

# The Role of Regional Organizations in Building Peace In South Sudan: IGAD As a Model

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## Abstract

*Regional blocs are pivotal in fostering peace through preventative measures, diplomatic intervention, conflict resolution, and post-war recovery. These entities have successfully mediated numerous conflicts, including the 2008 Kenyan peace accord, the 2005 Sudan peace deal, and the 2000 Algiers Agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Effective regional peacebuilding hinges on several factors, including unified support from member nations. A clear mandate to address conflicts, coupled with adept mediation skills and international recognition, are essential. Furthermore, adequate financial and human resources are crucial for operational success. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) exemplifies a regional body that has contributed to peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan. The organization has led numerous mediation initiatives and contributed to the achievement of several peace agreements, most notably the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2015 and the Khartoum Agreement of 2018, which serves as the current framework for resolving the conflict in Juba. IGAD has actively contributed to the realization of these peace accords. Although obstacles have been substantial, IGAD's initiatives have yielded concrete advancements in resolving the South Sudanese conflict.*

**Keywords:** *Regional organizations; peacebuilding; South Sudan; organizational mediation; IGAD.*

## Introduction

South Sudan has continuously experienced prolonged and ongoing conflicts, leading to acute instability and significantly delayed development. Since its independence from Sudan in 2011, South Sudan has repeatedly faced a series of internal conflicts that have tragically caused significant loss of life and displaced millions of people. Under these extremely challenging circumstances, non-regional organizations have crucially played a role in building peace and assisting in the gradual reconstruction of the affected community. These organizations range widely from international organizations and global civil society organizations to non-governmental organizations, providing support in various areas such as mediation, humanitarian aid, election support, and infrastructure reconstruction.

The conflict in South Sudan remains complex despite IGAD's efforts to maintain it. IGAD faces serious challenges in its efforts to end these conflicts, including violations of agreements, continued foreign interference, and its determination to shift power on the ground. However, IGAD's role is not limited to mediating conflicts; it actively builds trust between conflicting parties, gradually promotes good governance, and supports long-term reconstruction and development efforts.

Remarkably, since the beginning of the crisis in South Sudan, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) immediately employed a comprehensive method that included direct mediation between the parties to the conflict, as well as providing technical and logistical support to the peacekeeping operation and monitoring the implementation of peace agreements. Much work has been done to defuse the conflict and establish a transitional government to implement the 2015 peace agreement and, most importantly, the 2018 peace agreement.

### *The Research Importance*

Overall, the importance of this study lies primarily in the urgent need to understand the important role of the International Development Agency (IGAD) in making lasting peace and achieving political stability in South Sudan, which are undoubtedly the major challenges facing the African continent. IGAD is known to be one of the regional organizations committed to resolving complex and multifaceted armed conflicts

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through peaceful means, and has sought to mediate some of the previous peace agreements in South Sudan. An analysis of the work of this body can contribute to improving future strategies in order to consolidate its achievements and enhance the ability to resolve similar challenges in other parts of the country.

### *The Research Problem*

The research problem strategically focuses on how to properly assess the effectiveness and impact of regional organizations, especially IGAD, in the lasting peacebuilding process in South Sudan. The central question of the crisis is therefore: How effective are regional organizations, especially IGAD, in building lasting peace in South Sudan?

### *The Research Hypothesis*

This study focuses on the main hypothesis that local governments play a key role in achieving sustainable peace in South Sudan by providing adequate material and moral support and implementing development programmes with a high level of commitment. Research shows that the effectiveness of the IGAD is strongly influenced by the level of engagement with local governments and communities and their ability to address the environmental and political challenges facing the country. The effectiveness of peacebuilding in an organization depends on how effective its members want to be and how strong the organization is, or how strong the political courage and ability of the organization to be an influential force in a place where peace and security prevail.

