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PRIO PAPERS

From Guerrilla Movement to Political Party

The Restructuring of Sudan People's Liberation Movement

Øystein H. Rolandsen

ISBN 978-82-7288-241-8 • 2007

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The Restructuring of Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Three Southern States

Øystein H. Rolandsen

*Centre for the Study of Civil War/International Peace Research Institute, Oslo
(CSCW/PRIO)*

Oslo, July 2007

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ISBN 978-82-7288-241-8

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CANS	Civil Authority of New Sudan
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
EEQ	Eastern Equatoria
GONU	Government of National Unity
GOSS	Government of Southern Sudan
IDP	Internally Displaced People
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IRI	International Republican Institute
NBEG	Northern Bahr el-Ghazal
NCP	National Congress Party
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NDI	National Democratic Institute
PA	Payam Administrator
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement

1. Introduction

In the period January - April 2007 a short survey of SPLM structures, capacity and processes of decision making was conducted in three out of ten states in South Sudan: Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Eastern Equatoria and Jonglei.¹ These states were selected because of their heterogeneity in terms of political, geographical and ethnical background, but they may not be regarded as fully representative of all states in the Southern Sudan.² The study is based on a combination of extensive interviews in the field and the study of key SPLM documents.

2. Background

2.1 SPLM's Political History

Since 1983 SPLM has officially been the overall political body for the rebellion in the Southern Sudan. Formally, Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) has been its military wing, but in reality SPLA has been the dominant part. The leading figures in SPLM were also the leading commanders of SPLA. During the first decade of the war the SPLM as a political movement was most visible within the National Democratic Alliance³ and in the Diaspora as national chapters in a number of countries worldwide. This changed in the mid-1990s when SPLM emerged as a more independent entity both in terms of representing the Southern rebellion, but also as the civil authority in the areas occupied by SPLA.⁴ This change was initiated through the National Convention in Chukudum in 1994 and followed up by a series of more specialised conferences in 1995 and 1996.⁵

However, the reforms of the mid-1990s were partly reversed in 2000 when SPLM/A leadership realised that the Movement at that time could not afford the economical costs and political consequences of the reforms. Civilian structures, often referred to as Civilian Authority of New Sudan (CANS), already partly established at the lower levels of government (county, payam and boma) were maintained but with extremely limited capacity.

¹ The Norwegian People's Aid's South Sudan Programme staff has been very helpful in facilitating the fieldwork for this project and in providing documents and insights. I would like to give a special thanks to my research assistants in the three states surveyed.

² The cases should be seen as examples of Southern states, and they should not be considered as representative of the three regions of the Southern Sudan.

³ NDA is a coalition of oppositional groups from both the North and the South. Its importance waned as the bilateral negotiations between SPLM/A and NCP gained momentum.

⁴ For more details on SPLM in this period: Øystein H. Rolandsen, *Guerrilla Government: Political Changes in the Southern Sudan during the 1990s* (Uppsala, 2005).

⁵ Among others, conferences for Civil Society and Senior Officers of the SPLA.

The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) 9 January 2005 and the establishment of the Government of South Sudan (GOSS) demands that SPLM must go through another phase of change. SPLM has to change its current configuration as an all-compassing political movement and become a political party competing with other parties for the attention and support of the electorate. In doing this the Movement faces two major challenges. Firstly, to change its hierarchical guerrilla structures and move towards a civilian and democratic organisation. Secondly, it is necessary to make a clear distinction between government and party. A party structure was formally established 9 July 2005 together with the inauguration of the Government of South Sudan, but in reality this is a more difficult and long-lasting process. This task is made more challenging by the predominance of one-party politics in the Sudan since independence and a tendency of merging government administration and political party under the notion of a “ruling party”.⁶

In February 2006 the first steps towards establishing SPLM as a proper political party was announced. Interim Party bodies were introduced at the national, Southern Sudan level and at state level. In January 2007 a large meeting for the SPLM Southern Sector was held in Juba where Salva Kiir announced the year of SPLM and launched a campaign for organising party congresses at grassroots’ level and for recruitment of members. In February 2007 a SPLM leadership meeting was held in Yei where resolutions on crucial policy issues were adopted and SPLM’s commitment to unity of the Sudan and the New Sudan policy of John Garang was confirmed.⁷ However, the first major test of SPLM’s ability to transform into a political party and open the field for multi-party elections will be the national elections which probably will take place in 2009.

