

Book Review

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Title: South Sudan: The National Security Interest and Economic Bottlenecks

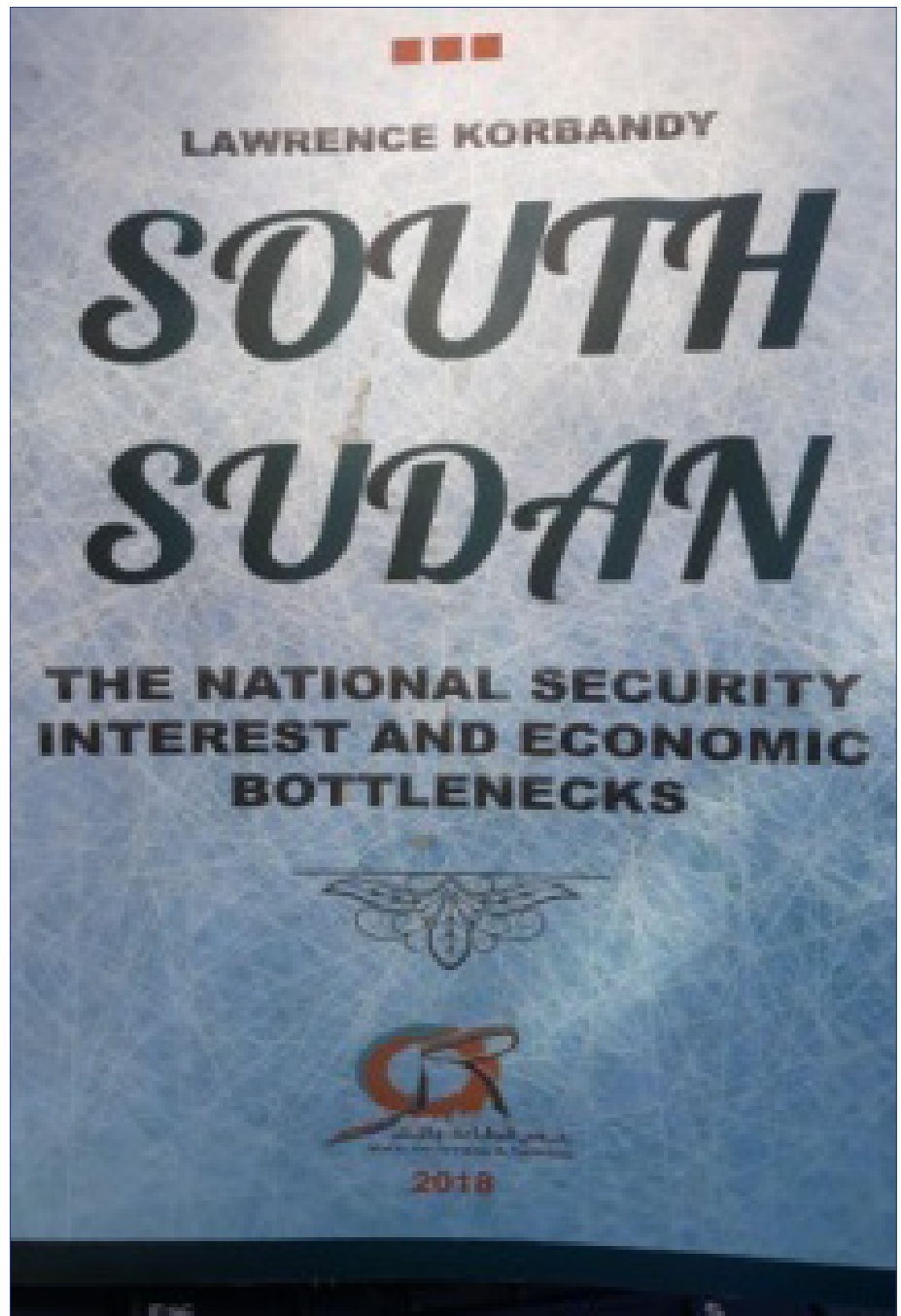
Author: Lawrence Korbandy

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South Sudan

The National Security Interest and Economic Bottlenecks

Author: Lawrence Korbandy

Book Review



By Ambassador Moses M. Akol

Although a book cannot and should not be judged by its the cover or size, cover of Lawrence Korbandy's latest book is absolutely irresistibly inspiring. The exotic font (Brush Script MT) in which the title of the book is written blends artistically with the bleached-blue background to produce an elegant cover that grabs one's attention. From its cover, the book exudes the kind of dignity and gravitas exhibited by professional economic foreign policy publications that grace the shelves of major public libraries. Surely, the content of South Sudan: The National Security Interest and Economic Bottlenecks does not disappoint!

