

Initiatives by the African Union and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development in the South Sudan Peace Process, 2013-2023

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ABSTRACT

The war in South Sudan has persisted despite the efforts by different players. This study focused on initiatives by the AU and IGAD to restore peace in South Sudan after civil war between 2013 and 2023. This study was anchored Neoliberal Institutionalism theory to argue that regional organizations supplement the role of states also enhance and reinforce by acting as arbitrators in state disputes. Regional organizations also reinforce and enhance the efforts of states in arbitration of international disputes. This study took an exploratory research design. Both primary and secondary methods of data collection were employed by the study. Purposive and snow balling sampling techniques were used to identify 410 respondents for field interviews. The study purposively identified 385 South Sudanese refugees in Nairobi. A total of 25 other respondents who included; representatives of the warring factions in South Sudan residing in Kenya, IGAD officials, EAC officials and Diplomats from IGAD member states. Data collected was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The study findings indicated that both AU and IGAD had failed to restore lasting peace in South Sudan despite efforts made.

INTRODUCTION

Virginia (2012) posits that the nature of conflict and political violence has evolved over the past two decades of the twenty-first century. Since the late 1990s, there has been a notable shift in peacekeeping and conflict resolution efforts from the United Nations to various continental and regional organizations. Consequently, entities such as the African Union (AU), East African Community (EAC), and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have played significant roles in peacekeeping missions in countries like Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan. Since the early 1990s, there has been a discernible rise in civil wars across Africa, which has posed threats to national stability and adversely affected regional integration and economic development. Chapter Eight of the UN Charter acknowledges the importance of Regional Organizations (REOs) in maintaining global security. Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have reported an increase in their involvement in regional peace-building initiatives, aligning with the principles outlined in the UN Charter (Adetula et al., 2016).

Kelly (2013) observes that the growing complexity of global security issues, coupled with an increase in intra-state conflicts, necessitates the involvement of Regional Economic Organizations (REOs) in peacekeeping initiatives. If not managed properly, these intra-state conflicts and associated political violence could extend to neighboring countries and beyond. The evolving landscape and rising incidence of civil wars underscore the vital contribution of civil society and regional organizations in facilitating peaceful conflict resolution. Minyori (2018) emphasizes the crucial role of civil society in the peace-building process. Empirical studies validate the significance of civil society's support and participation in peace initiatives. Thus, the involvement of REOs enhances the inclusivity, participatory nature, and acceptability of negotiations among conflicting parties. Furthermore, the participation of civil society, especially through regional organizations and coalitions, lends credibility to the reconciliation process and holds political leaders accountable to their commitments.

IGAD serves as the principal platform for dialogue regarding peace in South Sudan. However, the geopolitical interests of its member states in the conflict complicate this role. The effectiveness of IGAD in facilitating the peace process in South Sudan is called into question when member nations prioritize their own strategic objectives. It is essential to confront the challenges that IGAD faces in this peace initiative. IGAD's significance in maintaining regional balance cannot be overlooked. To achieve a sustainable resolution to the conflict, it is imperative to address the shifting internal dynamics of South Sudan as well as the divisions among IGAD member states. This analysis examines the efforts made by the African Union and IGAD to promote peace in South Sudan from 2013 to 2023.

Statement of the Problem

For more than twenty years, both the regional and international communities have concentrated their efforts on achieving peace and stability in South Sudan. Despite these endeavors, conflict and political violence have continued to exist, adapt, or resurface. International actors, whether through the allocation of foreign resources or the establishment of peacekeeping missions, have not succeeded in stabilizing South Sudan. Following the conclusion of the Cold War, Regional Economic Communities (REC) has increasingly engaged in regional peace-building initiatives. The growing intricacy of global security issues, coupled with rising intra-state conflicts, has led to heightened involvement of regional organizations in peacekeeping activities.

The civil unrest in South Sudan that erupted in December 2013 led to a profound humanitarian crisis, resulting in extensive displacement and numerous violations against civilians, particularly affecting women and children. This instability in South Sudan exerted considerable strain on neighboring countries and prompted a response from the international community. Various organizations, including IGAD, the AU, the EU, and the UN, have played crucial roles at different times in efforts to restore peace and stability in the region.

