resolution of the power struggles that emerged following the *Intifada*. Awad al-Karim Muhammad Ahmad, who had clashed personally with al-Bashir in 1985, was treated viciously by the new president's security agencies when he took over. Aazim Kabbashi, who had led Nimeiri's torture unit, was re-employed for the same purpose by al-Bashir's regime. It seemed as if the uprisings of 1964 and 1985 had underlined for Sudan's new autocrats the drawbacks of the Sudanese state being 'soft at heart'. Nimeiri had shown an unprecedented willingness to utilize physical violence against fellow members of the riverain elite in 1971; al-Bashir's violent crackdown following the 1989 coup started off where Nimeiri had begun.

Taking stock of the various political forces that featured prominently in 1985 can help us assess the extent to which the Salvation Revolution did represent a 'counter-Intifada'. Of course, it was the leftists, secularists and 'sectarians' associated with the 1985 *Intifada* who were most notably targeted by the post-1989 measures. In spite of the political infighting during the interim and democratic periods amongst the northern political parties, the SPLA and the professionals, following al-Bashir's coup, these groups joined together to form the 'National Democratic Alliance' (NDA) in October 1989, taking the original National Alliance's 'Charter to Protect Democracy' of 1985 as their inspiration.⁹ Meanwhile, observing the reactions of the perceived 'pro-Islamists' who participated in the *Intifada* and the transitional regime should enable us to assess the credibility of the argument that the 1986 transitional regime was pro-NIF and paved the way for the 1989 coup. Hussein Abu Salih, the interim minister of health, was probably the most sympathetic to the new order. He served in three ministerial positions in the early 1990s, including the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1993 to 1995.¹⁰ Other 'pro-Islamists' from the 1985 transitional government were favourably treated by the regime, without their being actively incorporated into it. Siwar al-Dahab was allowed to become head of the Islamic Call Organization (*al-Munazzama al-Dawa' al-Islamiyya*),¹¹ while Taj al-Din Fadl took over the presidency of an Islamist youth organization.¹²

Nevertheless, with the exception of Hussein Abu Salih, the liberal Islamists within the professional elite largely shunned the new regime. Umar Abd al-Ati was not employed by it, and recalls being harassed by the new security agencies, although his close personal relationship with al-Turabi helped him to escape the kind of brutal treatment suffered by the more left-wing professionals.¹³ Jizouli Dafa'allah, whilst having been treated leniently by the new rulers, has also distanced himself from the Salvation Revolution. He claims that he refused an offer from Umar al-Bashir to work as Sudan's representative at the UN on the grounds that his regime had been brought about by a military coup.¹⁴ 'I am not an *Ingazi* [i.e. a supporter of the *Ingaz*, or "Salvation Revolution"]', he insists.¹⁵ Furthermore, it seems that Mirghani al-Nasri did not play any great political role after 1989, although he was treated sympathetically by the new regime and al-Bashir and Ali Uthman Taha attended his funeral in 2010.¹⁶ This reminds us that a distinct category of 'liberal Islamists', who had little sympathy for the secular and left wing ideologies of a number of their professional contemporaries, and at the same time did not share the NIF's contempt for democracy, participated in the *Intifada*.

The one Islamist professional closely identified with both the uprisings (or in this case, the first one) and the 'Salvation Revolution' was Hasan al-Turabi. Whilst al-Turabi was sent to prison by Umar al-Bashir along with the other political leaders, it is now acknowledged by many – including al-Turabi himself – that this was a ploy to disguise the fact that al-Turabi and the NIF *Shura* council were themselves behind the coup.¹⁷ As seen in previous chapters, the NIF chief was himself a champion of democracy during the 1964 October Revolution and had participated in both the parliamentary regimes brought about by the 1964 and 1985 uprisings. However, by the 1980s and 1990s, he had begun to adopt a far more ambiguous position on democracy. In 1983, he contended that 'an Islamic form of government is essentially a form of representative democracy. But,' he continued, 'this statement requires the following qualification.

First an Islamic republic is not strictly speaking a direct government of and by the people; it is a government of the *shari'ah*. But, in a substantial sense, it is a popular government since the *shari'ah* represents the convictions of the people, and therefore, their direct will.¹⁸ Al-Turabi's belief that his state was 'democratic' was rooted in his somewhat optimistic conviction that his own personal interpretation of *shari'a* was one shared by the entire Sudanese public. There is some evidence that this conviction was genuine – in 1996 al-Turabi was prepared to test it out by sanctioning multi-party elections in Sudan, but was overruled by senior generals and ministers who did not share his optimism.¹⁹ Al-Turabi is often dismissed as a hypocrite who betrayed his former commitment to democracy by allying with military dictators. However, what this indicates is that al-Turabi shared the same paradoxical beliefs of the more secular branches of the 'modern forces' following the 1964 and 1985 uprisings – that 'democracy' would be implemented after suspending 'democracy' for a period to prevent 'anti-democratic' forces (the 'sectarians' being the culprit in both cases) from exploiting 'democracy' to prevent 'democracy'.

After a decade of largely futile efforts by opposition politicians to unseat the regime, it was inter-Islamist rifts over the precise nature of 'democracy' that set the scene for a readjustment of the nature of political competition in Sudan. In 1996, al-Turabi had chosen to take up the position of speaker in the parliament formed by the largely fraudulent elections of the same year. He had hoped that from this position he would slowly be able to transfer power to the civilian wing of the Islamic Movement and thus escape from his bondage to the military. However, he was caught by surprise when the Salvation Revolution decided, in his own words, to 'eat its father'. Just as he was beginning to introduce legislation that would limit Umar al-Bashir's powers, members of the Islamic Movement issued the famous 'memorandum of the ten' in 1998, which indirectly criticized al-Turabi's leadership and suggested that he transfer a number of his powers to Umar al-Bashir.²⁰ A year later, al-Bashir dissolved the parliament and drove al-Turabi into opposition, where he formed his own Popular Congress Party to rival the National Congress Party of his erstwhile allies.

