

<b>Institution: DURHAM UNIVERSITY</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 30 (HISTORY)</b>
<b>Title of case study: Governance, elections and borders in north-east Africa (CS1)</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Through training courses, briefings and written reports, <b>Justin Willis</b> and <b>Chris Vaughan</b> have influenced policy-making and contributed to professional development in the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Department for International Development (DfID), and Ministry of Defence (MoD), as well as other governments. They have had similar impacts on NGOs and multilateral bodies, including the African Union and agencies of the United Nations. In so doing, they have contributed to innovation and entrepreneurial activity through the expansion of a non-governmental organisation, the Rift Valley Institute (RVI).</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Externally-funded interventions in north-east Africa, a region which has seen persistent conflict, have increasingly focused on improvements in governance as the key to achieving long-term regional stability and economic development. It is crucial that such interventions are underpinned by understanding of the complex histories of governance in the region, and the often uncomfortable interaction between the multiple forms of legitimacy, particularly at a local level, that have produced present-day structures and cultures of authority. Willis's research on Sudan and Kenya has consistently been concerned with the nature of authority at a local level, and the ways in which the ambitions of the colonial and post-colonial central state have become entangled with persistent local ideas about legitimacy and identity. More recently, Vaughan's work on Sudan has examined similar concerns through a study of the governance of territorial boundaries.</p> <p>Their work contributes to a key academic debate: how far have exogenous forms of governance and attempts to impose social and territorial boundaries transformed everyday life in Africa? One paradigm presents colonial rule as an absolute disjuncture, and has tended to emphasise its negative results on people who were subject to the schemes of empire. An alternative line of scholarship has seen much more continuity in notions of authority, space and identity, as a consequence of the profound weakness of the state and the resilience of local cultures. Willis's and Vaughan's work is part of a wider recent scholarship which refines this second paradigm. Arguing that distinctive technologies – military and bureaucratic – have given colonial and post-colonial states considerable destructive and creative potency, their work has nonetheless identified the importance of local agency and cultural affect in shaping the consequences of these new technologies in any particular society. In making this argument, Willis's and Vaughan's research has explored the ways in which practices and languages of power can be appropriated and reinterpreted locally, making the consequences of externally-conceived interventions unpredictable. Willis's work on the authority exercised by <i>sheikhs</i> in Kordofan, Sudan (2005, 2011), and on the shifting ideas of legitimacy and identity on the southern Kenya coast (2013a and 2013b), has identified significant shifts in ideas about identity, legitimacy and accountability which are directly linked to colonial and post-colonial rule. Vaughan's work on borders and boundaries in Sudan (2013) has argued for the importance of local agendas and ambitions in shaping the outcomes of colonial policies. This consistent emphasis on the local, and the importance of understanding the multiple forms of agency through which state projects are mediated, has been a key element of their engagement with research-users. The same concern with understanding local-level political processes and experience, and the effects of these on ideas of legitimate authority, has characterised Willis's work on elections (2010).</p> <p>Willis was employed as a lecturer in History at Durham in 2002; he became Reader in 2005 and Professor in 2009. Vaughan was a doctoral student at Durham from 2006 to 2010, and has been employed as a lecturer since September 2012.</p>
<p><b>3. References to the research</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Justin Willis (2005), 'Hukm: the creolization of authority in Condominium Sudan', <i>Journal of African History</i>, 46, pp. 29-50 (doi: <a href="https://doi.org/10.1017/S002185370400996X">10.1017/S002185370400996X</a>)</li> <li>Justin Willis and Atta el Battahani (2010), "'We changed the laws": electoral practice and malpractice in Sudan since 1953', <i>African Affairs</i>, 109, pp. 191-212 (doi: 10.1093/afraf/adq003)</li> <li>Justin Willis (2011), 'Tribal gatherings: colonial spectacle, native administration and local government in Condominium Sudan', <i>Past and Present</i>, 211, pp. 243-268</li> </ol>

## Impact case study (REF3b)

(doi: 10.1093/afraf/adq003)

4. Justin Willis and George Gona (2013), 'Tradition, tribe and state in Kenya: the Mijikenda Union, 1945-80', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 55, pp. 448-73  
(doi: [10.1017/S0010417513000091](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417513000091))
5. Justin Willis and George Gona (2013), 'Pwani C Kenya? Memory, documents and secessionist politics in coastal Kenya', *African Affairs*, 112, pp. 48-71  
(doi: 10.1093/afraf/ads064)
6. Chris Vaughan (2013), 'Violence and regulation in the Darfur-Chad borderland c. 1909-1956: policing a colonial boundary', *Journal of African History*, 54, pp.177-98  
(doi: [10.1017/S0021853713000285](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853713000285))

These items have all appeared in peer-reviewed journals of international standing.