Both state and non-state entities have made efforts to restore peace in South Sudan. However, the ongoing conflict raises concerns regarding the prospects for achieving enduring peace and stability. The peace process has been sluggish, marked by instances of renewed conflict among the opposing factions. This study investigates the initiatives undertaken by the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to facilitate peace in South Sudan from 2013 to 2023.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the initiatives by the AU and IGAD to restore peace in South Sudan between 2013 and 2023.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Deng (2018) outlines the initiatives undertaken by the UN to secure enduring peace in Sudan following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in 2005. He notes that the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) was formalized through Resolution 1590, which aimed to facilitate the effective implementation of the CPA. The mission's responsibilities included providing humanitarian assistance, enabling the safe return of displaced individuals, and supporting global initiatives to enhance human rights. This study examined the contributions of various stakeholders in the pursuit of peace and stability following the civil conflict.

The United Nations acknowledges the significance of regional organizations in the context of international security at the regional level. Since the early 1990s, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have enhanced their participation in initiatives aimed at fostering peace within their respective regions (Adetula et al, 2016). As noted by Kelly (2013), the intricate nature of international security, coupled with an increase in intra-state conflicts, has made it imperative for regional organizations to engage in efforts to restore peace. This is particularly crucial as political violence and intra-state disputes can potentially escalate and affect neighboring countries and beyond if left unaddressed. This study examined the importance of RECs in peace-building efforts within their regions, highlighting the role of these organizations in facilitating peaceful resolutions amid a changing landscape characterized by a rise in civil conflicts.

The African Union (AU), established in May 2001, was tasked with fostering regional integration, solidarity, peace, and good governance across the continent. Against the backdrop of the civil war in South Sudan, this study investigated the AU's involvement in the peace process. In light of the ongoing conflict in South Sudan, the research concentrated on the AU's efforts in mediating peace in conflict-affected African nations. Additionally, the study explored the challenges faced by the continental organization in its pursuit of establishing peace throughout the continent.

Iliwade and Agbo (2012) investigated the initiatives undertaken by ECOWAS to uphold regional security. Their analysis focuses on the organization's involvement in Liberia and the Ivory Coast, exploring the internal dynamics of West Africa and their impact on ECOWAS. Additionally, they assess how ECOWAS has navigated a highly volatile and precarious region. The authors conclude that the security strategies and framework of ECOWAS have undergone substantial transformations in the post-Cold War era. Francis (2009) highlights the obstacles that hinder ECOWAS's capacity to sustain regional peace and security. These challenges encompass the regionalization of domestic civil conflicts and their repercussions on the actions of regional leaders, political instability within certain member states, and the considerable costs associated with maintaining peace and security in the region (Ibid, 2009). The issues faced by ECOWAS, stemming from the deteriorating security landscape in West Africa, have informed this study's exploration of the evolving dynamics in the peace process in South Sudan.

Deng (2018) analyzes the contributions of IGAD to the peace process in South Sudan, highlighting its dual role as both an international organization and a coalition of individual member states. He asserts that IGAD serves as the principal forum for the peace negotiations in South Sudan. Notably, IGAD played a crucial role in facilitating the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, which concluded the second civil war. Other significant international entities involved in the CPA's endorsement included the Troika nations—comprising the United States, Norway, and the United Kingdom—as well as China and Russia.

Despite IGAD's eventual achievements in brokering a resolution among the conflicting parties, the mediation process has faced considerable challenges throughout the conflict. These challenges stem from the adversarial mindset of the warring factions, which perpetuates their reliance on military solutions and hinders the possibility of reaching a negotiated settlement, alongside the regional leaders' focus on their own bilateral interests. This study delves into the obstacles IGAD encountered as a regional economic community during the South Sudan peace process, addressing the underlying factors contributing to the region's persistent lack of enduring peace.

According to Afriyie and Apphia (2020), the United States has played a crucial role in the peace process in South Sudan. They contend that the U.S., which provided both diplomatic and humanitarian support, significantly influenced Sudan's decision to secede in 2011. Nyadera (2018) analyzes the achievements and shortcomings of IGAD in the South Sudan peace process. Consequently, the mediation team appointed by IGAD succeeded in mitigating hostilities between the conflicting parties. The threat of international sanctions, including a proposed arms embargo, compelled the warring factions to engage in negotiations. These international efforts culminated in a peace agreement signed by the factions in August 2015 (Mulupi, 2015; Tchie, 2019).