The transition into a political party comes within a difficult national context: There is a growing political distance between SPLM and National Congress Party (NCP).⁸ The war in Darfur and NCP’s lack of co-operation with the international community drains government budgets; causes international isolation; and, obstructs the international contribution to the reconstruction of the South.

2.2 Brief Description of the Three States Included in the Survey

Eastern Equatoria

Eastern Equatoria (EEQ) is situated at the South-East corner of the Sudan and its population is divided into several ethnic groups where the Latouka is the largest one. The tribes of EEQ rely on a combination of agriculture and livestock herding. The state

⁶ Cf. National Congress Party and President Nimeri’s Sudan Socialist Union of the 1970s and early 1980s.

⁷ SPLM Interim National Council, ‘Communiqué’, Yei, 12 February 2007.

⁸ Alex de Waal, ‘The Wars of Sudan’, *The Nation*, 19 March 2007.

capital, Torit, is perhaps best known for being the site of the Torit Mutiny in 1955, which was an important pretext to the first civil war in the Southern Sudan (ca. 1963-72).⁹ EEQ was heavily affected by the last civil war. Initially the local population of EEQ was not involved in the rebellion against central state in Khartoum and SPLA's relationship with the local population was somewhat strained. This was partly due to a rather militaristic rule in the areas SPLM/A took control over in the 1980s. Later the Eastern Equatorians' support for SPLM/A grew and a common purpose in defeating the "Arabs" of the North united them. The local political elite has still remained somewhat wary of what they perceive as a Dinka dominated SPLM and it is fair to say that their highest political priority remains local autonomy from Khartoum as well as Juba.

Northern Bahr el-Ghazal

Aweil is the main town and state capital of Northern Bahr el Ghazal (NBG). The majority of the population belongs to the Dinka tribe while a minority belongs to smaller tribes, commonly referred to as Jur, mainly living in the Western part of the state. Situated at the border to Northern Sudan and being both on a major north-south road to Bahr el-Ghazal and the railway line to Wau, Aweil has been strongly influenced by Northern culture and economy. The Northern influence is compounded by the fact that albeit besieged and shelled, Aweil was one of the few towns that was never captured by the SPLA during the civil war. The Government of Sudan used Aweil as a base of operation for both the regular army and the Arab *Murahalin* militia. Despite an oppressive military rule during the civil war, NCP still wield influence in Aweil town and the Southern opposition parties appear to have a stronger foundation here than in Torit/EEQ and Bor/Jonglei. The countryside has been mostly controlled by SPLM/A and the population remains strongly supportive of the Movement.

Jonglei

Jonglei state is a part of Greater Upper Nile Region and Bor is the state capital. The majority of the population belong to the Dinka tribe, but also many from the Nuer, Anuak and Murle tribes live within the state borders. Greater Upper Nile has been and continues to be the less economically and politically developed region in the South. The Greater Bor area (South Bor County, Twic East County and Duk County) has been the heartland of SPLM/A since its inception. The mutiny in Bor 16 May 1983 is regarded as the onset of the second civil war in the Southern Sudan and the participants of this mutiny have constituted an important part of SPLA core members. Still, Bor Town was held by the government during most of the civil war (except for 1989-92). The area was heavily

⁹ EEQ is also well-known by many Norwegians as the site of NCA's extensive integrated rural development programme of the 1970s and 80s (see Rolandsen, 2000).

affected by internal divisions within SPLM/A during the 1990s, and the 1991 Bor Massacre is widely known as one of the most massive attacks on civilians during the civil war. NPA conducts a sizable relief, livestock and agricultural development operation in the Northern part of the state.

3. SPLM and Local Politics in the Southern Sudan

This section discusses how SPLM is changing from liberation movement to political party at the state and local levels. It also provides a general overview of relevant political settings, administrative structures and the social and cultural contexts within which this transformation takes place. It is important to bear in mind that in accordance with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement SPLM is controlling the Government of the Southern Sudan and in each state, and they have a majority in all Southern parliaments. Other parties, including the National Congress Party, constitute the opposition. One must also be aware of the fact that not only SPLM but the Southern Sudan as such is going through a phase of rapid transition and the following analysis provides basically a “snap-shot” of an ongoing processes.