The crisis of political Islam undermined the foundations of authoritarian rule in Sudan. Having 'eaten its father', the Islamic Movement lost its ideological coherence. Whilst the outlook of the post-1999 regime remained Islamist in character, the division created a conflict over how exactly the 'Islamic State' was to be established and many began to acknowledge the failings of the original 'civilizational project' of the 1990s.²¹ This ideological splintering resulted in the re-emergence of a semi-free print media. As a result of the Islamic Movement's ideological confusion, the security agencies have been unsure as to how to censor the wide range of political and religious views that have emerged following this media liberalization.²²

At the same time, the ideological rift also furthered regional and ethnic tensions amongst the Islamists. The majority of those remaining loyal to al-Turabi had their origins in the western region of Sudan, whilst the NCP came to represent the interests of the 'riverain centre', and its senior cadres hailed from the Shayqiyya and Ja'aliin groups of northern province.²³ This rift partly contributed to the outbreak of rebellion in Darfur in 2003, when – alongside the more secular Sudan Liberation Movement – one of al-Turabi's former lieutenants, Khalil Ibrahim, led the Justice and Equality

Movement into rebellions against the government. Speculation remains as to the extent of the connection between al-Turabi and the JEM. The Darfur rebellion has proved to be costly for the Sudanese government. First, it distracted it to the point that it was compelled to abandon the attempt to dominate the south and consequently made peace with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in 2005. Moreover, the regime's brutal counter-insurgency campaign led to the International Criminal Court issuing a warrant for Umar al-Bashir's arrest on charges of crimes against humanity and, later, genocide.

In spite of extricating itself from its over-ambitious project to 'Islamize the south', the regime has failed to offer a political vision that can unite even the portion of Sudan that remains following the secession of the south in 2011. It has remained focused on developing the 'Hamdi Triangle', consisting of the areas of central and riverain Sudan between the towns of Atbara, Kassala and al-Ubayyid. The fact that Abd al-Rahim Hamdi, the Finance Minister whose name this policy is associated with, was one of the *Ikhwani* lecturers who helped drive the October Revolution following the University Incident of 1964, reminds us that the democratic hero of one region of Sudan could be the villain of another. In 2011, al-Bashir declared that following the secession of the south, the Sudanese government would be free to impose its own version of Arab/Islamic identity on the rest of the country. Predictably, the branches of the SPLM/A, which had been left stranded in the north following secession and had been forced to reform as the SPLM/A-North, entered into rebellion against the regime.

For the northern regime, the most serious consequence of the secession of south Sudan has been its loss of oil revenue. With the majority of the country's oil fields located in the now departed south, the northern government lost access to a resource that provided 70 per cent of its revenue.²⁴ The effects have been predictable – inflation has doubled and production of the major staple foods has declined, making the country increasingly dependent on imports.²⁵ As of May 2012, even the Finance Minister was acknowledging a poverty rate of 40 per cent, whilst youth unemployment has now risen to 25.4 per cent.²⁶ It was yet another wave of economic austerity measures that provoked the next series of uprisings. In June 2012, the government's declaration that it was cutting fuel subsidies provoked mass student-led street demonstrations throughout Khartoum.²⁷ When the state once more attempted to remove fuel subsidies in September 2013, it faced a far more extensive series of protests and its various security units had shot dead over 200 protesters before the demonstrators finally relented.²⁸ This figure was a far greater number than that of those slain in either 1964 or 1985, suggesting that if any future uprising does succeed in removing al-Bashir's regime, it will be a much bloodier affair.

The narrowing horizons of the NCP, its gradually diminishing inclusive political vision, the economic catastrophes it has presided over and its intensification of the conflict on the periphery have engendered further divisions and crises within the Islamist camp. Most of these rifts are products of policy conflicts over the relationship between the regime and the civilian Islamic Movement, as well as the matter of how to approach the opposition, at both the periphery and the riverain centre. Al-Bashir and a number of hardliners such as Nafie Ali Nafie wish to maintain a strict NCP monopoly on power by treating the Islamic Movement as a branch of the ruling party and by

stepping up the military campaign against the SPLA-North.²⁹ Meanwhile, a more reformist faction, including a number of military Islamists and former intelligence czar Salah Gosh, objects to the NCP's attempts to establish a monopoly over the Islamic movement, whilst Gosh and the 'Naivasha group' – the civilian Islamists such as Ali Uthman Taha most closely associated with the 2005 peace agreement with the SPLA – advise pursuing a more cautious and conciliatory approach towards the SPLA-North for fear of uniting the various rebel factions in the peripheries.³⁰ These divisions have also taken on something of an ethnic character, with 'hardliners' from Ja'ali backgrounds such as Nafie and al-Bashir taking on 'moderates' from Shayqi backgrounds such as Gosh, Taha and Awad al-Jaz.³¹ The conflict has escalated in recent years with the dismissal of major figures from the NCP. Bashir removed Gosh in April 2011 after a rift between the latter and Nafie over feelers Gosh sent out to the opposition parties, and then had him arrested in 2012, together with a number of military Islamists, after NISS accused them of plotting against the regime.³² In 2013, it expelled Ghazi al-Atabani, a senior 'reformist' figure, for penning a memo along with two dozen other NCP members demanding that Bashir end his violent crackdown against the uprisings of September 2013.³³

In spite of the withdrawal of senior Islamists such as al-Atabani, Gosh and al-Turabi from the regime, De Waal maintains that 'the fact that they are not united against the government is a challenge for the opposition.'³⁴ He further observes that 'In Tunisia, Egypt and Syria in 2011, the Islamists were in opposition and supported the protesters, as indeed they were in the critical moment in Sudan in 1985.'³⁵ This is in many regards a cogent argument. The fact that the dissidents have struggled to coordinate their opposition to the regime – in the words of el Gizouli, al-Turabi has 'only Schadenfreude to show' towards Salah Gosh since his fall from grace³⁶ – suggests that it may take a while for a challenge to the NCP from within the Islamic Movement to be effective. However, De Waal is to some extent ignoring that fact that in both 1964 and 1985 there were other 'Islamic' forces guiding the opposition to the government. In both of these uprisings, parties affiliated with Sudan's major religious orders, the *Ansar* and *Khatmiyya*, played major roles in the political transitions and achieved far greater electoral success than the *Ikhwan*-inspired political parties in the country at large. This evidently distinguishes post-colonial Sudan from post-colonial Egypt, Syria and Tunisia, where neo-revivalist and Sufi-backed religious parties have not had such a significant part to play in the post-colonial politics of the country. To understand the potential for the emergence of an effective oppositional alliance, we must assess the capacity of these particular parties to pose a viable political challenge to the current regime.

