

**Oystein H. Rolandsen, Guerrilla Government: Political Changes in the Southern Sudan during the 1990s, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, UPPSALA, 2005, pp. 201.  
ISBN 91 7106 537 7**

Southern Sudan has been embroiled in conflict situations for quite a long time. Thus the book is well intentioned as it attempts to unravel the complexities surrounding the politics of guerrilla government in the face of carrying out transformation to peace from decades of civil war and struggles.

Chapter one which marks as an introduction provided the major objective of the text which 'is an analysis of continuity and change in Southern Sudanese politics with particular reference to the 1994 National Convention of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A),p.13. An account of the historical background to politics and war in Sudan from the pre-colonial period, colonial period to post independence era ending 1991 was alluded to of importance the author espoused that 'Sudan is a colonial construct...there is little binding the country together but the shared history of colonial rule'.p.22. The early of the civil war were analysed and the events leading to the 1991 split were highlighted. Important to note as the author noted is that 'two contradictory themes of the southern Sudan history – continuity and instability – are important in the analysis of political changes during the 1990s.'p.32.

Chapter two dealt with split that emerged in 1991 citing the factors that played a role in enabling the split as well as the explaining the dimension the split took. The author went on to explain how the split affected peace negotiations and foreign humanitarian organizations. An analysis of how aid became part and parcel of politics and war in Southern Sudan was provided.

Chapter three examines the politics of reforms and creation of new local institutions and these were intrinsically linked to political development in areas controlled by SPLM/A. The process leading to holding of the convention was traced and explanation of successes and shortcomings of the preceding meetings were given. The author analysed various interpretation to local Administration in SPLM/A areas to which the author noted 'until more research is done on representative localities, and until former CMAs are interviewed systematically, definite conclusion about the nature of SPLM/A's local administration in the period prior to the National convention cannot be reached'.p.70. A great detail was provided of the role of local institutions from 1991 to 1994 was given.

Chapter four is set forth to analyse the SPLM/A's National Convention. The author provided the defining parameters for its conception, preparation and its eventual holding. Of importance in this chapter is the provision in greater detail of issues that were involved –various meetings, agenda drafting, delegates' selection, voting and elections. An analysis of the outcomes of the convention was analysed. Whether the convention was a success or a failure largely depends on 'ultimately in its aftermath, in the extent to which actual changes can be attributed to the event'.p.123.

Chapter five examined the challenges and obstacles that came in the aftermath of the National Convention and various dimensions they took i.e local, national and international. Attempts that were made in trying to overcome the constraints were alluded to. In essence the author highlighted that, ‘there has been uneven development of political structures in southern Sudan since the 1994 National Convention’.p.166.

Chapter six is the conclusion to the text provided an overview of the issues that the previous chapter looked at. In essence the author concluded that ‘positive developments both politically and on the battlefield during the second half of the 1990s were largely owed to NIF regime’s increasing national and international isolation, and to increased aid to the SPLM/A from neighboring countries’.p.178.

In conclusion the book did manage to accomplish its objective and is highly recommended to those who want to comprehend African politics in general and specifically readers in civil war and resolution of conflicts within the African context.

**Reviewed by**

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