3.1 Current SPLM structures in the selected states

The formal SPLM party structure follows the government levels (state; county; payam; and, boma). According to the ‘SPLM Interim Basic Rules and Regulations’, the Congress is the highest “organ” at each level followed by an Interim Council and an Interim Secretariat.¹⁰ The investigation revealed that there is also a SPLM Chairman at each level, which is not mentioned in the document. It appears that the chairmanship is given to the one holding the highest political office at each government level.¹¹ The introduction of the party structures at the state level and at the local levels are generally at an early stage and the role of the SPLM Chairman will assumedly be addressed in a final version of the SPLM Basic Rules and Regulations which will be adopted at the planned National Convention November 2007.

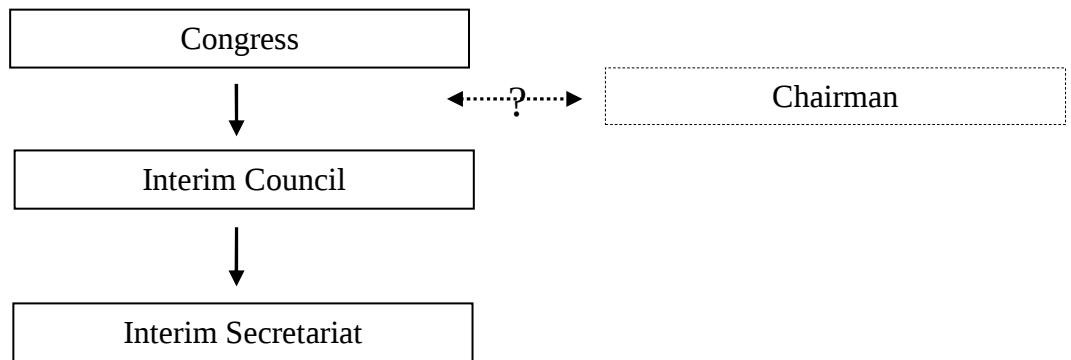
The SPLM interim State Council members have different areas of responsibility (e.g. policy, administration, information and culture). Policies and activities involving women and youth fall under the council member dealing with “Syndicated organizations”, which should also include groups like farmers and students.¹²

¹⁰ SPLM Interim Basic Rules and Regulations, April 2006, p. 11.

¹¹ I. e. President of South Sudan, State Governor, County Commissioner, Payam Administrator and Boma Administrator

¹² This structure is similar to the one at the Southern Sector/Southern Sudan level, cf. SPLM Interim Basic Rules and Regulations, *passim*.

This is a graphic representation of the SPLM structures which is reproduced at each level:



The SPLM party office at state level was quite recently established in the three states investigated. It was the EEQ office that appears to be the first established and the physical structure was in use already in January 2006. Also the SPLM office in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal was established in 2006, while the one in Jonglei was officially opened in February 2007 (although the office had been operational for about a year before that).¹³

Considering the post-conflict environment and the general lack of physical infrastructure and transportation, the SPLM state secretariats visited were reasonably well-equipped. It appeared that a minimum of necessary physical input was present: All offices had a reasonably good building, several persons employed in the secretariat, several vehicles at their disposal, satellite broadband connection, several computers and Thurayas (hand held satellite telephones). Jonglei was clearly the largest office with 11 cars (9 functioning at the time of investigation) and they were in the process of establishing an IT-training centre which also included an internet cafe. There was a strong demand for training in all aspects related to the nature of political campaigning and the establishment of a political party within a democratic multi-party system.