The lingering influence of the 'Sectarians'

Analysts of contemporary Sudan have tended to assume that the 1989 Revolution marked a transitional phase whereby an older, 'sectarian' form of politics was phased out to be replaced by a political duel between the centralizing Islamists of Khartoum and

the rebel movements of the marginalized peripheries. Undeniably, the transformative violence associated with the post-1989 political dispensation did have a major impact on the cushy systems of patrimonialism that had facilitated the hegemony of the *Ansar* and Khatmiyya orders in democratic Sudan. The sheer ideological self-assurance of the NIF and their military proxies left them undaunted by the religious reputations of figures such as Sadiq al-Mahdi and Muhammad Uthman al-Mirghani. That the regime was willing to subject the former to a mock execution and cause the other to suffer two heart attacks in prison following the 1989 coup illustrated its willingness to introduce a new game of politics whereby state force trumped religious heritage.³⁷ Within the first 2 years following the revolution, the government had dissolved the Khatmiyya Tariqa and nationalized all of its property as well as that of the *Ansar* movement.³⁸

Furthermore, the regime has attempted to undermine the system of rural patrimony upon which these orders base their legitimacy. For instance, in South Kordofan, it dissolved the Nazirates that have historically supported the Umma Party and substituted *Amirs* loyal to the NIF.³⁹ However, it was also the growing power of regionalist movements in the north that led to a relative decline in the power of the Umma and the DUP, whose electoral campaigns were based upon their ability to mobilize mass rural support. In Darfur, rebel movements such as the JEM and the SLA have begun to take over historic Umma power bases, whereas movements such as the Beja Congress and Rashaida Free Lions that had dominated the low intensity conflict against the government in the East have begun to erode DUP support in its traditional heartland.⁴⁰

However, analysts should be wary of downplaying the support still received by the *Ansar* and Khatmiyya orders in Sudan. *Mulid* festivals at the tomb of the historic Khatmiyya patron Sayyid Hassan in Kassala are still mass events. As Gallab has observed, the very fact that the government has put religious discourse at the centre of political life and attempted to impose a uniform religion upon each individual has encouraged the Sudanese to respond by re-affirming their ties to historic religious orders such as the Khatmiyya and *Ansar*, making the NIF/NCP 'keenly aware of the narrowness of their support base.'⁴¹ In 1993, Sadiq al-Mahdi issued a speech challenging the government in front of 200,000 *Ansari* supporters in Omdurman.⁴² Given the essentially rural nature of the Umma Party's constituency, and the exponential rise in migration to the towns since the 1970s, the party was able to deploy far more supporters on the streets after 1989 than it could in 1964 in spite of its political disempowerment.

The DUP and, particularly, the Umma also retain significant kudos amongst the Sudanese youth. In coalition with the other major opposition parties, they have continued to contest university elections, which – given the comparatively open nature of campus politics – are perhaps a more genuine guide to party popularity than national elections. These opposition alliances – whether under the banner of the NDA or more recent coalitions – have remained competitive in elections in both Khartoum and the provinces.⁴³ Whilst it is difficult to judge the precise extent to which the NUP and DUP contributed to these coalition victories, studies conducted by the University of Khartoum before the 2010 elections perhaps offer another indication as to their popularity. Its opinion poll suggested that within the northern provinces

of Sudan (the regions that now form Sudan after the secession of the south in 2011), the DUP and the Umma were losing ground in their traditional heartlands of the east and west, respectively, where, according to the survey, regionalist movements would obtain 93 per cent and 97 per cent of the votes, respectively.⁴⁴ However, it also predicted that the NUP should acquire 23 per cent of the vote in the northern region as a whole, although northern support for the DUP had sunk to a paltry 4 per cent.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the statistics regarding the NUP suggest that they still retain a considerable degree of support within the central riverain areas of Sudan where the urban uprisings of 1964 and 1985 were centred. As seen in this thesis, the Umma Party has found it easier to mobilize support against military regimes than the DUP, given that it is less obviously identified with the army than the latter party. Whilst the DUP has traditionally relied on the commercial strength of the Khatmiyya order and it has been easy for the new economic elite associated with the NCP to outbid it in this regard, the Umma/*Ansar* possess a form of cultural and historical capital that dates back to the Mahdi's struggle against the British and Egyptians and which is harder for the current regime to usurp. Residual identification with the historic legacy of the *Ansar* is evident in the protest behaviour of a number of the youth groups that have been involved in recent uprisings against the NCP regime. In the 2012 Sudan Revolts, the youth activists associated with the *Girifina* movement camped out in the Sayyid Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi mosque in Wad Nubawi in Omdurman, using it as a safe haven during the crack-downs of NISS.⁴⁶

