CALMUN'25
UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FOURTH COMMITTEE
SPECPOL
STUDY GUIDE

Agenda Item: Sudan Dispute

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1. Letter from the Secretary-General

Esteemed Participants,

As the Secretary-General of Cağaloğlu Model United Nations, it is my distinct honor to welcome you all to the 7th edition of CALMUN, which will take place on May 16th, 17th, and 18th, 2025. It is with great pleasure that we present the study guide for UNESCO, which aims to equip you with the essential knowledge and context for the upcoming three days.

After months of preparation and dedicated effort, I am proud to say that we are now just one step away from CALMUN 2025. We hope that, by reading this guide, you will feel as ready and enthusiastic as we are.

Without a doubt, this conference would not be possible without the contributions of our remarkable academic team. I extend my gratitude to our Head of Academy, Özge Öztürk; our Co-Heads of Crisis, Meryem Sultan Çok and Akay Engin; our devoted and hardworking team members; and our motivated trainees. Their commitment and passion have brought this vision to life and elevated CALMUN's academic quality to its peak.

Furthermore, I would also like to extend my best wishes to all delegates participating in CALMUN 2025. Whether this is your first conference or you are a seasoned MUNer, I thank each of you for taking a step forward and joining us. We truly hope that CALMUN will be a special experience that you will remember warmly in the future. From my perspective, MUN is about motivation, enjoyment, meaningful discussion, and connection. I wish each delegate an inspiring, engaging, and memorable experience.

Warm regards,

Ceylin Gürsoy

Secretary-General

2. Glossary

Abyei Region: A disputed border region between Sudan and South Sudan, rich in oil and grazing land

Border Demarcation: The official process of determining and marking national boundaries. In the context of Sudan and South Sudan, several border areas remain contested, leading to tensions and clashes.

Demilitarized Zone: An area where military forces are not allowed to operate, often used as a buffer to prevent conflict.

Displaced Persons (IDPs and Refugees): IDPs are people forced to leave their homes but remain within their country whereas refugees cross international borders to seek safety.

Economic Interdependence: A condition where two or more countries rely on each other economically.

Paramilitary: A group that is organized like an army but does not belong to the official armed forces of a country.

Refugee Repatriation: The process of helping refugees return to their home country voluntarily, safely, and with dignity

Sovereignty: The full right of a state to govern itself without outside interference.

Secession: The act of formally withdrawing from a political state or organization to become independent.

Transitional Government: A temporary government created to oversee a country during a period of political change or conflict recovery

3. Introduction

There is no doubt that the current global landscape is experiencing a period of heightened instability and fragmentation. Although the idea of a third world war remains largely speculative and discussed only on the margins, ongoing regional conflicts continue to cause profound suffering for civilians and place enormous pressure on international humanitarian systems. High-profile wars such as the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the ongoing crisis between Israel and Palestine command significant international media attention, often overshadowing other significant humanitarian emergencies around the globe. Yet another of the most overlooked yet devastating of these crises is the ongoing conflict in Sudan.

Sudan has been engulfed in persistent violence, political unrest, and social fragmentation, leading to one of the largest displacement crises in recent history. More than a quarter of Sudan's people - over 10 million - have been forced to leave their homes, leaving millions without shelter and tearing entire communities apart. The humanitarian response to this crisis has reached a critical point, and aid agencies are warning that they may no longer be able to keep up with the growing needs. An estimated 25 million people in the country are struggling with severe food shortages, and many don't have access to basics like clean water, healthcare, or shelter.

The severity of the conflict in Sudan is further intensified by its geopolitical and economic significance. The country's substantial oil reserves have drawn the attention of numerous external actors, particularly the high oil-consuming nations such as the United States and China. Sudan's oil resources are not only vital to its own economy but are also strategically important to the global energy market.

Moreover, there have been numerous allegations from international observers and humanitarian organizations suggesting that certain global powers have provided military assistance, including arms and logistical support, to paramilitary groups operating within Sudan. These claims raise serious concerns about outside involvement and the growing use of weapons in the conflict, which could harm efforts to bring peace to the region and make diplomacy more difficult.

4. History

Despite considerable international efforts to mediate between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan, many serious problems were left unresolved after South Sudan became independent. Tensions initially intensified due to the failure of both parties to agree on the revenue-sharing arrangements for oil. Although the majority of oil reserves lie within South Sudanese territory, the infrastructure for export, particularly pipelines and refineries, remains largely within Sudan. In December 2011, in response to a breakdown in negotiations, the Sudanese government began confiscating crude oil that was being transported from South Sudan through Sudanese pipelines.

Further complications arose in the territories of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, which are geographically located in Sudan but share historical and political ties with South Sudan. During the Second Sudanese Civil War, a significant portion of the population in these regions supported the southern cause. However, during the 2011 referendum that ultimately led to South Sudan's independence, the populations of South Kordofan and Blue Nile were excluded from participation, despite prior commitments to hold consultations in these areas.

By late 2011, hostilities escalated when Sudanese forces carried out airstrikes on areas near the border that were controlled by rebel groups. These acts were followed by ground clashes between the two national armies, extending the conflict to the disputed Abyei region. Although these events nearly led to a full-scale war, tensions eased for a while in May 2012 when both countries started pulling their troops back from the border.

In subsequent years, Sudan remained plagued by internal unrest, particularly in the Darfur region and the aforementioned states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile. The Sudanese government employed severe military tactics, including the use of tanks, air strikes, and advanced weaponry, in an effort to suppress armed opposition. These campaigns resulted in mass displacement. By the end of 2014, approximately 650,000 Sudanese nationals had sought refuge in neighboring countries such as Ethiopia, Chad, and Egypt, while over 1.8 million remained internally displaced.

The political environment remained unstable as Sudan approached the 2015 general elections. President Omar al-Bashir, who had ruled since 1989, accepted the National Congress Party's nomination to run for re-election. Despite receiving approximately 94 percent of the vote, the electoral process was widely criticized. Domestic opposition parties rejected the results, citing a lack of transparency and fairness, and the international community condemned the government for failing to foster a credible democratic process.

