

Book Review: The New Kings of Crude: China, India, and the Global Struggle for Oil in Sudan and South Sudan by Luke Patey

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The New Kings of Crude aims to take the reader from the dusty streets of Juba in South Sudan to Asia's glistening corporate towers to provide a first look at how the world's rising economies established new international oil empires, amid one of Africa's longest-running and deadliest civil wars. A key motif of the book is how the politics of oil in Sudan and South Sudan came to impact the expansion of Asia's oil giants. **Marisa McCrone** finds that what is most notable and commendable about this book is that it focuses not only on China and India's influence on Africa, but also Africa's influence on the world's rising powers—a growing influence that has been largely neglected.

The New Kings of Crude: China, India, and the Global Struggle for Oil in Sudan and South Sudan. Luke Patey. Hurst. January 2014.

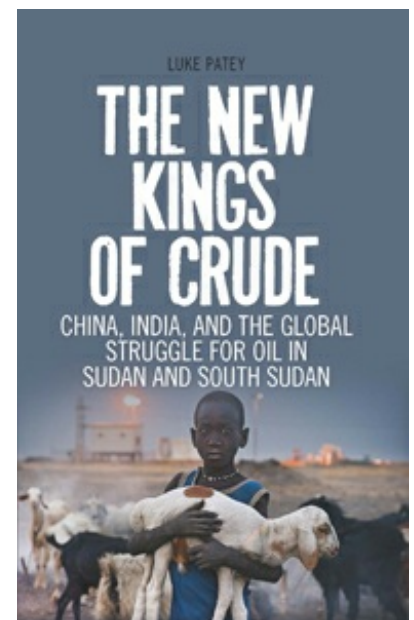
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The recent level of violence erupting in South Sudan has been called a “game-changer” and condemned as “among the gravest in history” by the United Nations. Thousands have been killed and nearly a million people displaced, from places such as Abyei, one of the disputed areas along the Sudanese and South Sudanese border that is also home to several oil concessions. To understand the current volatile political situation in South Sudan and the latest round of fighting that began in late 2013, it is first necessary to understand the historical context surrounding the birth of the world's youngest nation in 2011—a birth baptized in oil.

Luke Patey's new book *The New Kings of Crude: China, India, and the Global Struggle for Oil in Sudan and South Sudan* is timely in providing that much-needed, comprehensive account of and insight into the global oil game that has been played in Sudan for decades, and now in its offspring South Sudan. As participants in this game, China's and India's national oil companies have been embroiled in Sudan's history of conflict, rebellions, civil war, and economic instability. Although oil is not the cause of the current conflict in South Sudan, Patey intricately details how the business and politics of oil in Sudan, and now South Sudan, is intimately connected to the political decisions taking place not only on the battlefields near Khartoum and Juba, but also in the boardrooms in Beijing and New Delhi.

Covering a broad range of key personalities involved in China's and India's entry into Sudan's oil market in the 1990s and the construction of a still-disputed oil pipeline between Sudan and South Sudan, the book chronicles the complex relations between Sudan's presidents, officials of the southern regional government that preceded the state of South Sudan, Chinese and Indian politicians and oil executives, Sudanese rebel leaders, and North American and European human rights activists.

The book dedicates the first chapters to an analysis of Sudanese politics and the civil war and attacks between the North and South that led to the ousting of Chevron and the withdrawal of its oil exploration efforts there in the 1980s and 1990s. He lucidly illustrates the international and domestic reverberations of the political and oil business wheeling-and-dealing in Sudan, North America, and Asia. Part II is dedicated to China's subsequent emergence in Sudan in the 1990s and details China's strategy in penetrating international markets through its state-owned oil companies' strong influence in domestic Chinese party politics. In Part III, the focus turns to India and showcases



how it followed China's example through a domestic push to seek energy security in Sudan.

In a separate chapter on Darfur, Patey's thorough examination of the players involved in the oil games of Sudan's civil war extends to Western human rights activists and showcases the limits of civil society and advocacy groups, demonstrating how their divestment campaigns that targeted Western oil companies—and that effectively called for their exit from Sudan—paradoxically furthered China's and India's oil investments in Sudan by removing Western competition, thereby paving the way for the Asian oil giants to dominate the oil business in Sudan, bringing with them Asian policies of non-interference in Sudan's gross human rights violations.

The book closes with a look at the "Two Sudans" and leads the reader up to the current troubles. Although the book weaves together the various factions through neatly divided chapters on each country, its non-linear structure results in occasional repetition of details and events, sometimes making the reading cumbersome. Yet overall, this non-chronological writing style mirrors the complicated nature of Sudanese politics. By parsing out individual analyses of each country's actions, the book effectively documents how Sudan's civil war affected both the international strategies and the domestic standing of China's and India's national oil companies.

A key motif of the book is how the politics of oil in Sudan and South Sudan came to impact the expansion of Asia's oil giants. Indeed, what is most notable and commendable about this book is that it focuses not only on China and India's influence on Africa, but also Africa's influence on the world's rising powers—a growing influence that has been largely neglected. Patey chronicles this often overlooked impact of Africa on the politics of rising economies, demonstrating how Sudan altered the foreign policies of these two powers, particularly China. It details why Sudan was strategically important to the international expansion of China's national oil companies, an expansion which, in turn, shaped China's foreign policy. Rather than describing a passive engagement with external actors that so often is used to define African countries' policies, this book offers a refreshing look at Africa's direct engagement and influence through its civil wars, rebellions, trade, and resources—proving an indispensable read for a clear understanding of the issues surrounding Sudan and South Sudan's current crisis.

Marisa McCrone is an editor at the International Peace Institute. She holds an MSc in International Relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science. [Read more reviews by Marisa.](#)

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