The problem for the Umma and the DUP is that they are capable of effecting regime change only in collaboration with the 'modern forces', whether it be the professional activists of 1985 or youth-based organizations such as *Girifina* of today. In 1985, although it was Umma Party students who helped initiate the demonstrations, Sadiq al-Mahdi was unwilling to declare war on the regime until he was confident of the ability of the professionals and the military to unseat it. Humbling defeats for the *Ansar* in 1970 and 1976 have proved to him that they are incapable of taking on a modern, mechanized army by themselves. The other, consequent problem for al-Sadiq as well as Muhammad Uthman al-Mirghani is that these figures cannot reconcile themselves with the secular political outlook of a number of the professionals with whom the more traditional political parties have previously collaborated to effect regime change. Twice, in 1964 and 1985, religious patriarchs and urban professionals cooperated to unseat military regimes, and on both occasions they subsequently fell into argument over issues such as sectoral representation, the status of the 'Native Administration' and, most significantly, the role of religion in governance and law. Disputes over the latter issue, in particular, have continued to bedevil the opposition parties during both the era of the National Democratic Alliance and the New Dawn Charter. In 1992, the Umma Party refused to sign an NDA manifesto that declared that 'religion is a divine concept between God and the individual, the state is for all citizens.'⁴⁷ In 2013, the NUP rapidly backtracked on its decision to sign the New Dawn Charter with a number of other opposition parties in Kampala, following controversy over the inclusion of a clause requiring cancellation of any religiously inspired legislation that might conflict with international human rights law.⁴⁸ Along with al-Turabi's PCP, it has now left the 'National Consensus Forces' altogether.⁴⁹

Therefore, mistrust between members of Sudan's major religious orders and the *effendiyya* educated elite remains significant.

Whether out of fear of the lingering popular sympathy for these movements, or a desire to secure 'Islamic' allies following its rift with Hasan al-Turabi in 1999, al-Bashir's NCP government has shown an increasing willingness to mitigate its initial anti-sectarian policy and to attempt to align these parties, or factions of them, with the government. Initially, such moves reflected the sundering of Islamist unity – following the initial split between al-Bashir and al-Turabi in 1999, the president and his former ally scrambled to invite the DUP and the Umma, respectively, to join 'National Reconciliation' projects.⁵⁰ When al-Bashir's NCP re-asserted itself, its policies towards the 'sectarians' came closer to representing a classic 'divide and rule' strategy – the appointment of Sadiq al-Mahdi's former stalwart Mubarak al-Fadil al-Mahdi as a Presidential Assistant in 2002 created a long-term rift between the mainstream National Umma Party (NUP) of Sadiq al-Mahdi and Mubarak al-Fadil's Umma Party: Reform and Renewal. Nevertheless, the neo-traditionalist religious orders' rapprochement with the NCP also reflected a mutual interest in stalling the increasing growth of the rebel movements of the periphery as players in the Sudanese political arena. Sadiq al-Mahdi has distanced himself from the slogan of regime change, and expressed fears that if the armed rebel groups in the periphery were to gain access to power, it could lead to a repeat of the Rwandan Genocide in Sudan.⁵¹

The regime's most significant effort to incorporate the sectarian movements came in 2011, when al-Bashir appointed Jafa'ar al-Sadiq al-Mirghani and Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi, the sons of the DUP and NUP chiefs, respectively, as Presidential Assistants. In many ways this still represented a policy of factionalizing the opposition – Abd al-Rahman's appointment occurred without the knowledge or blessing of his father.⁵² Although Muhammad Uthman al-Mirghani was far more positive about his own son's ascension to the government, the move also caused divisions within the DUP. Some resigned, and others joined the breakaway military wing that had aligned itself with the SRF.⁵³ As the DUP party committee was convening to sanction Jafa'ar al-Sadiq's participation in the government, members of the DUP Youth movement occupied the garden of the al-Mirghani residence, where the meeting was being held, in defiance of their seniors' decision.⁵⁴ The DUP youth action mirrored that of factions of the Umma youth who surrounded a meeting of the NUP political office in the days following the appointment of Abd al-Rahman, demanding that al-Sadiq dismiss his son from office and mobilize party supporters to topple the regime.⁵⁵ In 2013, the student wing of the NUP announced its outright refusal to participate in any electoral alliance with the NCP in university elections.⁵⁶ With major generational rifts within both the Umma and the DUP, the eventual passing of the two septuagenarian patriarchs, each of whom has dominated his party for over four decades, may usher in a more confrontational phase of politics – although this might be prevented by Bashir's decision to incorporate Jafa'ar al-Sadiq and Abd al-Rahman in his government. However, even if a generational shift does bring more belligerent leaders to the helm of the more 'traditional' parties, they will still need the collaboration of the institutions associated with the 'modern forces' – whether they be the army, students or professional movements – to produce any effective change.

The assault on the 'Modern Forces'

As observed above, one reason that De Waal downplays the potential for any 'third Intifada' is that contemporary activists lack the organizational capacity of the previous generation. This is not exactly their fault – it is certainly not, as De Waal seems to imply, because the 1985 generation of activists were more meticulous planners than their twenty-first century successors. As seen in Chapter 4, the National Alliance's activities during the *Intifada* were a great deal more spontaneous than De Waal acknowledges. The reason that today's oppositionists appear less well prepared is that the Salvation Regime has been far more rigorous than its predecessors in denying them access to leadership of the institutions most associated with the 'modern forces' – professional, labour and student unions. In both 1964 and 1985, the 'modern forces' were able to coordinate opposition to the regime because each of the major student unions and professional unions (if not the labour unions) was controlled by groups opposed to the regime. Today's oppositionists are not as fortunate.

Possibly the most significant reason for the longevity of al-Bashir's military regime is the ruthlessness with which it pursued its initial assault on the 'modern forces' that had been the principal protagonists in the 1964 and 1985 uprisings. Soon after instigating the June 1989 military coup, the RCC dissolved the major trade unions and professional associations and arrested each of their heads.⁵⁷ When doctors struck in protest in November, al-Bashir famously fulminated that 'anyone who betrays the nation does not deserve the honour of living', and had one doctor executed under emergency legislation to back his point.⁵⁸ The sheer extensiveness of the purging of both workers and professionals deemed hostile to the regime was unprecedented in Sudanese history. In 2001, *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* observed that the number of government employees dismissed from service since the Salvation Revolution was 73, 640, more than twice the number fired between 1904 and 1989.⁵⁹ Such was the ferocity of the measures adopted by al-Bashir that, despite the post-2005 liberalization measures, the 'modern forces' still possess only a limited capacity to mobilize against the regime.