Although it consists of only 118 pages, the book, which the author humbly refers to as a booklet, is not only an important catalogue of significant political events that rocked the country in 2013 and 2016, but it also offers valuable pieces of advice on ways out of the political quagmire and fatal economic bottlenecks. Luckily enough, the author does not seem to be afflicted with the debilitating malady that causes many South Sudanese writers to engage in unnecessary verbal gymnastics that only bore readers with poor renditions of history and myths. Mr. Korbandy summons historical anecdotes only sparingly enough to elucidate a point or to provide an enlightening context. Consequently, the book begins with the political events of 15th December 2013, thus sparing the reader the gory details of the sagacious, legendry 'fistfights' in which leaders engaged during the long years of the liberation struggle. By so doing, the author has succeeded in producing a book that speaks to contemporary issues that portend enormous implication to the future of South Sudan, its people, and its neighbors in the region.

It is fitting that in reviewing this book, one must also endeavor to employ the appropriate words, just as the author has done in the book, to avoid any shadow of misrepresentation of the intended ideas. In that same vein, it is important to note emphatically that this book is a critique—not a criticism—of the totality of the political and economic events that led to the choking bottlenecks that have both impacted negatively on the wellbeing of the citizens and which might have also jeopardized some of the country's national security interests. Therefore, this critique, not to be associated with its other close cousin (criticism), aims to interrogate the facts thoroughly with a view of finding appropriate and durable solutions to the root causes of the problems. Hence, the historicity and accuracy of the events contained in the book, including the genesis of the senseless five-year long civil war that has laid the economy to waste and eroded the country's ability to safeguard its national security interest are incontrovertible. Therefore, South Sudan: The National Security Interest and Economic bottlenecks, is a critical critique that merits close attention.

The book argues convincingly that the militarization of political conflicts in 2013 and 2016 is traceable chiefly to the blur lines between the ruling political party and the country's army, South Sudan Defense Force. hence, to guard against future involvement of the national army in political feuds that play havoc with the lives and livelihood of millions of South Sudanese citizens, Korbandy puts forward bold political solutions which will no doubt ruffle the feathers of a few of his diehard comrades who will most likely consider the author's solutions as bordering on political heresy. Moreover, the author also hovers perilously close to the highly charged political 'third rail' when he mentions the high-voltage word 'technocrats,' albeit in connection to the proposed positions of five vice presidents during the interim period.

South Sudan: The National Security Interest and Economic bottlenecks is valuable

because it identifies major bottlenecks and prescribes many valuable solutions to conundrums associated with the economy and national security interest. The book offers an economic model for South Sudan. Of greatest interest, however, is the author's timely broach of two subjects that have drawn great public attention in many circles in south Sudan in recent times; namely national security interests and the country's foreign policy. The former has been a subject of mistaken identity in many developing countries for decades where it has been confused with the colonial concept of the security of the government from the 'subversive' activities of national liberation movements yearning to liberate the people from the yoke of foreign domination. conversely, national security is a highly illusive concept that includes a wide range of interests which a sovereign state deems existential for the protection of its sovereignty and the perpetuation of the welfare of its citizens mostly through peaceful means or the use of military force or a through a combination of the two means. Hence, with the exception of imperative of protecting the state's sovereignty and territorial integrity along with safeguarding the welfare of the citizens, which the state must protect at any cost, other vital interests that fall under the elastic rubric of national security interests consist of moving targets which each sovereign state determines independently. National security interest is, therefore, whatever interest each sovereign state designates as vital to its sovereignty and that of its citizenry. Foreign policy is the vehicle by which the state pursues its national security interests. Therefore, while a state may declare its foreign policy toward a certain state or a group of states, it cites the protection of its national security interests as the reason for not disclosing subtle national security interests.

Although there is no known prescription for protecting national security interests, states fare better when they develop a realistic military strategy to lend impetus to their elaborate strategy for the peaceful resolution of challenges to national security interests. War, the last act of a failed diplomacy, should not be entered into without the assurance of a decisive military victory. Furthermore, the only thing worse than war is an asymmetric warfare which is capable of inflicting serious damage to a state's ability to achieve its national interests even after the army has achieved a decisive military victory in the battlefield.

South Sudan: The National Security Interest and Economic bottlenecks, is must-read book, especially for politicians, army generals, students, and all persons who follow the fluid political scene in South Sudan. Some of the author's tangential assertions and aspersions, including the depiction of some armed South Sudanese opposition groups and the comparison with Mozambique's RENAMO, can be safely dismissed as nontoxic residue of a moribund ideology that has outlived its usefulness. They should not in any way diminish the value of this important and timely book.



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