Public anger grew in late 2018, mainly because of economic problems like the rising cost of living. But what started as protests over daily struggles soon turned into a wider movement against authoritarian rule. On December 19, 2018, a major protest in Atbara ended with the burning of the local office of the National Congress Party. In the weeks that followed, demonstrations spread across the country and were met with force by government security. In January 2019, even as the government held rallies to support President Bashir, the protest movement continued.

On April 11, 2019, President Bashir was deposed in a military coup. The military announced the dissolution of the government and suspension of the constitution, promising the establishment of a transitional military council to oversee governance for two years before democratic elections. Even after Bashir was removed from power, protesters stayed in the streets, calling for a civilian-led transitional government and refusing to accept any plan controlled by the military.

Later in 2019, a power-sharing agreement resulted in the formation of the Sovereignty Council, a joint civilian-military body intended to guide the country through a transitional period ending with elections in 2022. However, internal disagreements, economic deterioration, and ideological divisions persisted. These conditions led to another military coup on October 25, 2021. The subsequent political instability, coupled with sustained public opposition and widespread demonstrations, undermined efforts to restore civilian rule. Although a new transitional deal was reached in November 2021, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok resigned in early 2022, citing a lack of consensus. By 2023, heavy fighting between rival military groups made the humanitarian crisis worse and further weakened the country's already unstable government.

5. Timeline of the Important Events

a. 2011 South Sudan Independence Referendum

The 2011 referendum that ultimately led to the independence of South Sudan was preceded by a series of complex political, logistical, and social challenges. One of the primary preconditions for conducting the referendum was the completion of a national census, intended to determine the distribution of political representation across regions. This census was also a necessary step for the voter registration process required for the 2010 national elections, thereby serving as a foundational element for the referendum itself.

However, the census process faced repeated delays and was ultimately postponed three times. These delays were largely attributed to unresolved disputes between northern and southern authorities, issues that were to be settled under the terms of the 2005 Naivasha Agreement, as well as significant financial constraints and logistical difficulties. Among the major obstacles were unmapped minefields in the southern regions, which severely hindered the mobility of census workers. Furthermore, about five million Sudanese were living as nomads, which made it hard to count the population accurately. An additional two million people, mostly from the south, had been forced to leave their homes and were living in camps near Khartoum. Many others had fled to nearby countries like Uganda and Kenya to seek safety.

The conflict in Darfur further disrupted the census process. Many civilians fleeing violence refused to participate, fearing misuse of the results. Armed groups in the region, particularly rebel factions, actively rejected and condemned the census. These irregularities created considerable uncertainty, not only about the reliability of the data but also about the legitimacy of the electoral process itself.

The National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) also disagreed on various procedural aspects of the referendum. These included how many votes were needed for independence, whether southerners living in the north could vote, and what the political system would look like after the referendum. There were also concerns about the future of the South Kordofan and Blue Nile regions, which were left out of the vote even though they had supported the southern cause in the past. People feared that not involving the public in these areas could lead to more unrest.

In October 2009, the governments of Sudan and South Sudan agreed on a participation threshold: at least 60 percent of the 3.8 million registered voters needed to cast ballots for the results to be considered valid. A simple majority in favor of independence would result in secession, or separation. In the event of insufficient voter turnout, a second referendum would be scheduled within 60 days.

From the outset, Sudanese authorities emphasized their intention to ensure a peaceful transition, whether the outcome favored unity or secession. Vice President Salva Kiir, representing the southern leadership, expressed frustration over the government's failure to deliver promised "peace dividends" and asserted that disarmament was essential for national stability. President Omar al-Bashir acknowledged the south's right to self-determination and characterized the referendum as a legitimate democratic exercise. Nonetheless, he warned that independence might not resolve the region's long-standing challenges and could instead perpetuate them. He said "The stability of the south is very important to us because any instability in the south will affect the north. If there is war in your neighbor's house, you will not be at peace."

Negotiations between the two parties continued in parallel to the referendum process, focusing on post-secession arrangements. These included questions of citizenship, border security, debt allocation, and oil revenue sharing. Later, Oil Minister Pagan Amum Deng proposed a transitional agreement to mitigate the economic impact of secession, particularly in regard to oil exports, which relied on infrastructure situated in the north. At that time, South Sudan had not developed alternative pipeline routes. In a statement issued in September 2010, Deng suggested a phase-out arrangement to continue supplying oil to Sudan as a temporary measure. Additionally, the Sudanese government indicated its willingness to assume the majority of the country's $38 billion debt if South Sudan voted in favor of secession. President al-Bashir sought to reassure citizens that the rights and freedoms of southerners who remained in Sudan post-independence would be safeguarded, regardless of their citizenship status. He affirmed that emotional and social bonds between the two regions would persist, even in the event of political separation.

i. The Influence of Egypt and Libya

In the period leading up to the 2011 South Sudan Independence Referendum, different regional players tried to shape the process and its outcome by getting involved diplomatically. Among the most active were Egypt and Libya, both of which had long-standing political, economic, and strategic interests in Sudan. These interests were particularly rooted in concerns over regional stability, Nile water agreements, and the potential consequences of a divided Sudan for neighboring countries.

At one point, the idea of a confederation between Sudan and South Sudan was introduced as a possible middle ground, allowing both regions significant autonomy while maintaining a formal union. This proposal, however, did not gain ground. President Omar al-Bashir acknowledged this rejection, stating that the primary question was no longer about restructuring the union but rather about choosing between unity and complete separation. He remarked, "Our brothers in the south are rejecting the confederation proposal at the moment. If secession is the result of the referendum, the two sides will negotiate on the future of their relations."

Recognizing the potential for unrest, Egypt and Libya intensified their diplomatic involvement in the final months before the vote. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi both traveled to Khartoum in an effort to mediate and ensure a peaceful process. Both leaders had previously expressed support for the territorial integrity of Sudan, fearing that secession might trigger similar separatist movements in other parts of Africa and destabilize the broader region. Egypt, in particular, was deeply invested in the outcome due to its dependence on the Nile River, which flows through both Sudan and South Sudan. Any changes to the political geography of the region raised concerns in Cairo about future water security, particularly regarding potential changes to upstream water usage agreements. Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit emphasized the importance of holding the referendum "in an atmosphere of freedom, transparency and reliability" to ensure that the outcome genuinely reflected the will of the people of South Sudan.

ii. International Oversight and the Role of IGAD

Beyond regional diplomacy, international organizations also played a critical role in facilitating the referendum and overseeing the transition process. Chief among these was the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which had served as the main mediator during the negotiation of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The CPA laid the legal and political foundation for the 2011 referendum and outlined procedures for security, wealth sharing, and governance between the north and south.