As previously mentioned, the threat of international sanctions can effectively encourage warring parties to come to the negotiating table. However, certain leaders may disregard agreements made during negotiations, even violating cease-fires, if they perceive that the outcomes do not serve their interests. Despite this, violent confrontations have continued, with both sides frequently violating the established cease-fire. This research investigates the effectiveness of IGAD and other stakeholders in restoring peace in the war-torn nation. The delayed involvement of IGAD in the South Sudan peace process has raised concerns. The literature reviewed in this section enhances the understanding of the various roles played by different actors in peace-building efforts in South Sudan, including IGAD, the Troika, China, and Russia.

Theoretical Framework

This research is grounded in Neoliberal Institutionalism theory, positing that regional organizations not only complement the functions of states but also strengthen and support them by serving as mediators in inter-state conflicts. Furthermore, regional organizations bolster and augment the initiatives of states in the resolution of international disputes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study takes the form of an exploratory research design to interrogate the initiatives by the AU and IGAD to restore peace in South Sudan between 2013 and 2023. This study was conducted in Nairobi Kenya that hosts hundreds of thousands of South Sudanese nationals. The target population comprised; South Sudanese refugees in Kenya, representatives of the warring factions in South Sudan residing in Kenya, IGAD officials, EAC officials and Diplomats from IGAD member states. Purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were used to select 410 respondents distributed as follows;

Table 1.1 Categories of Respondents

	Category of Respondent	Number
1	SPLM (Government faction)	5
2	SPLM IO (Rebel faction)	5
3.	IGAD Secretariat	5
4	EAC Officials	5
5	Diplomats from IGAD member Countries	5
6	South Sudanese Refugees in Nairobi	385
	Total	410

The main research instruments for this study comprised questionnaires and interviews schedules with both closed and open ended questions. Interview guides comprised of open ended questions to give the respondents room to respond to questions without much restriction. Questionnaires were semi-structured and composed of closed ended questions. Data collected in this study was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively.

Initiatives by the African Union and IGAD in the Restoration of Peace in South Sudan

This study selected 410 respondents for field interviews. Questionnaires that generated quantitative data were administered to 385 South Sudanese refugees residing in Nairobi. One on one interviews were conducted among 25 respondents who include; representatives of the warring factions in South Sudan residing in Kenya, IGAD officials, EAC officials and Diplomats from IGAD member states. Out of the 385 distributed questionnaires, 308 were returned. The high response rate was attributed to the fact that most South Sudanese refugees are keenly following developments in the peace process. This represented a response rate of 80% which the researcher considered adequate. This is represented in table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Response Rate

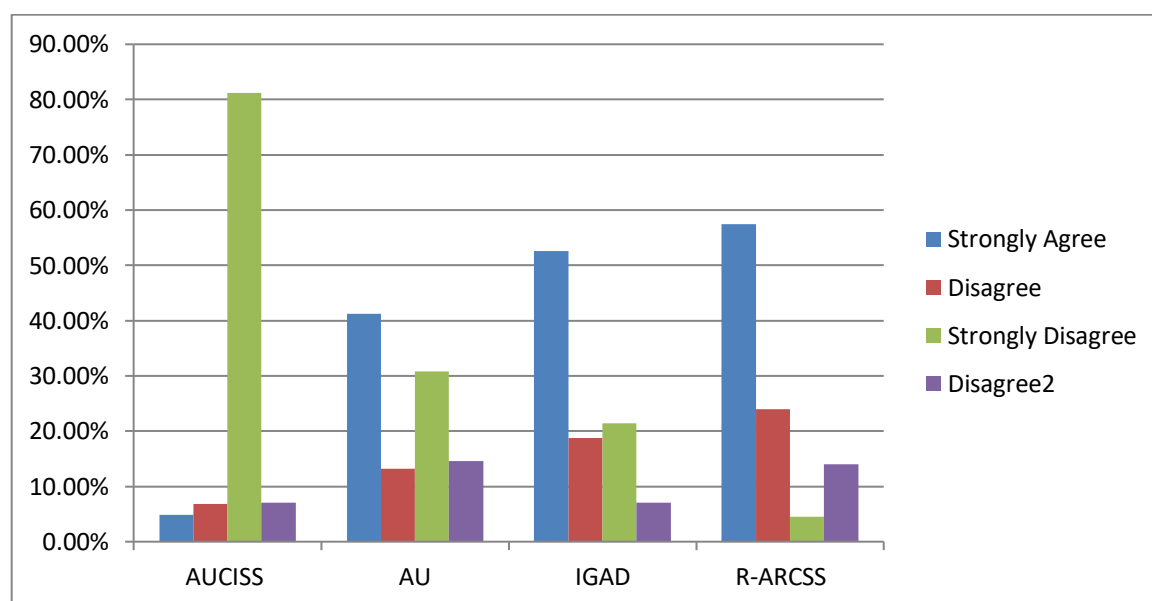
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Responded	308	80%