### *The Research Methodology*

This study adopts an analytical method to investigate how effective the regional organizations are in building peace in South Sudan, with focusing on IGAD. Data will be collected from different sources, such as official reports from organizations and previous peer-reviewed foreign studies. This data will be analyzed to identify patterns and strategies used, the challenges faced, and the actual effect on peace in South Sudan.

### *The Research Plan*

To address the research problem, the study falls into two main sections. The first one is dedicated to examining the effectiveness of regional organizations in building peace, whereas the second section will focus on analyzing the role of IGAD in building peace efforts in South Sudan.

## **Section One: The Role of Regional Organizations in Building Peace**

Since the mid-1990s, there has been a remarkable international development characterized by the development and reinforcement of regional organizations active in the field of peace and security. These organizations have established various security systems and have taken on roles in preventive diplomacy, mediation, peace operations, post-war peacebuilding, and arms control and disarmament. On several occasions, they eased the resolution of violent conflicts. (Khalaf, 2024) . For instance, in 2008, the African Union mediated a peace agreement amid civil violence in Kenya; in 2005, the (IGAD) intermediated the end of the decades-long local struggle in Sudan; and the Organization of African Unity mediated the 2000 Algiers Agreement, which ended the border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. (Laure, 2010)

### **Subsection One: The Importance of Establishing Regional Organizations**

Regional organizations are of paramount importance to the United Nations and the donors who finance these organizations in South Sudan. The United Nations Charter underscores the significance of diplomatic settlement of local disputes through regional cooperation and regional agencies, as stipulated in Article 52 .(Ali & Alsaedi, 2022). The UN Security Council and the UN Secretary-General emphasize the central role of regional organizations in building peace. The enthusiastic support of the United Nations for these organizations largely relies on the promise that they could help make a peaceful regional setting. (Benner, Mergenthaler, & Rotmann, 2011) .They function as forums for struggle resolution, make trust through repeated interactions among states, encourage and facilitate a

common method to conflict resolution, address border security concerns, and promote adherence to global and regional standards on governance and preventing struggle. (Al-Douri, 2018)

The focus of a regional organization on building peace and its orientation and efficacy are formed by historical, geographical, political, and economic conditions. Key aspects such as the state formation, the strength, domestic and foreign policies, developmental levels, regional distribution of power and resources, the role of external powers, and the nature of internal and exterior struggles and security threats. (Francis, 2017). The prominence and repercussions of these aspects vary from case to case, leading to significant differences in the dynamics, capabilities, and institutional cultures of organizations. (Engel, 2020). Despite these differences, the distinctive characteristic of regional organizations is that they serve as forums for member states. (Reiterer, 2006). This is their fundamental attribute, as each of their primary features derives from their membership. Unless determined by members, a regional organization cannot have a mandate for peace and security, nor can it take action to address specific conflicts or engage in building peace. Therefore, organizations must primarily focus on the nature of these organizations, their policies, and the interests and relations of the member. (Laure, 2012). Thus, the effectiveness of building peace by any organization largely depends on whether the members desire the organization to stay active and if they have the political confidence and stability necessary to make it effective in the areas of peace and security (United Nations General Assembly, 2015).

### **Subsection Two: The Impact of Regional Organizations on Building Peace:**

A regional organization is considered successful in building peace when it establishes a system that includes treaties, protocols, and mechanisms for security cooperation and peacebuilding. However, this success criterion is formal and quite limited, as it overlooks the effectiveness of these protocols and mechanisms. There are numerous challenges in fulfilling such a role. (Akoth, 2017). The first challenge is that conflict, peace, and stability are intricate phenomena with numerous interrelated causes. Many of these causes cooperate with each other at the national, regional, and international levels that operate across regional, national, and international levels. (Goertz, Diehl, & Balas, 2016). This process is accompanied by peace initiatives from the United Nations, financial support and other forms of assistance from international partners, military actions by members, and forcible measures adopted by external authorities. (Solomon, 2015). The mediation by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) that led to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement for Sudan in 2005 is a pattern of this group of actors building peace. (Nwaiwu, 2013)