IGAD, supported by the United Nations, the African Union, and key international stakeholders such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Norway, monitored the pre-referendum conditions and maintained contact with both parties to ensure that the process remained peaceful. These actors emphasized the importance of adhering to the agreed framework and encouraged transparency, inclusivity, and logistical coordination to prevent a return to conflict. The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) was deployed to assist with the technical implementation of the referendum and report on human rights conditions.

iii. Media, Public Messaging, and Political Campaigns

The months leading up to the referendum were also marked by coordinated media campaigns and political messaging efforts by both the Government of Sudan and the Government of Southern Sudan. These campaigns sought to influence public opinion, either in favor of either unity or independence, depending on the region.

In the north, the National Congress Party (NCP) attempted to promote the benefits of remaining a unified country, emphasizing national identity and the risks of economic and political instability following secession. However, widespread dissatisfaction with governance in Khartoum and long-standing marginalization in the south undermined these efforts.

Meanwhile, in the south, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) launched major awareness campaigns to build support for independence. These efforts focused on past injustices, the right to self-rule, and the idea that gaining sovereignty could lead to progress and peace. Public rallies, local media, religious figures, and community groups all played a key role in creating a narrative of freedom and national hope.

Although both sides pledged to respect the outcome of the referendum, tensions remained high, and accusations of political interference and misinformation were not uncommon. Nevertheless, the months of public engagement and political advocacy contributed to a relatively high voter turnout and a decisive result in favor of South Sudanese independence.

b. May 2011 - The Abyei Conflict

In May 2011, tensions escalated in the Abyei region, a highly contested and oil-rich area stretching accross the border between Sudan's South Kordofan and South Sudan's Northern Bahr el Ghazal states. While it had been determined that South Kordofan would remain part of Sudan, the final status of Abyei remained unresolved. The region was governed under a special administrative status as outlined in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which had envisioned a separate referendum to determine whether Abyei would join South Sudan or remain within Sudan. However, that referendum had been postponed indefinitely due to political deadlock and technical challenges.

On 19 May 2011, a group linked to the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) attacked a convoy convoy of Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) personnel. The convoy was reportedly withdrawing from an area approximately 10 kilometers from Abyei town. The assault was widely condemned by both the Sudanese government and the United Nations, who described it as a violation of existing agreements and a provocation that risked destabilizing the region further.

In response, the Sudanese Armed Forces launched a military operation the following day, deploying fifteen tanks into Abyei on 20 May. Within two days, Sudanese troops took control of the town. As hostilities intensified, residents of Abyei began fleeing southward toward Northern Bahr el Ghazal, resulting in a wave of internal displacement. The military escalation led both sides to accuse each other of breaking the CPA. The Sudanese government claimed the operation was needed to restore order, while the South Sudanese government saw it as a violation of earlier agreements and an act of aggression.

c. June 2011 - Diplomatic Efforts and the Demilitarization Agreement

In an effort to contain the crisis, the African Union initiated diplomatic talks in early June 2011, led by a mediation panel chaired by former South African President Thabo Mbeki. These negotiations took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and aimed to ease tensions and set up systems to govern the disputed area.

On 20 June 2011, both parties reached an agreement to demilitarize the Abyei region. As part of this arrangement, the United Nations deployed peacekeepers under the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), with the first units arriving on 27 June. The deployment aimed to stabilize the area and monitor the withdrawal of armed forces.

The agreement also created a new Abyei Area Administration to replace the one that had been dissolved by President Omar al-Bashir. Under the deal, the SPLM would choose the chairman, but the northern National Congress Party (NCP) had to approve the choice. In return, the NCP would pick the vice-chairman, with the SPLM needing to agree. The executive council would have five members, three from the SPLM and two from the NCP, to keep things balanced. A joint police force made up of both northern and southern officers would be responsible for keeping the area secure.

The agreement received international support. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the deal, highlighting its potential to ease tensions. However, they also emphasized that the true test would lie in the willingness of both parties to implement the terms in good faith and to avoid future provocations.

Despite the agreement, differing interpretations of its terms quickly surfaced. On June 21, Didiri Mohammed Ahmed, who led the Abyei talks for the NCP, publicly claimed that the SPLM had agreed to hand over control of Abyei to Sudan during the Addis Ababa negotiations. SPLA spokespersons quickly denied this, saying no such deal was made and accusing the NCP of twisting the facts.

d. July 2011

In the days leading up to the formal declaration of independence by South Sudan, armed confrontations continued to erupt along the tense border regions. On 6 July 2011, a field commander from the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), one of the prominent rebel groups operating in Sudan, reported that a battalion of 54 government troops had ambushed and overpowered his forces. The battalion, reportedly supported by nine military vehicles, engaged in a planned assault. During the operation, the commander of the JEM unit and two of his fighters were killed.

On 9 July 2011, after decades of civil war, prolonged negotiations, and the completion of a highly anticipated referendum, the Republic of South Sudan officially declared its independence from Sudan. Despite this landmark achievement, the political separation did not bring an end to the violence. Armed clashes and unresolved territorial disputes persisted, particularly in the border regions of South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

Just two days after independence, on 11 July, heavy fighting broke out in the Fula area of South Kordofan. The Sudanese Federal National Front (SFNF) claimed responsibility for the attack, reporting that its forces had killed 20 Sudanese soldiers and destroyed four out of seven Land Cruisers transporting government troops. They also stated that firearms and ammunition had been seized, and that the remaining soldiers had fled the scene.

Around the same time, a confidential United Nations report was leaked, alleging the commission of war crimes in South Kordofan. The report stated that both the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and rebel groups had targeted civilian populations. However, the Sudanese government was particularly criticized for the severity of its actions and was identified as bearing primary responsibility for the violations. In response, on 12 July, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Valerie Amos called for a formal investigation into the reported atrocities. She also urged the Sudanese government to lift restrictions on humanitarian access to the conflict-affected regions.

e. January - April 2012

At the start of 2012, the humanitarian situation in Sudan and South Sudan continued to deteriorate. Ongoing conflict, particularly in the Blue Nile and South Kordofan states, significantly hindered access to food, healthcare, and basic services. According to United Nations estimates, by January, approximately 417,000 people had been displaced due to the violence. Of these, around 80,000 individuals fled across the border into South Sudan, seeking refuge from the escalating hostilities.