Not Responded	77	20%
Total	385	100%

To achieve its intended objective, this study posed four questions to respondents. The questions revolved around the effectiveness of the African Union Commission Investigating South Sudan (AUCISS), effectiveness of the AU and IGAD and the effectiveness of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS). The responses are depicted in Table 1.2 and Graph 1.1 below.

Table 1.2 Effectiveness of Initiatives by AUCISS, AU, IGAD and R-ARCSS

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total
Effectiveness of AUCISS Recommendations	15 4.9%	21 6.8%	250 81.2%	22 7.1%	308 100%
Effectiveness of Initiatives by the AU	127 41.2%	41 13.3%	95 30.8%	45 14.6%	308 100%
Effectiveness of IGAD in the peace process	162 52.6%	58 18.8%	66 21.4%	22 7.1%	308 100%
Effectiveness of the R-ARCSS	177 57.5%	74 24.0%	14 4.5%	43 14.0%	308 100%



Graph 1.1 Effectiveness of Initiatives by AUCISS, AU, IGAD and R-ARCSS

To begin with, respondents were questioned on the effectiveness of AUCISS recommendations on the restoration of peace in South Sudan. Out of the 308 respondents interviewed, 250 representing 81.2% strongly disagreed that there the recommendations by the AUCISS were effective, while 22 representing 7.1% slightly disagreed. 15 representing 4.9% strongly agreed while 21 representing 6.8% slightly agreed. Cumulatively, 272 out of 308 representing 88.3% were of the opinion that recommendations by the AUCISS were ineffective. On the other hand 36 out of 308 representing 11.7% were of the opinion that the measures recommended by the AUCISS were effective. This is depicted in the pie chart below.

Respondents who noted that the recommendations of the AUCISS were ineffective argued that the AU lacked the capacity to enforce the recommendations. This has been the biggest weakness with the AU

recommendations in civil conflict situations in various parts of the continent since its inception in the year 2000. Those who noted of the effectiveness of the recommendations argued that the formation of the AUCISS itself deterred the culprits from further perpetuating human rights abuses for fears of being taken to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for trials as had been in previous cases.

Second, respondents were questioned on the effectiveness of initiatives by the AU. Out of the 308 respondents interviewed, 127 representing 41.2% strongly agreed, while 41 representing 13.3% slightly agreed that initiatives by the AU in the peace process in South Sudan were effective. 95 representing 30.8% strongly disagreed while 45 representing 14.6% slightly disagreed. Cumulatively, 168 out of 308 representing 54.5% were of the opinion that initiatives by the AU in the peace process in South Sudan were effective. On the other hand 140 out of 308 representing 45.5% were of the opinion that initiatives by the AU in the peace process in South Sudan were ineffective.

Respondents who noted that initiatives by the AU were effective argued that the continental body managed to bring the warring factions to the negotiating table. This enabled the peace process in South Sudan to begin. Those who noted that the AU initiatives were ineffective argued that such efforts were not able to enforce a lasting ceasefire between the warring groups. Accordingly, fighting between the two antagonistic groups continued even after the signing of the ceasefire treaty of 2015 in Addis Ababa.

Third respondents were questioned on the effectiveness of IGAD in the peace process. Out of the 308 respondents interviewed, 162 representing 52.8% strongly agreed, while 58 representing 18.8% slightly agreed that IGAD has been effective in the peace process in South Sudan. 66 representing 21.4% strongly disagreed while 22 representing 7.1% slightly disagreed that IGAD had been effective. Cumulatively, 220 out of 308 representing 71.4% were of the opinion that IGAD has been effective in the peace process in South Sudan. On the other hand 88 out of 308 representing 28.6% disagreed that that IGAD has been effective in the peace process in South Sudan.