SPLM party structures at the local levels are, at the moment, weak and in many cases non-existing. They are clearly seen as a future instrument for the central level to channel SPLM policies and to organise people and syndicated organisations. For the time being it appears that the local levels will not be involvement in policy development but this may change if the party structure becomes more entrenched at the grassroots' level following the membership campaigns and the local congresses. In NBEG the process of appointing SPLM county secretaries did not start until February 2007. In Jonglei and EEQ it seems that most of them had been appointed but few at the time of the investigation had started working at full capacity. It is however worthwhile mentioning that in

¹³ 'SPLM Secretariat opens in Jonglei State', in *Juba Post*, 2007, Vol. 3, Issue 8, p. 9. The article also mentions that "committees of SPLM youth and women have already been formed to conduct elections at the lower levels". Unfortunately, neither the women leader nor the youth leader were available for interviews during the period of investigation in Bor town.

areas (mainly rural) held by SPLM/A for a longer period, war-time CANS structures¹⁴ are present to various degrees. Within these structures there were no distinction between SPLM and the administrative structures. Youth and women organisations, to the extent they existed, were also a part of the government. Therefore, when establishing SPLM party and government structures at the local levels the SPLM leaders will probably attempt to redefine already existing channels of popular participation into local party organization. However, how often this will be relevant is difficult to say and it is mostly local women organisations that are available for “re-naming”.

The future presence of other parties in these areas will be important when deciding whether the establishment of a party structure will merely be cosmetic or if this will open up for multi-party politics in the countryside. To what extent it will be feasible in the near future for other Southern parties or NCP to establish local structures outside the towns is still an open question. At least for the up-coming election it is difficult to imagine that other parties than SPLM/A should be able to gain any significant influence in the countryside.

3.2 Power structures and processes of decision making within the selected states

The national interim constitution and the CPA emphasises local democracy and devolution of power.¹⁵ This is obviously a sound policy for a region such as the Southern Sudan. Local autonomy will help to ease existing and possible future tensions between local groups and the GOSS/GONU. It should also make it possible to craft policies to fit – in the case of the Southern Sudan – extremely varied local contexts. The most profiled result of this policy is the strengthening of the state level at the expense of the central state, but there has also been a rapid expansion of administrations at all the local levels (county, payam and boma) as a result of division of existing units.

Probably beneficial in the long run, the reforms still put considerable strain on the current government apparatus in terms of increased need for manpower to fill new positions and to finance the expansion. At the same time the range of services supposed to be provided by the state is also increasing dramatically. The result is a situation of fluidity and uncertainty. There is confusion, and even conflict, over which level and office which is responsible for even the most essential tasks such as tax collection.

Institutions of popular representation at the state level and below are barely established and have a very limited opportunity to pass legislations, policy documents or control the executives and their administrations. This is not only due to lack of co-operation from the latter, but also due to the lack of state MPs with the necessary qualifications (e.g. functional literacy) to participate meaningfully in modern politics.

¹⁴ See p.2.

¹⁵ *The Interim National Constitution of the Republic of the Sudan, 2005*, pp. 10-1.

Many recognise the damaging influence of the old Sudan administration,¹⁶ but there seems not to be enough resources allocated for reforming the system and there are strong forces trying to maintain business as usual.

State Level

Formally, the state level is based on a three tier system of government with checks and balances between the executive, the legislative and the judiciary. However, the executive is clearly the strongest civilian political institution within each state, and the governor is the most powerful person/office. The governor is appointed by the president of Southern Sudan and is the head of the state. In accordance with the *Interim National Constitution* each state is supposed to have a state constitution; a state court; and, a state parliament.¹⁷ Every state in the Southern Sudan managed to form a parliament during 2006¹⁸ and these parliaments have used most of their time to draft a constitution and decide on regulations for the conduct of the parliamentary affairs. The establishment of state courts is lagging behind, but it seems that these may be starting up during 2007.

Seen from a formal point of view the state is a fairly new level of government in the Southern Sudan and it is to be expected that it will take time before the new system is up and running.¹⁹ Still, one reason why the state administration has become stronger than the legislative is because often the state level administration – in some cases also its administrative borders – are based on the old Districts/Counties.²⁰ This also means that the state level has inherited almost a century old authoritarian local structures established by the Condominium government. The impact of this legacy is compounded by SPLM/A's militaristic style of leadership. It will take a long time and focused efforts from all parties involved to change this political culture into one of genuine democracy and participation. One must also take into consideration that currently even state MPs are appointees²¹ and there will not be fully legitimate state parliaments until after the elections.

¹⁶ "Old Sudan" refers to the pre-war government administration, which continued to exist in areas controlled by the government during the war.

¹⁷ *The Interim National Constitution of the Republic of the Sudan*

¹⁸ The parliaments were formally announced in December 2005, but it took time before they started to work according to their purpose.

