

## Freedom Fight or Substitute politics? The Birth of 'South Sudan'

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- The Sudan People's Liberation Army/ Movement (SPLA/M) has been the most visible, biggest and possibly most successful secession movement in Africa in the last few decades, even though it did not necessarily set out to be a secessionist movement. Following a bloody war of two decades, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed between the mainly southern SPLM and the northern Government of Sudan, granting the South semi-autonomy with the right to hold a referendum after six years to decide over Sudanese unity or southern independence. An incredibly complex interim period—inclusive of milestones such as a census and elections—ensued and is due to end in 2011 with the referendum.
- This paper argues that while the SPLA and its political wing, the SPLM, firmly kept their sight on reaching the referendum to decide on secession, the focus on secession has largely de-politicized the process and as well as the new nation South Sudan. Instead of following the path of the liberation movement, the SPLM-based Government of southern Sudan has systematically used the concepts of secession and liberation struggle to establish a firmly controlled military dictatorship, which does not allow political debate or pluralism. Rather than granting its citizens the political voice the CPA implied, the focus on secessionism has silenced citizen's participation in the future of southern Sudan. Political development has essentially been substituted by the single issue focus on secessionism.

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