On 20 January 2012, renewed clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement–North (SPLM-N) broke out in Blue Nile State. The SPLM-N claimed to have shot down a military helicopter involved in a rescue operation. The confrontation resulted in the deaths of 26 Sudanese soldiers and seven SPLM-N fighters, with six additional rebels reported wounded. Tensions continued to mount over the following weeks. On 26 February, the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), a coalition of opposition and rebel groups, reported that it had launched a coordinated assault on a Sudanese military garrison near Lake Obyad, located close to the South Sudanese border. The SRF claimed that nearly 130 Sudanese soldiers were killed in the attack, further intensifyied the armed conflict.

i. Escalation of the Heglig Crisis

On 26 March 2012, the Sudanese government announced that South Sudanese forces had launched an attack on the Heglig oil field, located in South Kordofan state. In response, the South Sudanese government stated that its military operation was limited to the South Sudanese side of the border and was conducted in self-defense. The following day, the Sudanese Air Force bombed the Unity oil field in Unity State. Simultaneously, Sudanese ground forces targeted the areas of Jau, Pan Akuach, and Teshwin. However, these offensives were repelled by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). South Sudanese artillery positions located approximately 20 kilometers north of Bentiu came under heavy fire originating from Heglig. Sudan's Minister of Information, Abdallah Ali Masar, claimed that South Sudanese troops had advanced 10 kilometers into Sudanese territory, but were pushed back and several were captured. By 28 March, South Sudanese forces withdrew from the region. Yet, tensions persisted. On 31 March, Sudanese warplanes launched further attacks on southern military positions. While South Sudan confirmed the airstrikes, Sudanese officials claimed the assault was carried out using artillery.

ii.   Military Mobilization

On 4 April, South Sudan alleged that Sudanese aircraft bombed oil pipelines and claimed to have downed a MiG-29 fighter jet. Sudan denied the attack and dismissed the accusation as false. On 9 April, the SPLA reported that Teshwin was again attacked by Sudanese forces in a 24-hour assault. Around the same time, the Abiemnhom region was also targeted, allegedly by two Sudanese army brigades aiming to capture oil infrastructure. Four civilians were injured, but there were no reported military casualties. South Sudanese forces claimed they repelled the attacks.

On 10 April, Sudanese military spokesperson Colonel Khalid Sawarmi confirmed that South Sudanese troops had captured both the Heglig oil fields and the town. This marked the beginning of what would be known as the Second Battle of Heglig. On 11 April, the Sudanese government declared its intention to recapture the area by any legitimate means. South Sudan took a defensive stance, anticipating retaliation. Negotiations between the two governments were suspended, according to Sudan's second vice president, El-Hajj Adam Yusuf.

On 12 April, the Sudanese Air Force attempted to destroy a bridge using a modified Antonov An-26 aircraft, resulting in the death of one South Sudanese soldier. Both governments escalated their military operations. South Sudan reinforced its presence in Heglig, while Sudan began mobilizing internally.

On 13 April, although active fighting temporarily decreased, both sides signaled imminent large-scale confrontations. Sudanese forces announced operational readiness, though they admitted they had not regained control over the contested areas in South Kordofan. On 14 April, South Sudan claimed to have stopped a Sudanese offensive 30 kilometers from Heglig. Sudanese airstrikes—reportedly carried out by Su-25 jets—targeted Jau, Panakuach, and Heglig, killing five civilians. South Sudan then prevented another attack on Khersana, while Sudan failed in an attempt to destroy a bridge in Bentiu.

iii.   Withdrawal and Continued Border Tensions

On 15 April, a SPLA spokesperson reported that South Sudan had destroyed two Sudanese tanks and fully secured its borders. That same day, Sudan launched a new offensive in Upper Nile State, crossing the border to occupy the town of Kuek before being pushed back. On 16 April, the Sudanese parliament unanimously declared South Sudan "an enemy of all Sudanese state institutions" and called for the mobilization of all national resources in response to the conflict.

Clashes continued despite efforts to de-escalate. On 18 April, a confrontation occurred approximately 160 kilometers west of Heglig, in which 15 Sudanese soldiers were killed. According to reports, the violence began after a South Sudanese soldier was shot while gathering water. On 20 April, following increased international scrutiny and rising pressure, President Salva Kiir ordered the withdrawal of South Sudanese troops from Heglig. The Sudanese army re-entered the region shortly afterward and held a celebratory rally in Khartoum. However, tensions did not subside completely. On 22 April, Sudan launched three coordinated attacks using tanks and artillery within 10 kilometers of the South Sudanese border, sparking further skirmishes. On 23 April, Sudanese forces attempted once again to destroy a bridge between Rubkona and Bentiu, but the operation failed, damaging only market stalls near the target site.

f.   2015

In 2015, South Sudan entered a period of renewed internal conflict. Tensions escalated when President Salva Kiir accused his first vice president, Riek Machar, of attempting a coup d'état against the government. This accusation triggered the outbreak of a civil war that spread rapidly across several regions of the country. The conflict was marked by ethnically charged violence, widespread displacement, and a collapse in political trust.

To address the crisis, a peace agreement was signed on 17 August 2015 under international mediation. The terms of the agreement required both parties to withdraw their respective armed forces and commit to the formation of a unified national army. It was also agreed that national elections would be held within a 30-month transitional period as part of a broader effort to restructure the political system and restore institutional stability.

Although the agreement was intended to restore peace and initiate a process of national reconciliation, it failed to produce lasting results. Deep-rooted mistrust between the two sides, combined with political rivalries and repeated violations of the agreement, led to the resumption of hostilities within a year. The fragile security situation remained, and large segments of the population continued to suffer from violence, displacement, and lack of access to essential services.

g. 2020

By 2020, both Sudan and South Sudan were facing distinct internal challenges, although their bilateral relations remained closely linked, particularly in matters concerning energy, borders, and political coordination. In Sudan, the political landscape had undergone a significant transformation following the overthrow of President Omar al-Bashir in April 2019. The transition sparked widespread political uncertainty and power struggles between military and civilian actors.