¹⁹ Although the state structure was formally introduced by the NIF government during the war, the reform did not have any practical consequences before after the peace.

²⁰ E.g. Aweil State has the same borders as the colonial Aweil District. Cf. paragraph 1.1 of The Interim Constitution of the Lakes State states: "The territory of Lakes State comprises all lands and areas that were under the administration of the former district of Rumbek and Sub-District of Yirol that now constitute Lakes State, as their boundaries stood on January 1, 1956.", p. 3.

²¹ It has however been difficult to find out how the appointment process took place and the present author assumes that it differs from state to state and between the political parties. In one instance there was a re-election after a women state MP had died and then it was decided that she had to be replaced with another woman from the same county.

Conventional political theory suggests that when a party controls the government its representatives in the executive, parliament and the party administration work in concert to implement the policies of the party. This does not appear to be the case for SPLM in the investigated states. At the moment there seems to be limited formal co-ordination between SPLM state secretariats, SPLM MPs in the state parliaments, and the governor. The state secretary sees himself as the servant or executor of the directions of the Governor and SPLM secretariat at the GOSS level. The State Secretary seldom meets with the parliamentarians and they are assumed to work independently. Jonglei proved to be a bit different from the two other cases. The Jonglei State SPLM party secretary was more involved in the political processes of the state parliament. In some cases he functioned as a mediator in disputes between SPLM MPs and the governor. Whether this was due to personal characteristics, political environment or resources allocated to the office could not be established, but it is to be hoped that other states will follow suit.

Most SPLM MPs consulted did not appear to regard the SPLM party office as relevant. This may be due to the novelty or weakness of SPLM party structures at the state level, but it also indicates that most SPLM party office neither want to nor is capable of co-ordinating the political work of the party. It also appears that some SPLM MPs have a stronger loyalty towards fellow MPs from other political parties than to the executive and the party.

Local Level: County, Payam and Boma

The power of the executive is even more pronounced at the local government level and the changes from the pre-CPA period are in most cases minimal.²² Each government level is supposed to have democratically elected representatives as a counterweight to the Commissioners, Payam Administrator and the Boma Administrator, but the process of electing these seems to still be at an early stage.²³ The county level has so far been regarded as the primary local government level and the payam and boma levels as sub-offices of the county.²⁴ This is basically a continuation of structures established during the colonial era when local government main purpose was to control the rural areas with a minimum of administrative and military presence. This government was not designed

²² See Rolandsen, *Guerrilla Government* for an outline of the pre-CPA local government structures within SPLM/A controlled areas, 158-66.

²³ According to the SPLM Document "Local Government Framework: Re-Organisation and Sequencing" SPLM/A established 78 local councils during the war, while the Khartoum Government established 55, but the document also points out that "there are no councils in Southern Sudan at the level closest to the people as stipulated in the ISCC [Interim Constitution of the Southern Sudan] and service delivery provided by appointed functionaries at county, city [?], municipal [?], and town [?] Levels lack a policy framework and a legal framework from which to operate" (p. 12).

²⁴ This may be symbolised by the change of title (at least in Jonglei) from Payam Administrator to Assistant Commissioner.

for local democracy or economic development. The magnitude of the task of reforming this structure and making it capable of dealing with today's expectations is daunting.

3.3 Mechanisms for influencing government decisions at state level and local levels

It is necessary to separate between SPLM's party structure and state/local government when discussing mechanisms for influence and the opportunity for commoners to influence decisions. It is also necessary to bear in mind that the level of political education among ordinary people is very low and most people are poorly informed about the current policies of SPLM and general political developments at the GOSS or national level.

Influencing the government at state and the local levels from below

Obviously, commoners can more easily influence government decisions at the local levels than the higher ones. However, few important decisions are made at the lower levels. At the boma level there is hardly any state presence and most decisions are made by chiefs and elders within the confines of local courts. Chiefs are interlocutors between the state apparatus and the local population. Their duties include tax collection and mobilisation of labour, but also bringing petitions from the local population to the authorities and relay information from the government. In terms of provision of services these have mostly come from UN organisations and INGOs. The Payam Administrator has little authority by himself and is mostly the local extension of the commissioner's administration and even though the PA is accessible he must in most cases refer the decision to the commissioner.