When the regime did sanction the formation of unions once more, it was via a far more extreme form of Nimeiri's corporatist model. It appointed a General Union of Sudanese Workers and empowered it to oversee trade unions and professional associations, inspect their documents and rewrite the statutes that governed them.⁶⁰ Even the Sudan Bar Association, formerly independent, was subjugated to the General Union of Sudanese Workers in this manner.⁶¹ The 1991 Penal Code and 1992 Trade Union Law further restricted the autonomy of individual unions and imposed draconian sanctions on workers taking strike action.⁶² Although the regime permitted union elections, it responded to the success of anti-government candidates by permitting itself to appoint a majority of members on each individual board.⁶³ The result was that every opportunity that had existed under previous military regimes for oppositionists to mobilize the professional or trade unions against the regime was closed off. As a result, although the 'modern forces' continued to participate in demonstrations, they did so with little coherent leadership. Whilst students, civil servants and workers were able to orchestrate protests in Wad Madani and al-Ubayyid in 1994, they lacked the institutions to coordinate these protests and thus struggled to mobilize a more extensive anti-regime campaign.⁶⁴

In theory, the liberal clauses of the 2005 Transitional Constitution that followed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement should have ensured a return to a freer model of associational life. Its terms specifically guaranteed the right to 'peaceful assembly'.⁶⁵ However, professionals and labour activists seeking to take back their unions still face the challenge of reversing 16 years of NIF/NCP indoctrination, as well as continuing government obfuscation and manipulation of union elections. For instance, although after 2005 the president of the General Union of Sudanese Workers, Ibrahim Ghandour, agreed in principle with lecturers at Khartoum University that they should have a body to represent their interests, he has used delaying tactics to prevent this union from gaining official recognition.⁶⁶ When it launched an unsuccessful 3 day strike in 2007 in protest at the laying off of forty-seven lecturers, Ghandour responded with the dismissive statement that 'this union is illegal'.⁶⁷

Meanwhile, the Bar Association has also struggled to unshackle itself from its NIF/NCP-imposed leadership. Until 2009, Fathi Khalil, who had presided over the union since its initial relaunch by the Salvation Regime in 1993, continued to 'win' the leadership elections.⁶⁸ Candidates affiliated with a 'National Forces' list dominated by the NCP have triumphed in subsequent elections amidst the usual claims of government manipulation and vote rigging.⁶⁹ The result is that the Sudan Bar Association, unlike its predecessor in the 1960s and 1980s, has done little to challenge the government over the major political issues of the day, such as illegal detentions, torture and crimes against humanity in the Darfur conflict.⁷⁰

Perhaps the only professional association that has managed to challenge the regime effectively in the post-2005 political environment is the Doctors' Union. This association officially re-established itself in 2006, using the constitution adopted by its predecessor in 1972 as a framework.⁷¹ In 2009, it acquired an independently minded president, Abd al-Azim Kabbalo, who soon challenged the government by launching two major strikes in 2010 and 2011, both of which succeeded in paralysing major hospitals throughout northern Sudan.⁷² Commentators were quick to draw comparisons with the 1984 and 1985 medics' strikes that helped to oust Nimeiri, and it was a sign of the regime's less commanding position that after the predictable initial arrests, it chose, like Nimeiri in 1984, to pursue a negotiated solution to the crisis. The Doctors' Union was willing to challenge the government once more during the uprising of September 2013, when its new president Ahmad al-Shaikh was arrested for informing news agencies of the number of protesters slain by the security forces.⁷³

The General Union of Sudanese Workers has also threatened strike action recently, although in this case the agenda it is pursuing is more indicative of splits within the NCP than a resurgence of labour activism. In 2012, its head, the leading NCP official Ibrahim Ghandour, warned that his union would launch nationwide industrial action if his demands for an increase in the minimum wages were not met. However, these demands appear to be the product of a policy conflict between himself and the finance minister Ibrahim Abd al-Rasul.⁷⁴ When Khartoum hospital workers proposed strike action in early 2014, the GUSW warned its members not to participate.⁷⁵

The marginalization of the labour and professional unions within the anti-regime struggle can easily be demonstrated through a cursory study of the 2013 New Dawn Charter. The principal signatories include six members of the SRF, as well as six

members of the National Consensus Forces – a coalition of the old northern political parties, which has effectively replaced the NDA. The signatories also include youth groups, women's movements, 'civil society' and 'national figures'. A movement entitled 'Trade Union Solidarity' is listed as being a party to the NCF but this institution itself largely comprises the pre-1989 political parties and, in spite of the presence of an 'executive committee for the dismissed', there is little evidence that the NCF intends to push the kind of demands that the Professional Front did in 1964. The Charter does propose a 4-year interim period, signifying that those such as Farouk Abu Eissa who had participated in previous regime changes were aware that previous transitions had failed on account of having been too short.⁷⁶ However, there is little evidence that the 'modern forces' plan to use this period to empower themselves in the same way that they had attempted to during the 1964 and 1985 transitions. There is no demand for sectoral representation of the 'modern forces' at elections, and the most specific of all the demands is that the current union legislation be repealed and 'replaced with new democratic laws'.⁷⁷ The stipulations regarding the distribution of power in the transitional government are vague – the document simply observes that 'the participant[s] shall be from all political parties, civil society organizations, women and youth who ... ratified this document in addition to independent national figures'.⁷⁸ Little is done, therefore, to resolve pre-emptively the kind of conflict between parties and unions that resulted in the disempowerment of the latter during the previous transitions.