Meanwhile, South Sudan continued to grapple with internal unrest and slow progress in implementing peace agreements. One of the most pressing bilateral issues between the two countries remained the management of oil infrastructure. Oil exports are the principal source of national revenue for both states. While most oil reserves are located within South Sudanese territory, the pipelines and processing facilities used for export run through Sudan. Transit fees paid by South Sudan to Sudan created a critical income stream for the latter.

Due to a decrease in South Sudan's oil production and falling global oil prices, both governments entered negotiations to revise the terms of oil transit and revenue sharing. In 2020, the two sides reached a new agreement aimed at stabilizing their economies and ensuring continued cooperation in oil exports. This arrangement included the regularization of export flows and the adjustment of financial terms to reflect the economic realities faced by both governments.

Another major unresolved issue was the status of the Abyei region, a disputed border area claimed by both Sudan and South Sudan. In 2020, both states agreed to reduce armed activity in Abyei and other contested areas to minimize the impact on civilians. They also committed to engage in dialogue through United Nations mechanisms and to allow multilateral organizations such as the African Union and IGAD to facilitate the negotiation process.

6. Key Challenges and the Implications

The Sudan Dispute, rooted in a complex history of colonial legacy, civil wars, ethnic divisions, and resource competition, remains one of the most unresolved and tense interstate conflicts in East Africa. Despite South Sudan's declaration of independence in 2011, several major challenges continue to obstruct long-term peace, regional stability, and the normalization of the relations between two sides. These challenges are not only internal to Sudan and South Sudan, but they also have direct implications for international peacekeeping efforts, humanitarian access, and broader geopolitical dynamics.

a. The Status of Abyei and Disputed Border Regions

Abyei remains the most prominent unresolved territorial dispute between Sudan and South Sudan. The region is strategically located and rich in natural resources, particularly oil. It is inhabited by two major communities: the Ngok Dinka, who largely identify with South Sudan, and the Misseriya, a nomadic Arab group aligned with Sudan. Although the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) stated that the region would hold a separate referendum to determine its final status, this referendum has been indefinitely delayed due to disputes over voter eligibility, primarily concerning the Misseriya population's seasonal presence.

This has created a legal and political gap that keeps leading to violence and forcing people to flee their homes. The United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) has helped prevent major conflict, but it hasn't solved the root problems. Not settling Abyei's status still holds back progress on marking the border, slows down diplomatic efforts, and weakens public trust in the peace process. Other disputed areas along the border, like Kafia Kingi, also add to the tension and make it harder for the two governments to work together.

b. Oil Dependence and Economic Interdependence

The economic relationship between Sudan and South Sudan is defined by mutual dependence on oil, yet this dependency has also become a source of recurring conflict. South Sudan holds approximately 75% of the oil reserves from the pre-2011 unified Sudan. However, because it is landlocked with no coastline, it depends on Sudan's infrastructure - especially pipelines, refineries, and the Port of Sudan - to export its oil.

Disputes over oil transit fees, revenue sharing, and production management have led to multiple standoffs, including armed confrontations such as the Heglig Crisis in 2012. Any disruption in oil exports has immediate and severe consequences for both economies, which remain underdeveloped and heavily reliant on oil revenue. The lack of diversification in national economies has also increased the impact of global oil price fluctuations.

c. Political Instability

In Sudan, the transitional government established after the ousting of President Omar al-Bashir in 2019 has struggled with internal divisions between military and civilian leaders, frequent protests, and a deteriorating economy. Periodic coups and delays in the transition to full civilian rule have weakened state institutions and diverted attention from external diplomacy.

South Sudan has experienced repeated cycles of internal conflict since independence. Rivalry between President Salva Kiir and former Vice President Riek Machar led to a brutal civil war that began in 2013 and was only partially addressed by the 2015 and 2018 peace agreements. Ongoing political divisions, military control of the government, and a lack of accountability continue to put the fragile peace process at risk. Key issues like disarming fighters, bringing armed groups back into society, and creating a united national army still haven't been solved.

d. Humanitarian Crisis

Armed conflict, displacement, food insecurity, and the obstruction of humanitarian aid have contributed to one of the longest-lasting humanitarian crises in the region. According to the United Nations, millions of civilians have been displaced both internally and across borders due to recurring violence in Abyei, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile, as well as within South Sudan itself.

In many conflict-affected areas, people still struggle to get humanitarian aid because of safety risks, red tape, or restrictions put in place by the government. Civilians living in disputed border regions often face repeated displacement, violence, and limited access to essential services. International organizations, including the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), continue to urge for full access to those in need and the protection of civilians, as required by international law.