It is normally only chiefs and elders who can hope to get a meeting with the Commissioner and whether he will receive the local delegation often depends on the personal relationship between the Commissioner and the person asking to visit, as well as the personal inclination of the Commissioner.

In general it is important not to underestimate the importance of informal network and patron/client relationships. There are indications that nepotism and favouritism are widespread within politics and administration at the local level. This means that it is not necessarily the most qualified person who is appointed to influential positions. Persons in high positions may use their client networks to influence decisions at the local level and well-connected commoners may appeal to powerful patrons when they need political leverage. It is reasonable to assume that clan and sub-tribe are the basis for these networks. The degree to which commoners have access to these forms of informal channels of influences depends on one's standing within the local society and the size of one's family. At least in the Dinka societies there is a notion of a difference in status between

the various families and clans, where some are regarded as more “noble”/important than others.²⁵

Influencing the SPLM party structures from below

It is fair to say that the process of decision making within SPLM is still very much top-down. Without functioning party structures at the grassroots’ level there are few opportunities for ordinary SPLM members, to the extent they exist at the local scene, to influence decisions within the Movement. It still remains for SPLM to register the majority of its members, and at the moment it is only those holding a position within the Movement who is reckoned to be a member. The membership registration/recruitment campaign will probably change this (see p. 5). What kind of benefits that may be derived from possessing a membership card is a bit unclear, but it may be something beyond the mere symbolic.²⁶

The planned annual congresses at the different levels of the party should in theory give grassroots the opportunity to participate and shape the policies of SPLM. The processes is supposed to start at the boma level where representatives are to be elected to the Payam Congress, which again elect representatives to the county, which then again elects for the state and the states elects the representatives for the National Congress. There are however reason to believe that this will also end up being a top-down process. Especially considering that there appears to be no policy document to discuss and people interviewed who were responsible for these congresses seemed to regard national politics as irrelevant for local fora. Without a thorough process where suggested policies and future strategies are discussed at congresses at the local levels it is difficult to imagine that ordinary SPLM members will have much opportunity to influence the important decision to be made at the National Convention.²⁷

²⁵ The polygamist culture also means that those with power and wealth have a much larger family and hence a larger network of relatives who look after them and help them with marriages and getting positions.

²⁶ For instance, the SPLM membership card may in some places be the only id-card available.

²⁷ One SPLM official expected that the “election” would basically be a re-confirmation of the persons who currently holds the different position.

3.4 Women and young people in government and party structures

It is necessary to distinguish between the position and influence of *individual* youth and women within SPLM and government structures and the power of youth and women *organisations*. The investigation revealed that at the state level and below “youth” is generally understood as unmarried women and men in the age from 18 to 35. Women are expected to change their affiliation to the women’s organisation once they are married. Many women marry before they are 18 which means that in most cases it is the women organisation that is regarded as most relevant for them. However, girls who have received secondary and university education appear to marry later and may in some cases remain in the youth organisation even after they are married.

Influence of Women and Youth Organisation

SPLM women and youth organisations are only to a very limited degree established at the state level. However, some of the local women organisations established during the civil war in SPLM controlled areas, often referred to as the Women’s Federation, are still active. These were originally intended as support groups for the war effort providing food and assistance for the guerrilla fighters. In some cases these organisations, often led by strong local leaders, also started activities to benefit the women more directly. Building of women centres, education, self-help groups, local hotels and restaurants as well as agriculture and crafts initiatives were initiated in some places. These organisations being organised by women and operating at the grassroots’ level also managed to attract funding and assistance from international NGOs and UN organisations. To what extent these can be transformed into a political force and whether such a transformation is desired by the SPLM leadership is uncertain (see next paragraph).