The one branch of the 'modern forces' that the regime has struggled to retain a hold on is the student sector. This is partly a result of its ideological self-confidence backfiring on it. Since the Islamic Movement's student wing had won the majority of student elections in the period leading up to 1989, the Salvation Regime initially assumed that it would not have to control campus politics as rigorously as it did other areas of associational life. It failed to predict the reaction that its policy of introducing fees for accommodation and other living expenses would provoke. In the 1990 and then the 1991 round of KUSU elections, the 'National Democratic Forum', which combined SCP, Umma and DUP students, seized the union by exploiting the resentment caused by the withdrawal of free education.⁷⁹ The regime responded to the new union's anti-NIF policies by deploying security forces on campus and cancelling the 1992 student elections.⁸⁰ In 1993, the pro-NIF student group won by a narrow margin amidst claims of vote rigging and proceeded to dominate campus politics through the rest of the 1990s.⁸¹

Since the beginning of the new millennium, KUSU has been the only major civil society institution in which the anti-regime political forces have enjoyed a sustained period of hegemony. Between 2003 and 2008, an opposition alliance of Umma- and DUP-affiliated students, Ba'athists, Communists and Darfuris identifying with Abd al-Wahid Nur's SLM controlled KUSU, winning four elections.⁸² Given the relative integrity of KUSU elections – at least compared with elections at the national level – they are potentially more useful for gauging trends within Sudanese political life than regular polls. For instance, the election of KUSU's first female president during one of these elections indicates that Sudanese women are still capable of asserting themselves in the political arena in spite of the Islamist hegemony in the North.⁸³ As mentioned above, the *Ansar* youth's rejection of any compromise with the NCP has

been demonstrated through their refusal to ally with them in university elections. At the same time, the increasing competitiveness of Salafist student parties in KUSU elections indicates that they may soon – like their counterparts in the post-Arab Spring elections in Egypt – become major players in the political arena.⁸⁴

Since 2009, the NCP-affiliated student body, the 'National Forces', has regained control of KUSU on behalf of the regime – although, ironically, on the basis of just one completed election. Regulations stipulating that polls must witness a 50 per cent turnout to be valid have ensured that the 'National Forces' have maintained control over the union by default since this point. The result has been that the more politicized youth have resorted to direct action to pursue their goals. Many have joined independent youth movements such as *Girifina* or ChangeNow, or Islamist equivalents that have received less attention in the Western media.⁸⁵ These groups featured prominently during the 2012 and 2013 uprisings. At the same time, in spite of the NCP control over KUSU, the Khartoum University campus continued to act as a site of student protest during the civil unrest of 2012 and 2013 and was subjected to numerous closures and police invasions.⁸⁶ Pro-SRF students, now alienated from the official union, have also clashed with pro-NCP students and regime militias in recent times, culminating in the death of the Darfuri student Abu Bakr Moussa following another police raid on 12 March 2014.⁸⁷

Violent clashes between pro-NCP and pro-SRF students may herald a situation in which the conflict in the periphery will begin to dictate the nature of the conflict at the political centre. However, it is the very fear that this might occur that has given rise to trepidation amongst the political forces that have helped to guide previous *Intifadas*.

Centre and the periphery

The reason that conservatives within the riverain elite now fear attempting to recreate the experiences of 1964 and 1985 is not simply that they feel the failings of these uprisings will be repeated. Rather, their concern is that the balance between centre and periphery has changed to such an extent that if another *intifada* does break out, they will no longer be able to control the role that the marginalized peoples play in it. This, as seen above, is one of the reasons that De Waal believes Khartoum's urbanites may fear staging a third uprising. Jizouli Dafa'allah, a political moderate who was willing to side with the radicals in 1985, observed in 2012 that 'first the conditions for an *intifada* are not present as far as the unity of the opposition forces are concerned ... in addition to the fact that there are conflicts in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, and in these circumstances and with the proliferation of arms, and thus any attempt to engage in activity that uses violence could lead to the tearing apart and partition of Sudan'.⁸⁸ It is worth remembering that in 1985, the security agencies had tried to deter the riverain elites from mobilizing against the regime by inculcating the fear that the marginalized people present in Khartoum would provoke violence and anarchy. This strategy proved ineffective in 1985, but it might not now. De Waal has criticized the SRF for playing into the NCP regime's hands by demanding the dismantling of the Sudanese army as a condition of any political transition, thus giving the government 'an opportunity it has

used repeatedly and without hesitation invoking the spectre of armed opposition and promising that if the uprising were to succeed, Sudan might disintegrate or descend into sectarian conflict like Syria.⁸⁹

Former oppositionists now lament the dangers involved in provoking an uprising given that the capital is surrounded by armed gangs with no 'national feeling' (*huss watani*),⁹⁰ or rather, by armed former inhabitants of Sudan's rural peripheries unable to identify with the narrow definition of Sudanese nationalism provided by the riverain elite. As seen above, Sadiq al-Mahdi has begun to shy away from advocating regime change via popular uprising for fear of empowering rebel groups on the periphery.⁹¹ Al-Turabi, even though he openly calls for a third *Intifada*, admits 'Sudan is not a nation, there is a breakdown of authority in every tribe everywhere, centrifugal forces may develop ... here the people are well armed, the Nuba, in South Kordofan, they are in arms now, the Beja, Isaias [Afwerki, the President of Eritrea] now is allowing any Beja from eastern Sudan to be trained against the government.'⁹² Al-Turabi maintains that the regime should still be toppled through civil action, but 'then we have to watch out, control it soon enough, if you let it go on like Syria others may come in, and then Sudan, like Yugoslavia, will break up.'⁹³