Those who supported the assertion that IGAD had been effective noted that the regional body was able to bring the warring factions to the negotiation table from where the first ceasefire agreement was signed in January 2014. It was noted that this meeting set the process for the subsequent meetings that culminated in the signing of the R-ARCSS treaty of 12th September 2018. Respondents who were of the opinion that IGAD was ineffective noted of the numerous instances whereby the parties to the conflict did not stick to the agreements reached. They note of particular concern the breaching of ceasefire agreements by both parties. To add to this the respondents noted of the numerous challenges faced by the regional body in the peace process as a sign of failure.

This study finally questioned whether the R-ARCSS signed on 12th September 2018 would translate to lasting peace in South Sudan considering that previous attempts had failed. Respondents were interviewed on the possibility of lasting peace through the signing of the R-ARCSS. Out of the 308 respondents interviewed, 177 representing 57.5% strongly agreed, while 74 representing 24% slightly agreed that there was the possibility of the R-ARCSS resolving the civil war in South Sudan. 14 representing 4.5% strongly disagreed while 43 representing 14% slightly disagreed. Cumulatively, 251 out of 308 representing 81.5% were of the opinion that there was the possibility of the R-ARCSS in resolving the civil war in South Sudan. On the other hand 57 out of 308 representing 18.5% disagreed that the R-ARCSS was capable of solving the conflict in South Sudan

Respondents who supported the position that the R-ARCSS could translate into long term peace argued that it was a more inclusive process as compared to previous agreements. They particularly noted of the power sharing arrangement in which the various parties to the conflict were accommodated in government. Those who dismissed the R-ARCSS initiative were of the view that it had failed to tackle the main triggers to the December 2013 civil conflict namely, ethnicity, corruption and centralization of power around the presidency. Some noted that what the R-ARCSS achieved was only to appease the egoistic appetites of the parties to the conflict. They were particularly concerned with how the R-ARCSS was going to bring about justice, accountability and healing of the people of South Sudan during the civil war.

The mandate of the AUCISS was to investigate violations of human rights and propose measures to halt the violence during the civil conflict. Additionally, the panel was responsible for addressing issues related to reconciliation, healing, and accountability in the aftermath of the conflict. The commission was established for duration of three months. The members of AUCISS included former Nigerian President Olesegun Obasanjo (Chair), Sophia Akuffo from Ghana, Bineta Diop from Senegal, and Professors Mahmoud Mamdani from Uganda and Pacifique Manirakiza from Burundi (AU, PSC, 2015). AUCISS members traveled to South Sudan to conduct interviews with NGOs, community leaders, and victims of human rights violations in order to collect first-hand accounts.

The AUCISS was initially intended to release its findings after a three-month period; however, this plan was ultimately abandoned due to concerns that such a disclosure could jeopardize the ongoing peace negotiations in Addis Ababa (Powell, 2015). As reported by CEPO (2016), the report was eventually published on October 15, 2015, revealing that both factions involved in the conflict had committed serious violations of human rights and other offenses. The panel advised the African Union (AU) to create a legal framework that would be led, managed, and funded by African entities, with support from the United Nations, to ensure accountability for the offenders. However, the identities of those responsible for the attacks were not publicly disclosed; instead, they were referred to the AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC). Additionally, the AUCISS recommended that the AU establish a reparations fund to provide compensation to victims of human rights abuses (Deng, 2015).

The African Union (AU) demonstrated a prompt response to the conflict in South Sudan; however, it fell short in ensuring accountability for the perpetrators. This represents a notable weakness within the AU's framework. In the 2015 peace agreement, the AU asserted its responsibility to hold individuals accountable for human rights violations. Nevertheless, the organization became largely inactive in South Sudan. It did not undertake significant measures to establish a tribunal aimed at prosecuting those responsible for such violations.

On a positive note, the AU successfully facilitated a series of peace negotiations aimed at restoring stability in South Sudan. Collaborating with IGAD and partnering with East African nations, the AU organized discussions in locations such as Addis Ababa, Nigeria, South Africa, and Namibia to unite the conflicting parties. These diplomatic efforts culminated in January 2014 with the signing of a cease-fire agreement in Addis Ababa. It can be inferred that the AU acted swiftly in response to South Sudan's civil war, with the intention of achieving a sustainable resolution to the conflict. By working alongside IGAD, the AU effectively brought the opposing factions together for negotiations, thereby establishing a foundation for future peace talks.