Among the interviewed SPLM leaders at county and state level the “syndicate” organisations were perceived as not intended to be political, and at the moment it is safe to conclude that to the extent that they exist they have a rather limited influence. Still, youth and women leaders in Bor, Aweil and Torit indicated that they wanted to promote the interests of women and youth as social groups within SPLM and towards the government as such.²⁸ There seems however to be a mismatch between the expectation of these leaders and the perceived utility of these organisations seen from the point of view of the SPLM leadership at the state and county level. These leaders see the youth and women organisations as ways of organising women and youth in non-political activities such as sports and building of kindergartens. Assisting SPLM organising meetings (basically cooking and setting up temporary meeting facilities) were, according to some

²⁸ E.g. work towards increasing the number of youth being employed by the government and improving adult and higher education were mentioned as youth specific issues youth leaders wanted to promote.

of the local SPLM leaders interviewed, the only activities related to politics that youth and women organisations are supposed to be engaged in. There appears however that there is a possibility that if the women and youth organisations improves their capacity and assert themselves on the local political scene that SPLM leaders may change their perception of the utility and purpose of these organisations.

Youth and women leaders often indicated that they saw it as more important to establish organisations including all political parties and that these organisations should represent women and youth as groups/social segments. Local leader of youth and women organisations preferred working within organisations that include all parties rather than one specific party. In the case of women this was partly justified by the need for reconciliation between women activist who had worked inside the GOS controlled areas and the women in exile and in SPLM controlled areas. It was feared that splitting women along party lines would weaken their ability to fight for women issues.

Influence of Women and Youth as individuals and groups

Women and youth may gain influence within SPLM on an individual basis. The 25% minimum quota for women appears to be implemented at least at the state level. This makes women participation in politics accepted as a given. There are strong and capable women who through this system get the opportunity to represent both their local constituency and women in general. Also the quota provides opportunities for “on the job training” for women otherwise too inexperienced or unable to participate in political fora. Still, to what extent women are included in the political processes probably vary considerably and it appears possible that in some cases inexperienced or literate women sit in the meetings but are not given the necessary assistance or schooling to participate beyond the symbolical presence. Prejudice against women may of course also hinder meaningful participation. It seems however that educated women, in particular those returning from Diaspora, are granted actual authority because of their education; their role as “educated” or “intellectual” becomes more important than the fact that they are women.²⁹

In terms of youth there are many who have received education, but these may have spent long periods outside the Sudan and lack local network and may not have local sponsors/patrons (cf. page 13-4). Education is still important for youth’s influence in politics. Young persons with education are needed in many government offices and other organisations. Within SPLM the military rank and number of years one has been within

²⁹ Many places in the South important guests are honoured with the slaughter of a cow, over which the guests are supposed to jump. Previously it has been regarded as taboo for women to jump over the cow, but one Nuer state MP explained that now when she returned to her constituency the local leaders asked her to jump as well. In the end she did not jump, but the incident is telling in terms of the status granted to educated women with positions.

the Movement contributes heavily towards prestige and positions. This is certainly a disadvantage for young persons, but some were recruited at a fairly young age and it is not unusual to find persons recruited in the 1980s who still regard themselves as youth. There has also been a tendency that the power of elders and chiefs has been challenged by youth military background. It is nevertheless fair to say that youth in general has very little influence over political issues at all government levels.

3.5 SPLM's standing in the Southern Sudan

SPLM, or rather SPLA, has a strong standing in the population of the South in general. Nearly all parts of the South have contributed recruits and they are seen as the only protections against "the Arabs". There is, however, always an ambiguity in the relationship between insurgents and the people they are "protecting" in the areas under their control. The civilian population are both allies and prizes, and to what extent SPLM/A emphasised the former or the latter aspect seems to have varied considerably between different areas in the South. In EEQ there are grievances against continuing Dinka presence in the area (IDPs, soldiers, police and traders), but this appear not necessarily to be directly against SPLM as a party. It will probably take some time before commoners will be sufficiently informed about the planned multi-party election. Also, the idea that SPLM is going to be a party among several competing for the electorate's favour has yet to sink in.

In the towns under Government control the standing towards SPLM may be more nuanced than in the countryside. During the war NCP had built up groups of supporters (often through incentives) in these towns and not all of them have converted to SPLM. It is likely that many of those employed by the NCP during the war will lose their jobs due to government reorganisations and staff reductions. This will on a short term basis estrange a substantial amount of people in these towns.³⁰ SPLM's popularity may also be reduced if the expected social and economic development does not take place or if local security problems are not solved. Furthermore, if the relationship between North and South Sudan continues to deteriorate, Southern parties advocating an outright brake from the North may take advantage of SPLM's increasingly unpopular unity/New Sudan policy. Nevertheless, in the countryside – except for some areas close to the North and in some parts of Greater Equatoria – one may still expect that SPLM will continue to have close to total domination of the political landscape.