The second challenge in evaluating the effect of a regional organization on peace-making is that it is impossible to recognize what the security circumstance would have looked like had the organization not been present. In some cases, it may seem clear that the organization did not make any difference in the intensity of the regional conflict. (Wallander, 2015). However, it is probable that the level of instability could be greater without the organization's initiative. The African Union's peacekeeping mission in Darfur from 2004 to 2007 is a better example of this phenomenon. (Ishaque, 2021). The third challenge relates to organizational goals as a regional organization is established to achieve specific objectives. Any evaluation of its effectiveness must consider how well it has met these goals. Thus, a regional organization whose protocols state that it works to improve human rights would be deemed ineffective if it disregards serious violations within one of its member states. (Laure, 2012)

Finally, critical evaluations of the building peace efforts undertaken by regional organizations must take into account the extent of the intractability of severe conflicts within and between states. Recognizing these diverse challenges, our focus has been placed on the (IGAD) in terms of the scope, duration, intensity, and spread of violent conflict among member of the regional organization. We have examined the strategies and activities of the organization aimed at preventing and resolving violent conflicts, as well as the outcomes of its peacebuilding efforts.

### **Subsection Three: The Effectiveness of Regional Organizations in Making Peace**

The motives of the United Nations to engage regional organizations in preventing struggle and resolution may be convincing, as a form that arises from case studies of such organizations is certainly diverse. In fact, the most conspicuous part of this form is the variety of effectiveness. (Miller, 2015). These organizations vary from vastly successful (such as the European Union) to entirely ineffective (such as the South Asian

Association for Regional Cooperation - SAARC) or largely ineffective (like the Southern African Development Community - SADC and IGAD) (Kołodziejska, 2023). Within this aspect, some organizations have been effective in certain areas but not others (such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations - ASEAN), and some institutions have experienced varying levels of effectiveness over different historical periods (such as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe - CSCE / Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe - OSCE). (Conca, 2015). Despite the stressed security placed by African regional organizations at the top of their agendas, they have achieved only minimal results. It is not merely a matter of the weakness of African organizations and the enormity of Africa's security needs. (Laakso, 2004)

The previous discussion highlights such varieties by presenting a brief overview of the peacebuilding effect of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) as follows.

## **Section Two: The Role of IGAD in Making Peace in South Sudan**

The (IGAD) is a pivotal player in making peace efforts in South Sudan. Since the outbreak of internal conflicts, IGAD has been actively involved in mediating comprehensive peace agreements and providing continuous support for reconciliation and state reconstruction. (Müller & Bergmann, 2020). The organization has a crucial role in promoting regional stability through coordination with the international community and local partners. This section will study IGAD's role through the following subsections:

### **Subsection One: The Mandate of IGAD**

IGAD is tasked with, among other things, retaining and improving peace and security in the area. It comprises eight member states: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda. The organization's objective is to enhance peace and safety in the area, with a mandate to prevent, manage, and resolve violent conflicts. (Biel, 2021). IGAD is engaged in restoring peace in South Sudan since the outbreak of the domestic fight in Dec 2013. Though IGAD chaired the peace process in South Sudan since the outset, its achievements could bear some criticism and debate. (Gebru, 2020)

The (IGAD) does not have a mandate to intervene in internal conflicts within states; its mandate is limited to conflicts between states. The founding agreement of IGAD, established in 1996, emphasizes the sovereignty of the whole members and the principle of non-interfering in their internal affairs. (Magara, 2022). It only provides advice on resolving conflicts within states and encourages dialogue between states. However, IGAD made the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN). (Nkubah, 2015). Though its role is limited to pastoral strife, it stands for the first attempt to address fighting through a joint mechanism, which includes non-governmental information sources and information exchange between member states. Nevertheless, the absence of trust among member and their tendency to take over the mechanism, such as information from non-governmental sources, hinders its effective operation. (Thuranira, 2019).