The participation of the SRF in the signing of the New Dawn Charter highlights the challenges that the increasing empowerment of 'peripheral' political groups will pose to an effective transition in Sudan. In 1964 and 1985, the transitions failed to bring about comprehensive democracy because the centre was unable to engage rebel groups operating in the marginalized south. Today, the NDA and its successor the NCF have succeeded in bringing the rebel groups into political coalitions. The JEM, SLM and SPLM-N leaders all have signed the New Dawn Charter. However, the participation of political forces representing the marginalized people in any future interim government will make any regime change a much more severely contested affair. The 1964 and 1985 transitions represented shifts of power within the riverain elite – some government ministries were purged and former regime stalwarts imprisoned for relatively brief periods, but no fundamental change occurred in the regional structure of power. It seems unlikely that the SPLM-N and, particularly, the JEM and SLM will settle for as much should a regime change occur in 2014. The New Dawn Charter stipulates that it will be the task of the new government to 'engage in positive co-operation with the International Criminal Court and hand down those wanted criminals to be prosecuted.' It holds that those responsible for 'genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes' should be prosecuted in Sudan as well as internationally, whilst proposing that denial that Bashir's regime committed a genocide in Darfur should itself be regarded as a crime.⁹⁴ Whilst South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission is cited as a model, the Charter is also clear that any identification with this process should not mean 'exemption from punishment.'⁹⁵ These provisions give officers in NISS, PDF, SAF and other institutions, as well as civilians involved in the formulation of the 'Darfur policy', an extra incentive to hang on to power, and suggest that Sudan's third military regime may not unravel as smoothly or as bloodlessly as either of the previous two. Nevertheless, it is also the relationship between these various security units that will play a crucial role in determining the potential for political transition in Sudan.

Guarding June against October: The security forces and the Salvation Revolution

The architects of the Salvation Revolution had seen in 1964 and 1985 that the great irony of military coups in Sudan is that the military, or at least the regular military recruited on a professional basis, cannot be trusted to safeguard the regimes they usher in; neither can the regular police. Like Nimeiri's May Regime, the NIF and, later, the NCP were thus quick to establish bodies parallel to the regular security institutions, although they had learnt from the demise of the Sudan Security Organization in 1985 that they would have to tip the balance even further in favour of the politicized security units. In the early 1990s, Turabi spoke quite candidly of his intention to replace the army with the Popular Defence Forces (PDF), envisaged by the NIF as the Salvation's citizen army. The great irony of the PDF is that whilst they are often understood as an imposition of the NIF, they also represented its inheritance of the failed policies of the previous parliamentary regime, incorporating as they did the ethnic militias established by Sadiq al-Mahdi to wage war in south Sudan and the Nuba Mountains. Thus the establishment of the PDF exacerbated an already developing process of national fragmentation.

Meanwhile, the new regime tipped the military-intelligence service conflict that had been such a significant factor in 1985 decisively in favour of the intelligence services. Whilst purging the officer corps of the military, the regime radically expanded the intelligence services, staffing them with both re-hired SSO agents and NIF intelligence gurus, such as Salah Gosh and Nafie Ali Nafie. In spite of their historic links with the NIF, most of these lynchpins of the intelligence apparatus were willing to betray Hasan al-Turabi and side with al-Bashir in 1999, helping him to establish what Gallab terms his *verkhushka*, or 'pinnacle of power'.⁹⁶ Since this point, a bewildering array of parallel security institutions have proliferated. The Ja'ali section of the government has reportedly established a unit called the 'Precious Stones', drawn from the Ja'ali regions of the northern Nile, a further indication of the ethnicization of the government's security forces.⁹⁷ In 2011, al-Bashir declared the formation of a 'Strategic Unit', which combined the most dedicated members of the PDF, army, police, Popular Police, and youth militias that would defend Khartoum against a potential uprising.⁹⁸

His government has adopted a similar two-pronged strategy to marginalize the existing police force. First, it purged the upper echelons of the regular police force and replaced them with Islamists; second, it developed its own police apparatus in parallel to the regulars. The military junta that became known as the Revolutionary Command Council dismissed around 400 police officers in two purges in 1989, including the commissioner and all four of his deputies.⁹⁹ These actions occurred simultaneously with purges of the rest of the riverain professional elite, demonstrating that these police officers posed a similar threat to the incoming *putschists*. At the same time, the new government granted police powers to a series of parallel bodies, including the Popular Police (*al-shurta al-sha'abiyya*), who were in effect an extension of the NIF party apparatus and the new intelligence units.¹⁰⁰

In spite of the various purges to which the force was subjected, the police remained reluctant to serve as the political arm of the state. Two attempts by anti-regime protesters

in September 1995 and September 1996 to repeat the 1985 *Intifada* once more brought the conflict with the government to a head. Large sections of the force clearly resented being required to coerce the public on behalf of the government, particularly since they were called upon to do so in coordination with NIF militias and the Popular Police. During and after these events, the government launched two more purges of the police, the second coming in September 1996 after eighty officers went on strike complaining that they were being blamed by the public for killing protesters, and that they were being marginalized by the Popular Police.¹⁰¹ It is noteworthy, however, that immediately after the first purge, the government returned to service fourteen officers who had previously been dismissed, demonstrating that it had at least some level of reliance on these skilled professionals.¹⁰² Nevertheless, the state has slowly been able to manipulate legislation so as to increase its control over the police. In 2008, it revised the police law so as to empower NCP-affiliated state governors to nominate candidates for the position of police commandant, dismissing a series of officers who protested against these measures.¹⁰³ According to correspondence released by Wikileaks in 2011, the police now report not directly to the minister of interior but to the vice-president and senior Islamist party figure, Ali Uthman Taha, via a private firm called the Nasr company.¹⁰⁴

De Waal downplays the possibility that security forces might reprise the role that they played in the 1964 and 1985 uprisings. He argues that it is unlikely they will side against the regime because 'the most recent military promotions have brought a cadre of Islamist-orientated officers to the most senior ranks', and 'because the army is at war' with the SRF.¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, it was not the most senior ranks that drove the military participation in the 1964 and 1985 uprisings, but the middle and junior ranks. Furthermore, in 1985, an 'Islamist-orientated' general, Siwar al-Dahab, was pressured into action against the regime by the middle and junior ranks. Since, as De Waal himself acknowledges, the Islamic movement is divided, even if only a part of the Islamic movement sides with a potential uprising, it is possible that 'Islamist-orientated' generals might choose this faction. Islamists interviewed by the International Crisis Group suggested that Bashir lacks support among this particular cadre of officers.¹⁰⁶ One eventuality might be a replay of the scenario that occurred in 1985, in which the senior and middle-ranking military Islamists pressure the military command to remove al-Bashir, warning them that continuing to back a destabilizing regime might risk the SRF or the northern secularist parties gaining control of any future *Intifada*.