³⁰ Commissioner of Bor explained that right after the CPA it had been 2200 registered as employed by the GoS and 900 in the CANS inside the borders of Bor. Now this figure is reduced to 2400 in total, but they are expected to reduce further to a total of 350. Most of these positions will be advertised.

4. Conclusion

The above analysis shows that SPLM as a political party at the state and local levels still is very much at the infant stage. Hence it is too early to draw any conclusions regarding how well SPLM will manage the transition from a rebel movement to a political party. This process is dependent on both internal developments and the overall political context. The preparations of the national elections in 2008/9 will be of crucial importance and by way of conclusion it is worthwhile discussing some of the main challenges connected to this.

Whether the elections will take place is mainly dependent on the overall level of trust between the two signatories of the CPA and the status of the agreement. The relationship between the NCP and SPLM has been tense since an incident in Malakal in December 2006 when several SPLA soldiers and pro-NCP militias were killed. Reduced transfers of oil revenues from the central government to the South in the first half of 2007, and the lack of transparency of the process of calculating the Southern share causes continuous friction within the Government of National Unity. The Sudan Armed Forces troops in the oil producing areas in the Southern Sudan were supposed to be withdrawn by the beginning of July 2007, but this process is at best delayed and may not happen in the foreseeable future. It is also claimed that NCP agents are supporting armed groups in the South in order to destabilise the area and distract SPLM. Whether this is the case or not is difficult to verify, but the allegations are sufficient to widen the gap between the two parties. A possible scenario is a break-down in the implementation of the CPA, but without open hostilities. Within such a scenario it is unlikely that any national elections will take, in particular considering that neither the NCP nor SPLM are genuinely democratic and their leadership have some doubts regarding whether they will ultimately benefit from any elections.

However, the preparations for the elections are still moving ahead although at a slower pace than planned. The first stage is a national census, which is supposed to be finalised by November 2007. It is however expected to be delayed. Also, demarcation of the North/South border is delayed and the ruling of the Abyei Border Commission is disputed by the North/NCP. Delays and problems related to these processes may also have implications for the preparations of the National Elections. The census is required for registration of voters and distribution of representatives to parliaments. Southern politicians believe that the border questions need to be clarified in order for the elections to take place, although one may envision *ad hoc* solutions which may amend this shortcoming. Some also fear that the South will be underrepresented if the census is carried out before the Southern IDPs in the North and refugees in neighbouring countries return to the South. However, with sufficient pragmatism and flexibility built into the census and vote registering procedures it should be possible to overcome this formal obstacle.

Even if these problems are solved it would be naive to expect an orderly, free and fair election. In particular the NCP leader may have much to fear from a free election and they already have considerable experience from organising phoney elections. Even though SPLM should not plan to rig the elections in the South, there may be difficult to have an actual multi-party competition. The NCP and the other Khartoum centred parties will not be able to mount a credible challenge to the SPLM in the South. There are only Southern Sudanese political parties which can become a real supplement or alternative to the SPLM. Whether the current Southern parties are truly independent have been questioned. It is assumed that most of them secretly co-operate either with SPLM or NCP and that some will merge with the SPLM before the national elections take place. There are few incentives for the SPLM to build autonomous party structures and to develop political programmes if there are no significant opposition parties to compete against.

There is however also centrifugal forces at work within the SPLM. Vice-President of the Southern Sudan, Riak Machar, and the wife of the late John Garang, Rebecca De Mabior, are both seen as potential faction leaders. The sacking of both as Minister of Housing, Public Land and Public Utility and Minister of Transport and Roads,³¹ respectively, is interpreted as a sign of Salva Kiir seeing them as potential rivals and that he tries to reduce their influence. A split within SPLM would mean a considerable weakening of the Movement. Although this would decrease the probability of the election to take place, a split would also increase the competition in the South.

³¹ Presidential Decree 69 of 2007.

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International Peace Research Institute, Oslo
Institutt for fredsforskning

International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO)
Hausmanns gate 7
NO 0186 Oslo, Norway
E-mail: info@prio.no

www.prio.no