Research conducted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) states that: *"There are now 12.7 million forcibly displaced due to the outbreak of conflict in Sudan since April 2023, including 8.6 million internally and 3.8 million in neighbouring countries. Sudan and neighbouring countries were already hosting large refugee populations before this new emergency and require additional support to provide protection and critical life-saving assistance, including for those who have been secondarily displaced within Sudan. Urgent needs include water, food, shelter, health, and core relief items. The current priority activities are the registration of new arrivals, relocation away from border areas, identification of especially vulnerable families and persons with specific needs, and putting mechanisms in place to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and ensure alternative care services for unaccompanied refugee children."*
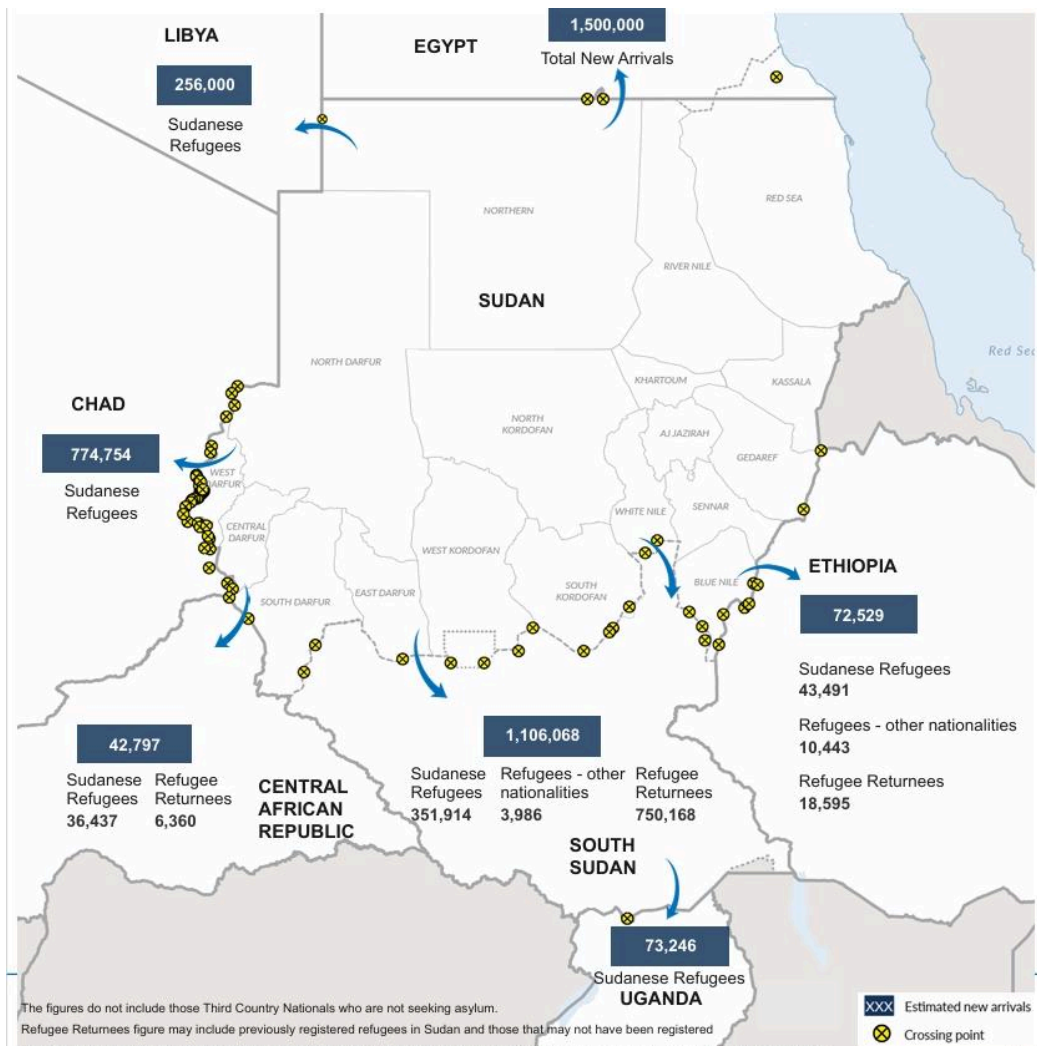
[Population movements from Sudan](#)

e. Regional and International Implications

The Sudan Dispute is not solely a matter of two-sided concern between Sudan and South Sudan. It has far-reaching implications for regional stability, humanitarian conditions, and international diplomatic engagement. Ongoing instability along the Sudan–South Sudan border continues to influence the broader Horn of Africa, a region already facing overlapping political, security, and environmental challenges.

i. Regional Destabilization

The Horn of Africa is marked by various overlapping crises, including internal conflicts, displacement, and transboundary tensions. Within this broader context, the Sudan Dispute contributes to regional instability through periodic violence, cross-border displacement, and disruptions to trade and security coordination. Neighboring countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, and the Central African Republic are affected in multiple ways. Ethiopia has hosted significant numbers of displaced individuals from both Sudan and South Sudan, alongside managing its own complex internal dynamics. Kenya and Uganda, which serve as important regional partners and humanitarian corridors, have encountered pressures related to refugee management and cross-border security. Refugee flows, coupled with competition over limited resources in host communities, have occasionally contributed to tensions.

ii. The Role of Regional Organizations

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU) have played key roles in facilitating dialogue and promoting negotiated solutions between Sudan and South Sudan. The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) were both achieved with support from these organizations.

However, the ability of these institutions to ensure full implementation of agreements has been affected by a range of factors, including internal political developments in Sudan and South Sudan, limited enforcement authority, and differing priorities among member states. Member states within IGAD and the AU engage with the dispute from diverse perspectives, reflecting their individual security interests, economic ties, and regional roles.

iii. International Involvement

A range of international actors have maintained sustained involvement in Sudan and South Sudan, particularly in the areas of peacebuilding, humanitarian support, and development cooperation. While these efforts have contributed to various aspects of stability and governance, the strategies, priorities, and scopes of engagement differ significantly across actors.

The United States has been actively involved in promoting peace initiatives, with a particular focus on the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and subsequent peace processes. U.S. engagement has often emphasized democratic governance, conflict resolution, and humanitarian access, supported through both bilateral programs and multilateral platforms. Meanwhile, China has approached the region primarily through economic and infrastructure partnerships. Its engagement has focused on investment in key sectors such as oil and transportation, particularly in South Sudan, where Chinese companies play a prominent role in energy production. On the other hand, Russia has pursued growing relations with Sudan and, to a lesser extent, with South Sudan. Its engagement has included cooperation in areas such as defense, infrastructure, and political support.

The European Union has contributed through development aid, capacity-building programs, and support for civil society actors. Its involvement has included efforts to strengthen local governance, promote inclusive dialogue, and assist with electoral processes. The EU has also played a role in funding humanitarian responses, particularly in areas affected by displacement and food insecurity.

iv.   Multilateral Peacekeeping

The United Nations has maintained a long-standing presence in Sudan and South Sudan through several peacekeeping and political missions, including UNMIS, UNMISS, and UNISFA. These missions have sought to support peace implementation, monitor border areas, and provide protection to civilians in affected regions.

While peacekeeping missions have played a stabilizing role in many areas, they continue to face operational challenges. These include restrictions on movement, access limitations in conflict zones, and the need for clearer mandates that align with the evolving security landscape. Discussions continue within the international community regarding the appropriate scope, composition, and duration of these missions. In particular, the mandate and future of UNISFA in Abyei remain a subject of ongoing international dialogue, especially in relation to political negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan regarding the region's final status.

7. Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

a. The **Machakos Protocol (2002)**

On 20 July 2002, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), with the support of key international mediators including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Norway, facilitated the signing of a landmark protocol aimed at reducing hostilities between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). The protocol sought to establish a framework for addressing longstanding grievances in southern Sudan and provided the basis for future discussions on self-determination, governance, and resource sharing. This initial agreement laid out several fundamental principles that would later shape the structure of a comprehensive peace process. These included: giving southern communities the right to choose their political future; separating religion and state depending on the region; reforming how the country is governed; focusing on protecting civilians and ending armed conflict; and fairly sharing national income, especially from the oil found in the south.

The IGAD protocol played a central role in shaping the subsequent Comprehensive Peace Agreement and included preliminary commitments to hold a referendum on the status of South Sudan, a provision that would later be realized in 2011 with the country's formal secession.

b. **Comprehensive Peace Agreement (2005)**

On 9 January 2005, the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) officially signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Nairobi, Kenya, under the mediation of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). This agreement formally ended the Second Sudanese Civil War, one of the longest and deadliest conflicts in Africa, which lasted for more than twenty years and resulted in the deaths of over two million people. As a member of IGAD, Sudan played a direct role in the negotiation process, which was supported by a series of protocols and preliminary agreements concluded between 2002 and 2004.

The CPA was built upon several earlier accords negotiated during peace talks in Machakos and Naivasha. These included the Machakos Protocol of July 2002, the Naivasha Security Arrangements Agreement of September 2003, the Naivasha Wealth Sharing Agreement of January 2004, the Naivasha Power Sharing Agreement of May 2004, the Naivasha Abyei Protocol of May 2004, and the Naivasha Protocols concerning South Kordofan and Blue Nile, also signed in May 2004. Collectively, these agreements formed the foundation of the CPA and helped define its legal and political framework.

One of the main provisions of the CPA was the introduction of a new constitutional structure based on decentralization and inclusivity. It outlined a power-sharing arrangement between the Government of National Unity and the newly established Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS). Each entity would function within agreed terms, sharing executive authority, parliamentary representation, and responsibilities in local governance.

The agreement also addressed the management of natural resources, particularly oil. Since most oil fields were located in southern Sudan, but the export infrastructure was in the north, the CPA established joint revenue management bodies to ensure that oil income was distributed fairly.

Another significant aspect of the agreement was the granting of autonomy to the southern region. The GoSS was formally recognized, and it was agreed that a referendum would be held after a six-year interim period, allowing the people of South Sudan to decide whether to remain part of Sudan or become an independent state. This clause laid the groundwork for the 2011 referendum in which South Sudanese voters overwhelmingly chose independence.

The CPA also addressed religious and cultural diversity. It specified that Sharia law would be applied only to Muslims in the north. This provision acknowledged the multi-religious and multi-ethnic character of Sudan and was intended to reduce tensions that had previously arisen from attempts to apply religious law uniformly across the country.

Three specific regions (Abyei, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile) were given special attention due to their contested status and strategic importance. Abyei was to be placed under joint administration until a separate referendum could be held to determine its final status. This referendum was intended to coincide with the 2011 vote in South Sudan, but it was later delayed due to disagreements over voter eligibility.

South Kordofan and Blue Nile were granted the right to hold popular consultations. These consultations were meant to assess public satisfaction with the implementation of the CPA and determine whether further negotiations with the national government were needed.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement remains a landmark in the political history of Sudan and South Sudan. It brought an end to decades of war and provided the institutional framework for South Sudan's eventual independence. However, several provisions of the CPA remain unresolved. The final status of Abyei and the fulfillment of governance arrangements in South Kordofan and Blue Nile continue to be the subject of political debate and diplomatic negotiations.

c. Addis Ababa Agreement

On 27 September 2012, Sudan and South Sudan signed the Addis Ababa Agreement under the mediation of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), chaired by former South African President Thabo Mbeki. The negotiations took place under growing international pressure, especially after a United Nations Security Council resolution warned that both sides would face sanctions if they didn't reach an agreement within three months. The agreement aimed to address key unresolved issues between the two countries, including border security, the sharing of oil revenues and infrastructure, and the administration of disputed regions.

Although the agreement was welcomed by the international community and received attention in global media, reactions within both Sudan and South Sudan were more cautious. Political and societal concerns arose, especially regarding the agreement's provisions on the contested Abyei region, whose final status remained unresolved.

The signing of the Addis Ababa Agreement came in the aftermath of the Heglig Crisis in April 2012, during which armed confrontations had escalated between the two states over the control of oil fields near the disputed border. The African Union, the AUHIP, and the United Nations played significant roles in facilitating the negotiations following the crisis. The agreement, signed approximately five months later, was intended to de-escalate tensions and create a structured path forward for managing bilateral relations between Sudan and South Sudan.

d. **Khartoum Agreement**

The Khartoum Agreement was signed on 5 September 2018 as part of efforts to end the internal civil war in South Sudan. The agreement was concluded between the President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, and opposition leader Riek Machar, following years of violent conflict and failed peace attempts. The primary objective of the agreement was to establish a framework for permanent peace, political cooperation, and national reconciliation.

The agreement addressed several critical issues, including the formation of a unity government, power-sharing arrangements between the rival parties, equitable distribution of oil revenues, and the development of essential national infrastructure. By promoting cooperation over competition, the agreement aimed to shift focus from armed confrontation toward resolving the underlying social, economic, and political grievances that had fueled the conflict.

8. Major Parties and Stakeholders Involved
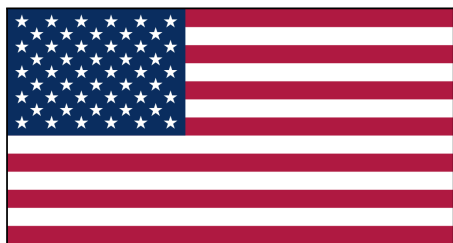
The United States: The United States has consistently supported the principle of self-determination and was one of the most prominent backers of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005. U.S. policy has emphasized democratic governance, human rights, and accountability in both Sudan and South Sudan. Washington has often advocated for stronger multilateral involvement in peacekeeping, support for civil society, and sanctions against actors deemed to be obstructing peace processes or violating international law. The United States has also maintained humanitarian aid channels to support displaced populations and has worked through multilateral platforms such as the United Nations and IGAD to push for diplomatic solutions.