IGAD has also struggled to prevent or manage conflicts between states, such as the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Peace initiatives in the region were carried out by a "lead state" rather than by the IGAD Secretariat. (De Conning, 2015)

### **Subsection Two: The Beginning of the Conflict in South Sudan**

The war in South Sudan has deep-rooted and complex structural causes as well as immediate factors. These include historical grievances, competition for power, absence of democratic governance, authoritarian state practices, struggle for natural wealth, ethnic affiliations, and intervention by neighboring regional states. (Gebru, 2020). The wealth of the African continent, particularly in South Sudan, attracts the greed of many nations, leading to their interference in the conflict, which further complicates the situation. (Alwan & Majeed, 2022).

The South Sudan crisis, which began in 1956 and culminated in its secession from Sudan and the achievement of full independence in 2011, is part of a broader crisis that Sudan has suffered as a political system and human society. Despite South Sudan being a newly formed state composed of various tribes and ethnic groups, power was not distributed among the ethnic groups as it is in Iraq's constitution (which distributes power among Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds) (Muntasser, 2022). This lack of power-sharing later exacerbated the conflict.

The crisis escalated in July 2013 when President Salva Kiir Mayardit dismissed his Vice President Riek Machar and all members of the South Sudan government in the largest ministerial reshuffle the republic had seen since its independence in 2011. (Akol, 2022). Additionally, he referred "Pagana Amum," the Secretary-General of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), for investigation following Amum's public criticism of the government's performance. (Kulang, 2019). These decisions were a result of a covert struggle that had been intensifying among the SPLM leaders since the death of the movement's historic leader, John Garang, in 2005. The conflict among the Southern leaders erupted publicly when Riek Machar officially announced, after his dismissal, his intention to run for the presidency in the 2015 elections, which did not take place. (www.gurtong.net)

On December 15, 2013, a battalion of the presidential guard clashed with residential areas in the capital, Juba, leading to outbreaks of violence between factions of the South Sudanese army. (Craze, Tubiana, & Gramizzi, 2016). This violence was rooted in political and ethnic rivalry within the system, with the president from the Dinka tribe and his deputy from the Nuer tribe. South Sudan slid into what would later be known as the civil war. (Fonkeng, 2021). President Salva Kiir appeared in military uniform in the media, accusing his deputy Riek Machar of attempting a coup. However, Machar denied any involvement in the alleged coup or the violence in Juba. Despite these denials, Machar immediately declared himself the leader of the opposition army and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in opposition, and was joined by eleven prominent members of the movement, including Pagan Amum. (Anyina, 2019)

### **Subsection Three: The Effectiveness of IGAD in Building Peace**

On December 27, 2013, IGAD called for an emergency summit at the level of presidents of country and government. Simultaneously, the IGAD summit set up the IGAD Special Envoy Office for South Sudan in Nairobi for mediation efforts. (Knopf, 2016). This initiative followed the work of former Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, who led IGAD. The special envoy's mission was represented in mediating and urging the parts of struggle to go towards a quick and diplomatic resolution of the strife through constructive dialogue (Nyathiec Autiak, 2019). However, tensions in the oil-rich country exacerbated divisions among IGAD member states, with neighboring countries and IGAD members taking different sides in the conflict. For example, Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, and Egypt supported various factions in the conflict, and this competition mirrored in the intensity and brutality of the internal strife. (Mengistu, 2015).

IGAD emphasized the urgent need for a resolution to the crisis and appointed special envoys to head the dialogue. The regional organization called for peace talks, leading to the signing of several ceasefire agreements in August 2014. (Kostelyanets, 2021). "IGAD is in need for the required fiscal capacity for the peace since the beginning of war. Undoubtedly, peace talks stipulated organizational and logistical efforts that exceeded IGAD's financial capabilities. Nevertheless, IGAD's Secretariat has largely institutionalized donor support through IGAD-PLUS partners, which include China, the Troika, the African Union, the European Union, and members of the IGAD Partners Forum (IPF) with varying interests. Specifically, IGAD received 1000000\$ from China for the mediation process that began in early 2014 and goes on to involve high-level representation from its special envoy to South Sudan and Sudan. (Magara, 2022). Nevertheless, recurrent violent actions of these agreements by both sides slowed the peace process. During the twenty-seventh extraordinary session, IGAD condemned the deliberate violations of the agreements by the parties, noting that their activities had exacerbated the humanitarian crisis. (Genser, 2017). Throughout the peace process, the struggling parties showed a lack of flexibility and recurrently boycotted peace talks in Addis Ababa over various issues, reflecting a lack of dialogue in South Sudan. Despite these difficulties,

