

South Sudan Constitutional Development: Go Slow to Go Fast

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Abstract:

This presentation proposes a pragmatic approach to constitutional reform designed to foster long-term stability, economic growth, and federalism in South Sudan. Rather than pursuing a non-realistic idealized, sweeping overhaul of governance, this strategy advocates for an incremental, adaptive framework that acknowledges current political and cultural realities while laying the foundation for future prosperity all the while instilling the fundamental aspects of a federalism-based democracy.

Drawing on the evolution of the U.S. Constitution and military Special Forces doctrine, the principle of "Go Slow to Go Fast" serves as the central theme for incremental constitutionalism. Specifically, we propose that government leaders begin with what is politically and culturally feasible, and then strengthen institutions over time through targeted amendments and gradual decentralization. Neither the U.S. Government, NGOs, nor the United Nations have ever suggested such an approach and instead idealistically propose philosophical and ethical perfection from the onset. This past approach has, without exception failed.

A core component of this novel approach is the division of resource governance whereby the central government retains control of oil and mineral revenues—finite resources vital to immediate fiscal stability—while state governments are empowered to manage and collateralize land and livestock, South Sudan's "infinite resources." This strategy positions the States as catalysts for foreign investment in agriculture and cattle, two vastly underutilized sectors. Empowering the States to attract sustainable investment and manage resources independently promotes fiscal federalism, reduces the GDP's over-reliance upon oil, and builds the institutional groundwork for a more resilient and representative constitution.