China: China's engagement in Sudan and South Sudan is primarily focused on economic cooperation and energy security. As a major investor in both countries' oil sectors, China has pursued a policy of non-interference in domestic political affairs, favoring bilateral economic partnerships and regional stability. While supporting peaceful resolution of disputes and backing UN peacekeeping efforts, China has generally refrained from endorsing sanctions or externally imposed political conditions.

Norway: Norway has taken an active role in supporting peace negotiations and post-conflict recovery, particularly through its contributions to the Troika (alongside the United States and the United Kingdom). Norwegian policy prioritizes dialogue, inclusive governance, and humanitarian response, especially in areas affected by displacement and food insecurity. Norway has supported international mechanisms that seek to address the final status of the Abyei region and has called for greater access for humanitarian agencies. It generally supports the use of multilateral diplomatic pressure, where necessary, to encourage compliance with peace agreements.

Egypt: Egypt views stability in Sudan and South Sudan as a strategic priority due to shared historical ties, geographic proximity, and mutual reliance on the Nile River. Egyptian foreign policy supports territorial integrity, state sovereignty, and stability in post-conflict governance. Egypt has also expressed concern over foreign interference that might worsen regional instability. While not a primary mediator, Egypt has played a supportive diplomatic role in regional forums and has hosted various dialogue initiatives aimed at reducing tensions between the parties.
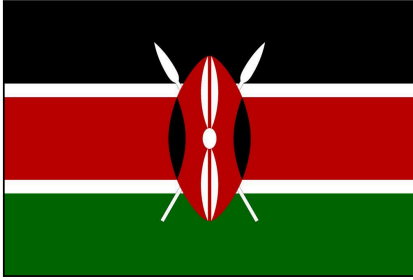
Kenya: Kenya has played a key role in helping bring peace to Sudan. It hosted the early talks that led to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and has strong political and economic ties with both Sudan and South Sudan. Nairobi continues to push for peace deals that include all sides, the full implementation of the CPA and later agreements, and long-term political reforms in South Sudan. Kenya also supports peacekeeping missions and has sent personnel to UN operations in the region. It backs international efforts to encourage democracy, the rule of law, and regional cooperation.

Russia: Russia has expanded its presence in the region in recent years, focusing on cooperation with Sudan, particularly in the areas of security, mining, and defense. Russian policy has favored a more state-centric approach, emphasizing sovereignty and non-intervention. Russia has expressed concern over what it views as politically motivated sanctions and has opposed international measures that it perceives as undermining national governments. Although not directly involved in the South Sudanese peace process to the same extent as other actors, Russia has maintained diplomatic engagement with both Khartoum and Juba and has advocated for regional solutions through dialogue between African states.

African Union: The African Union has worked hard throughout the conflict between Sudan and South Sudan to end hostilities and establish lasting peace. On June 29, the African Union Commission called on the parties in South Kordofan to cease hostilities and take steps to improve the welfare of the people. Although former South African President Thabo Mbeki and Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi tried to mediate to prevent tensions around the Blue Nile from spreading and to end the incident before it escalated, they were unable to prevent the problem from escalating.
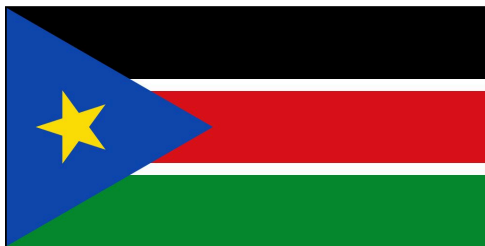
South Sudan: South Sudan condemned the seizure of the disputed Abyei region, which is home to mostly southerners and is closer to the south, as an "act of war". South Sudan expressed concern about the security situation in the Blue Nile and South Kordofan regions and the areas adjacent to them. It called for an investigation into the repressive and suppressive actions of the Sudanese Government and called for efforts to prevent the spread of violence.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD): The IGAD has mediated all disputes and conflicts between South Sudan and Sudan and has taken part in efforts to establish peace. The organization has been involved in almost all internal issues of Sudan since the end of the 20th century and has led the parties in important agreements such as the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Another of the main purposes of IGAD is to ensure the continuity of ceasefires and the continuation of peace negotiations. At the same time, IGAD supervises all the work that has been done and decided. It has also mediated between the two parties on economic cooperation and border security.

9. Possible Solutions

- Sudan and South Sudan should prioritize the peaceful finalization of their shared border, especially in disputed regions such as Abyei. Given their economic interdependence, both parties must also agree on the fair distribution of oil revenues and jointly manage export infrastructure. Clear frameworks on pipeline usage, maintenance responsibilities, and transit fees are essential to prevent future disputes and ensure stable economic relations.

- Strengthening border security by joint patrols and coordinated monitoring can help ease tensions and stop cross-border clashes. At the same time, working together on economic projects and trade can support recovery and improve living conditions. Expanding trade across the region could also boost both economies and help build lasting peace.

- The widespread displacement caused by conflict requires help from the international community. A well-organized humanitarian response should include safe routes for delivering aid, secure paths for people to return home, and a shared fund to support refugees and those displaced within the country. These steps are essential to protect civilians, help people return willingly, and support their reintegration after the conflict.

10.   Points to Cover

1. How can the final status of disputed regions such as Abyei, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile be determined in a manner that is accepted by both parties and the affected populations?

2. What steps can be taken to formally define the Sudan–South Sudan border while preventing renewed tension or conflict?

3. In what ways can oil revenues and infrastructure be managed jointly to ensure equitable economic benefits for both countries?

4. How can Sudan and South Sudan cooperate on border security to reduce cross-border violence and the movement of armed non-state actors?

5. What measures can be implemented to provide effective humanitarian assistance and ensure the voluntary, safe return of displaced persons and refugees?

6. Which terms of past agreements remain unfulfilled, and what realistic strategies could support their implementation in the current context?

7. What role should international stakeholders and regional actors play in the peace process, and how can their involvement be structured to respect national sovereignty?

8. How can economic cooperation between Sudan and South Sudan be promoted through mutual agreements, regional trade, and development partnerships?

11. Links and Further Resources

https://theglobalobservatory.org/2012/10/negotiating-peace-in-the-sudans-the-addis-ababa-cooperation-agreement/#:~:text=The%20Addis%20Ababa%20agreement%20is%20the%20result%20of,reach%20an%20agreement%20after%20three%20months%20of%20negotiations.

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