As for De Waal's observation that the army is at war, this was also the case in 1964 and 1985. However, the extension of the 'conflict in the periphery' since 1985 to Darfur, the Nuba Mountains and even Khartoum (briefly) in 2008 has made it seem a lot closer to home than the original wars in the south. Senior generals might be far less willing to run the risk of a repeat of the 1985 scenario, when their distraction in politics enabled John Garang to score a number of significant victories. At the same time, a number of senior generals are extremely anxious about the potential of what they see as an unjustified conflict in the Blue Nile, Nuba Mountains and Darfur regions to spread discontent in the rank and file, a considerable number of whom hail from these peripheral regions. It has been rumoured that several generals wrote to Bashir advising him to end the conflict in Kordofan and Blue Nile Province, and that Bashir

retired eighty officers as a result.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, regular police forces in the major riverain towns are continuing to rely on recruits from the marginalized peri-urban regions of Khartoum, and as the conflict in the peripheries intensifies, it will be interesting to observe what effect this has on the willingness of central police units to act as guardians of the regime.¹⁰⁸

However, we must consider not simply the question of whether the police and army would be willing in principle to back any potential *Intifada*, but also that of whether they are sufficiently well equipped to take on the regime's parallel security units. The latter remain under the control of Nafie Ali Nafie and intelligence chief Muhammad Atta Fadl al-Mula, both of whom remain very close to Bashir. Given the eagerness of potential post-*Intifada* governments to prosecute the perpetrators of the regime's various war crimes, it is likely that both NISS and the other parallel forces, which have been far more directly involved in the Darfur counter-insurgency than the regular army, will have a motive to fight to keep the current regime in place even if this involves open confrontation with the regular security forces. Moreover, the regime has deliberately kept the majority of SAF units deployed in Darfur and along the north-south border whilst using parallel forces or the 'precious stones' to patrol the capital, precisely because it recalls the role played by the army and the police in sheltering demonstrators in Khartoum from SSO violence in 1985.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

There is no denying the logic behind Alex de Waal's sceptical assessment of the potential for a 'third *Intifada*'. In spite of its internal factionalism and ideological malaise, the current regime has largely prevented the reappearance of the various factors that facilitated the first two uprisings. Before any coalition akin to the Professional Front or Union Alliance can be formed, professional activists will have to reclaim their various unions from the leaderships sponsored by the government, and amongst the most significant professional bodies, only the doctors have shown any signs of achieving this. In spite of their successes between 2003 and 2008, student oppositionists have also failed to reclaim KUSU from the regime. Without the ability to link up with the major student and professional bodies possessed by their predecessors, the National Consensus Forces are relatively toothless. Moreover, the balance of power between the security units sponsored by the regime and the regular military is now far more clearly tilted in favour of the former; with the vast majority of its units deployed well away from the capital, it is unlikely that the SAF will be able to simply swoop into intelligence headquarters and arrest its personnel, as it did in 1985. Any future *Intifada* is, therefore, unlikely to be as swift or as bloodless as the first two or even the Tunisian or Egyptian Revolutions – the regime's specialized security units killed over 200 protesters during the September 2013 uprising, and this did not come anywhere close to a repeat of the feats of 1964 and 1985. Moreover, the riverain urbanites who felt secure in backing the 1964 and 1985 uprisings may not be willing to chance such a prolonged period of urban struggle, fearing that this may empower armed groups operating within the urban peripheries which are linked to Sudan's various rebel factions.

There are, nevertheless, sufficient chinks in the regime's armour to make it unwise to rule out the possibility of a third uprising. De Waal's observation that any revolt is unlikely to succeed since – in contrast to those elsewhere during the Arab Spring – Sudan's Islamic Movement is not united against the government as its equivalents were in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya in 2011 requires qualification. After all, the Islamic Movement in 1985 was far less divided than it is at present, and it remained on the side of the government up until a month before its downfall. Moreover, it is important to observe that no one political party or movement has a monopoly on political Islam in Sudan – during the 1985 *Intifada* a number of the major figures within the National Alliance identified with Islamist political philosophies but not Turabism. Although none of the 'liberal Islamists' such as al-Nasri, al-Ati, Jizouli Dafa'allah or Siwar al-Dahab have identified openly with the NDA or its successors since 1989, it may be that a similar series of 'compromise figures' will emerge within a future interim government to make the transition acceptable to the Islamic Movement. Perhaps Youssef al-Koda of the al-Wasat Islamist party, which signed the New Dawn Charter in Kampala in 2013, could be one such figure.¹¹⁰ Moreover, none of the other countries that witnessed the 'Arab Spring' in 2011 possess a neo-revivalist movement carrying as much weight as the *Ansar*/Umma. Protests against the Salvation Regime have illustrated the continuing resonance of the Mahdist legacy. It may be that once Sadiq al-Mahdi's increasingly conservative, five-decade-long hegemony over the *Ansar*/Umma comes to an end, new leaderships will be much more willing to enter into confrontation with the regime.

Whilst the security forces facing today's oppositionists are far more entrenched than their predecessors in 1985, in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt protesters were able to successfully launch uprisings against the intelligence services of authoritarian systems in place for twice as long as the regime of al-Bashir. Whilst leading oppositionists do not control the major student and professional associations as they did in 1964 and 1985, these institutions were not as crucial to the 2011 Arab Spring as they have historically been to civil protest in Sudan. Although De Waal argues that today's internet activists and acephalous youth groups lack the organizational skills of bodies such as the National Alliance, these groups featured more prominently in the 2011 protests than any institution akin to the National Alliance. *Girifna* and similar organizations may replace the professionals' and students' unions as the natural allies of the opposition parties in any future *Intifada*. However, lacking the technocratic expertise and political maturity offered by the professionals in 1964 and 1985, and with a political charter that is relatively unclear on a number of issues relating to a future transition, today's oppositionists will likely find managing any change a chaotic affair.