Despite these achievements, the AU encountered shortcomings in various aspects of the South Sudan peace process. Initially, the delay in publicizing the AUCISS report hindered the intervention efforts. Furthermore, the AU's peace process in South Sudan exhibited greater effectiveness in coordination during the intervention phase, which ultimately led to a postponement in the implementation of the AUCISS's recommendations. These recommendations could have facilitated justice, accountability, healing, and reconciliation. This analysis evaluates the effectiveness of the AU's initiatives in promoting peace in South Sudan.

In evaluating the contribution of the African Union (AU) Commission to the restoration of peace in South Sudan, this study concluded that the continental body had a limited positive impact. This limitation stemmed from deficiencies in both the formulation and enforcement of sanctions. Although both factions committed violations of human rights, no individuals were held accountable. Furthermore, no measures were taken against the two leaders, Salva Kiir and Riek Machar, despite clear evidence of their lack of commitment to achieving a peaceful resolution to the crisis they instigated. Megistu (2018) identifies several challenges facing the IGAD-led peace initiative in South Sudan. A significant obstacle was Uganda's involvement as a member state in the peace process. Following the outbreak of civil conflict in December 2013, Uganda deployed troops to assist the Salva Kiir administration in combating the rebels. Uganda justified this action by claiming it was necessary to avert further violence. The Ugandan military openly endorsed President Kiir's government.

Another challenge was the rivalry and internal discord among IGAD member states. Sudan, under President Al Bashir, was strategically positioned to facilitate peace negotiations in South Sudan due to its geographical

proximity. However, the Salva Kiir faction harbored suspicions towards the Khartoum regime, which was perceived to be supporting the Machar-led SPLM/A-IO. Additionally, the Sudanese government had vested interests in the oil-rich Upper Nile region of South Sudan. Conversely, Kenya maintained significant economic interests in South Sudan and supported the Kiir administration for strategic reasons. Ethiopia, possessing the largest population and military strength in the region, played a crucial role by chairing the IGAD-led peace talks. Ethiopia's involvement was also motivated by its desire to protect its western borders, necessitating military engagement in Somalia and subsequently in the South Sudan conflict. The divergent interests of various IGAD member states have significantly impeded the peace process in South Sudan.

The third obstacle to the peace talks led by IGAD was the refusal or violation of peace agreements by the conflicting parties. The factions demonstrated a profound lack of commitment and significant political fervor. This behavior illustrated how both sides in the conflict disregarded ceasefire agreements at their discretion, despite IGAD's attempts to facilitate negotiations. Additionally, the slow progress of the peace process can be linked to IGAD's insufficient institutional framework. As noted by Mengistu (2018), IGAD opted to appoint special envoys for peace mediation in South Sudan instead of assigning these responsibilities to the Heads of State Council.

Notwithstanding these challenges, IGAD merits recognition for its initial responses to the civil crisis. The organization successfully encouraged the warring factions to convene for negotiations shortly after the outbreak of the civil war. In 2014, IGAD facilitated six rounds of peace talks among the conflicting parties. It is important to highlight that each round of discussions lasted only a few hours or days. These negotiations resulted in both agreements and disagreements (The Sudan Tribune, 2014). In light of these challenges, this study examined IGAD's effectiveness in the South Sudanese peace process.

CONCLUSION

The African Union (AU) demonstrated a modest level of effectiveness in its peace restoration efforts in South Sudan. This limited success can be attributed to the AU's insufficient capacity to enforce its recommendations, as highlighted by the findings of the African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan (AUCISS). The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) also encountered several obstacles in the peace process for South Sudan. The divergent interests among various IGAD member states have hindered progress in the peace negotiations.

Additionally, the third challenge faced by the IGAD-led peace talks was the rejection or breach of peace agreements by the conflicting parties. The lack of dedication to the peace process by these factions significantly impeded progress. Nevertheless, this study acknowledges IGAD's commendable initial responses to the civil conflict. IGAD successfully persuaded the warring parties to engage in negotiations promptly following the outbreak of the civil conflict. Ultimately, IGAD facilitated the signing of a revitalized agreement aimed at achieving peace among the warring factions in South Sudan. This treaty was signed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on September 12, 2018, and is known as the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS).

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