This research has been made possible by a series of grants since 2001:

1. AHRB, 2001–4: standard grant to Willis as PI, £98,000, 'Shaykhs, chiefs and clerks: governance in Condominium Sudan'
2. AHRC, 2006–9, doctoral studentship (Vaughan)
3. Department for International Development, 2008–9, £78,000 (made to Rift Valley Institute, for project with Willis as PI): 'Learning from experience: elections in Sudan'
4. British Academy, 2010–11, £5,900: minor grant to Willis as PI, 'The Mijikenda Union: tradition, modernity and ethnicity in Kenyan politics, 1945–80'
5. Department for International Development and Africa Conflict Prevention Pool (an inter-agency UK government fund), 2012–13, £69,000, grant made to Gabrielle Lynch, Warwick University; Willis was one of two co-investigators

#### 4. Details of the impact

##### Contributing to innovation and entrepreneurial activity

The Rift Valley Institute (RVI) is a non-profit education, research, publishing and advocacy organisation. It operates in what is now Sudan and South Sudan (formerly the single Republic of Sudan), the Horn of Africa, East Africa, the Great Lakes and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, working with communities, institutions and individuals to bring local knowledge to bear on political and economic development (source 8). A recent review of *The Sudan Handbook* published by RVI noted that 'the Rift Valley Institute has had tremendous influence on academics, policy makers, activities and fieldworkers' (source 2). Willis was co-editor of, and a contributor to, the *Handbook*, which was published in 2010 with the specific aim of providing relevant and practical research-based knowledge to those involved in development work, or political interventions, or humanitarian work, in Sudan; the *Handbook* was a *Choice* Outstanding Academic Title for 2011. On the basis of his research expertise, Willis has been a fellow of the Institute since 2004, a director since 2009 and a trustee/director (one of five) since 2010, when RVI became a UK charity. Drawing on his research-based knowledge of the region and in particular his understanding of local dynamics of authority, Willis has been closely involved in developing RVI's programme of activities. The trustees take an active role in guiding the development of RVI; Willis has an additional role as the chief advisor on RVI research projects in Eastern and Central Africa – the 'impressive body of work and projects of the Rift Valley Institute', as another reviewer called them (source 2) – including the Usalama project, a series of studies of armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Nairobi Forum, a regional programme that brings together policy-makers, researchers and representatives of communities affected by development interventions (source 6). Willis has helped to devise these projects and to write the core documents which have secured funding for them, and he continues to advise on the activities undertaken as part of these projects. RVI turned over more than £1m in 2012–13 (more than double the 2009 turnover), and currently employs sixteen people in the UK and Africa.

##### Professional development

The Sudan Course (now called the Sudan and South Sudan Course), run by RVI, is an intensive one-week training course designed for aid workers, peacekeepers, researchers, business executives and diplomats – those living and working in the countries of the region and those about to start. It is taught by teams of leading international and regionally-based experts and activists.

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The Course first ran on an experimental basis in 2004, when Willis designed part of the teaching programme. Since 2005 the Course has been an annual event. In the current REF period, Willis was Director of Studies for the Course in 2008, 2012 and 2013; in 2009, 2010 and 2011 he served as advisor to the directors of studies. Vaughan taught on the Course in 2013. In 2008, Willis helped to design and secure funding for the RVI Horn of Africa Course, modelled on the Sudan Course. This covers Ethiopia, Eritrea and the Somali territories, as well as neighbouring regions, and Willis taught on this Course in 2010; in 2010 RVI introduced a Great Lakes Course, covering DRC, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, and Willis provided advice on the development of the programme.

In the current REF period, 250 participants have attended the Sudan Course, the current cost of which is 4,000 euros. They have included a number of ambassadors (UK, Norwegian, Australian, Swiss and Dutch) and heads of UN missions and country representatives of UN agencies. The Head of the FCO South Sudan team wrote of the course: 'The combination of teaching excellence, subject knowledge and likeability of all the staff made for a fantastic experience' (source 7). A defence analyst for the Canadian armed forces commented that '[t]he discussions of culture, politics, economics and oil from the Rift Valley Institute course had a profound influence on my perception of present conditions in the Sudans and my assessment of their future trajectory... the background and analysis provided in the course have increased my capability to report on these issues' (source 3).

In November 2012, Willis also designed and ran a short course for the new UNICEF representative to Khartoum; and Willis and Vaughan were given funding by the FCO to organise a colloquium at Durham in January 2013 on new research on South Sudan, which was attended by twelve members of staff from the FCO, DfID and the MoD. Those attending included the Head of the Sudan Unit at the UK government, who subsequently wrote that this 'added valuable historical perspectives on some of the real-life problems that we are grappling with, which helped to illuminate some of the policy choices' (source 9).

