Water, Civilisation and Power in Sudan

In 1989, a secretive movement of Islamists allied itself to a military cabal to violently take power in Africa’s biggest country. Sudan’s revolutionary regime was built on four pillars – a new politics, economic liberalisation, an Islamic revival, and a U-turn in foreign relations – and mixed militant conservatism with social engineering: a vision of authoritarian modernisation. Water and agricultural policy have been central to this state-building project. Going beyond the conventional lenses of famine, “water wars” or the oil resource curse, Harry Verhoeven links environmental factors, development and political power. Based on years of unique access to the Islamists, generals and business elites at the core of the Al-Ingaz (Salvation) Revolution, Verhoeven tells the story of one of Africa’s most ambitious state-building projects in the modern era – and how its gamble to instrumentalise water and agriculture to consolidate power is linked to twenty-first-century globalisation, Islamist ideology and the intensifying geopolitics of the Nile.

Harry Verhoeven teaches African politics at Oxford University and is the founder and convenor of the Oxford University China-Africa Network, as well as the founder of the Oxford Central Africa Forum. He has published in Civil Wars; Conflict, Security & Development; Development and Change; Geopolitics; Journal of Eastern African Studies; Journal of Modern African Studies; Middle East Policy; Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society; Review of African Political Economy and The Washington Quarterly. In January 2015, he took up a professorship in comparative politics and international relations at the School of Foreign Service of Georgetown University, based in Qatar.
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Water, Civilisation and Power in Sudan

The Political Economy of Military-Islamist State Building

HARRY VERHOEVEN

Oxford University
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Jazakullah Khairan
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