IGAD exerted pressure on the conflicting parts to cease aggressions and get back to the negotiating table, amidst threats of sanctions. (Baraza, 2015)

The strife among governmental armed forces and those loyal to Riek Machar, based on political and ethnic grounds, made thousands of citizens displace their homes, the deaths of hundreds, and the destruction of infrastructure and livelihoods, (Arinze & Nwankwo, 2022). The violence that began in Juba later spread to the states of Unity, Upper Nile, and Jonglei. After 15 months of ineffective IGAD-mediated efforts and the holdup of the March 6, 2014, agreement, the Special Envoy and the Chairperson of IGAD became convinced that the involvement of other international actors in the peace efforts could contribute to reaching a peaceful resolution to the conflict. (Virk & Nganje, 2016)

In response, IGAD leaders and partners proposed expanding the peace process through the IGAD Plus format, which was announced in March 2015. (Mkandawire & US Army Command and General Staff College, 2019). IGAD Plus involves broadening the mediation group to include core regional and global stakeholders, mutually exerting the required pressure on the warring parts, and providing incentives to ultimately achieve a comprehensive peace agreement. IGAD-PLUS is composed of the members of IGAD (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda), the African Union (including the high-level dedicated committee for South Sudan, which comprises Algeria, Chad, Nigeria, Rwanda, and South Africa), the United Nations, the European Union, the Troika countries (the US, the UK, and Norway), China, and the IGAD Partners Forum. (Mokgola, 2019)

On August 26, 2015, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed by representatives of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition, former detainees, civil society organizations, regional bodies, and international organizations. (Gebremichael et al., 2018). The mediation led by IGAD was successful; however, implementation became another critical challenge. The Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), established under the peace agreement to monitor its implementation, was one of the main structures created. (Vhumbunu, 2018). JMEC's mandate was to support IGAD's mediation efforts by maintaining adjacent contact with the parties in South Sudan and engaging with IGAD leaders. Nonetheless, its effort was hindered by the imminent breakdown of the peace agreement in July 2016, as fighting continued in several parts of the state, such as Juba. Since that time, violations and repeated attacks against citizens have persisted. (Anyinia, 2019)

IGAD continued its efforts to fetch the struggling parties to the negotiating table at its 30-1 extraordinary summit in Addis Ababa on June 12, 2017. It decided that the peace agreement signed in August 2015 should be urgently revitalized. To this end, a high-level forum was convened on December 18, 2017, to review the implementation and monitoring mechanisms of the 2015 peace agreement, and to mobilize resources for implementing it. On December 21, 2017, the struggle parties signed an agreement on termination of aggressions, protecting people, and humanitarian access. Although the new agreement came into effect three days after it was signed, it was repeatedly violated by the parts in different areas of the state, indicating that the agreement did not convey into genuine commitment. (Onditi, Sabala, & Wassara, 2018).