Providing expert advice(a) Sudan's borders

In 2012 Vaughan was invited to Addis Ababa to brief the African Union Team of Experts, which is tasked with advising on the settlement of the border dispute between Sudan and South Sudan (source 1).

(b) Briefings for diplomatic staff

Since 2002, Willis has been involved in briefing FCO staff taking up posts in eastern Africa, as well as periodic meetings to discuss particular issues. He has briefed a new High Commissioner to Nairobi (in London and again in Nairobi in 2012), a new Ambassador to South Sudan (2013) and a new political officer for the Nairobi High Commission (2011). He has offered briefings in London and Nairobi on specific issues (the Sudan border conflict in 2012; coastal secessionism in Kenya in 2012) (source 10).

(c) Electoral support work

In 2008 RVI designed and implemented a research project, funded by DfID, on electoral history in Sudan. This informed the support being given by the international community – which ranged from technical advice, to logistical support, to the provision of voter education material – for the elections in Sudan, eventually held in 2010. Willis was PI on the project, and the project findings were presented in the report 'Elections in Sudan: learning from experience'. This report was launched in a series of meetings in Khartoum, Juba and London in 2009 with bilateral and multilateral donors involved in electoral support. It was subsequently translated into Arabic and widely disseminated on the web (see for example at: <http://southsudannngoforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Security/Elections%20in%20Sudan%20-%20Learning%20from%20Experience%20-%202009.pdf> and [https://groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/sudanese\\_list/0Ure8Baj1xY](https://groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/sudanese_list/0Ure8Baj1xY)). Willis was interviewed by the BBC World Service, France 24, Sky Radio and by National Public Radio.

In 2012 Willis, with two colleagues from Oxford and Warwick, received funds from the Africa Conflict Prevention Pool (ACPP), a multi-partner agency of the UK government which brings together FCO, DfID and MoD, for a project on 'Long-term election monitoring and early warning in

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Kenya'. This built on their existing research knowledge and provided expert advice to the UK and partner governments in preparing for, and offering support to, the 2013 Kenya elections. The project produced a series of briefing papers (three before the election, two after) which have been circulated in the UK government and to US and EU partner governments. With his two colleagues, Willis has also briefed UK government staff in London and Nairobi (three briefings in London; three in Nairobi); on one occasion the audience included a wider group including staff from the AU, and the US and other EU governments (source 5). One diplomat wrote of this event: 'We were very inspired by the presentations you... gave... concerning politics, risks and potential hotspots on the upcoming Kenyan elections. These presentations and the short discussions after gave us a great deal of information and better understanding of the dilemmas and many different elements influencing current affairs in Kenya.' The same diplomat wrote that 'we receive your reports via the FCO as well. We are very grateful that your reports are being shared with us' (source 4). Willis briefed Netherlands Foreign Ministry staff (including the head of the Africa section at the Netherlands Foreign Ministry) and presented a talk on the election to a larger group of thirty staff from the Foreign Ministry. He also took part in a panel discussion at Chatham House (transcript and recordings at <http://www.chathamhouse.org/events/view/188705> ) and contributed a blog piece to the *African Arguments* series (<http://africanarguments.org/2013/04/04/what-can-the-kenyan-coast-tell-us-about-the-2013-elections-%E2%80%93-by-justin-willis/>).

With the support of the ACP, Willis and his fellow researchers have made a successful application to the ESRC for a grant under the Knowledge Exchange programme, which will run from 2013 to 2014. This grant will support follow-up research to evaluate the effectiveness of the electoral support work undertaken in Kenya and to monitor progress on implementation of the new constitution; the programme of research has been devised in co-operation with ACP.

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

1. Email from AU Border Team
2. Reviews of the *Sudan Handbook* in *African Affairs* (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/afraf/ads021>) and the Harvard Lawfare blog (<http://www.lawfareblog.com/2012/04/the-sudan-handbook/>)
3. Email from the Sudan Analyst at the Directorate General for Intelligence Production (DGIP) within the Chief of Defence Intelligence (CDI) at National Defence (Canada)
4. Email from Policy Officer at the Netherlands Foreign Ministry
5. Agenda for FCO roundtable with US and European partners
6. Email from Executive Chair, Rift Valley Institute
7. Testimonials from former Sudan Course 'students'
8. RVI website: <http://www.riftvalley.net/>
9. Email from the Head of the Foreign Office/DfID Sudan Unit
10. Agendas for FCO briefings, 2012 and 2013