Despite this, IGAD made its relentless efforts continuous to find political solutions to the strife in South Sudan. On June 27, 2018, IGAD issued a stern statement expressing that it is ready to "take all required measures, such as directed sanctions against violators and individuals involved in corruption." After long and complex peace mediation efforts by IGAD, the organization made significant progress on June 27, 2018, with a meeting between President Selva Kier and Riek Mechar in Kartoom, Sudan. This meeting concluded signing of the Khartoum Declaration Agreement, which required the parties in South Sudan to implement a perpetual ceasefire. (Elmograbi, 2024)

The efforts made by IGAD member states varied, including their contributions to developing strategies for implementing Chapter III of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in 2018 (Kakande, 2019). These strategies included promising and sustainable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons. The aim was to facilitate resettlement and integration. (Young, 2019). In October 2019, IGAD focused on enhancing a protective environment for refugees, displaced persons, and returnees, expanding their living opportunities, and strengthening health support and

preventive services related to COVID-19. The approach included comprehensive and regional solutions to meet their needs in South Sudan (IGAD, 2019)

Therefore, IGAD's efforts to build peace in South Sudan were undoubtedly very fruitful. They were a significant step in launching complex and lengthy negotiations between the parties involved in the conflict. (Berridge, Lynch, Makawi, & De Waal, 2022) . These efforts have resulted in several peace agreements in the past, including the 2018 Khartoum Agreement, which is a significant step towards peace and stability in South Sudan.

## Conclusions

The involvement of local organizations such as the (IGAD) has proven to be an important factor in the peacebuilding process in South Sudan. IGAD is notable for its efforts to mediate numerous and diverse efforts, especially those aimed at achieving lasting peace and comprehensive peace agreements. Despite serious and formidable challenges, including a significant lack of resources, IGAD has been able to make significant progress, thanks in part to the strong IGAD Plus grant. IGAD's role in bringing struggling parts to the negotiations and providing technical and logistical support to the peace process is an important foundation for ensuring regional security. IGAD's role in South Sudan is a powerful example of how regional organizations can influence security and peacebuilding in conflict zones. By working with the international community and local partners, the organization continues its efforts to achieve enduring peace in South Sudan and strengthens its position as a strategic regional actor in supporting peace and development in southern Africa to the east. Therefore, we have reached the following findings and recommendations:

### First: Findings:

- The effectiveness of building peace by any organization largely depends on whether its member states desire the organization to be actively efficacious and if they possess the required political confidence and solidity to cause it to be efficient in peace and security.
- The local war in South Sudan was the result of intertwined and historically extended structural and direct factors, including the struggle for power, the absence of democratic governance, competition for resources, ethnic affiliations, and regional intervention.
- Critical evaluations of building peace efforts undertaken by regional organizations must mitigate the overestimation of the intractability of severe conflicts within and between states. This is what IGAD has addressed concerning the scope, duration, intensity, and spread of violent conflict among member states.
- IGAD repeatedly faces significant challenges in performing its critical role in sustaining peace and security in the area. Unfortunately, mistrust is widespread among member states, and the system is completely lacking in oversight of information systems and conflict resolution, severely hampering its effectiveness.
- The IGAD has effectively demonstrated its role in mediating peace in South Sudan by organizing several urgent emergency summits, establishing a dedicated special envoy office, and successfully reaching multiple peace agreements. This has been achieved despite significant challenges, including notably limited resources, frequent violations of agreements, and persistent external interventions by various parties.

### Recommendations:

- Gradually, efforts should focus on building sustained trust among IGAD members and enhancing the organization's long-term information independence and structured conflict resolution mechanisms. This

approach will undoubtedly enable IGAD to play a more effective role in preventing and resolving large-scale conflicts in the region.

- Democratic governance and the rule of law must be urgently strengthened, ensuring that all political and ethnic groups are fairly represented in government. Economic reforms and inclusive development are urgently needed to address gaps and competition over resources. Dialogue and national reconciliation among different political and ethnic groups must be actively encouraged, regional cooperation must be enhanced, and external interference in the internal affairs of South Sudan must be avoided. All these measures are essential to conserve peace and prevent the intensification of conflicts in South Sudan.
- IGAD should strengthen monitoring and implementation mechanisms for peace agreements and ensure that all parties adhere to their provisions, by imposing sanctions on violators and intensifying diplomatic efforts in cooperation with other international and regional bodies to achieve lasting stability in South Sudan.

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