

## **THE ROLE OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN AFRICA: THE CASE OF IGAD'S PEACE PROCESS IN SOUTH SUDAN**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Nowadays, most Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa are playing a crucial role in maintaining peace and security in Africa through resolving conflicts in a democratic and civilized way. Being one of the major building blocks recognized by African Union, IGAD is striving for sustaining peace and security throughout its turbulent and conflict raging operational area. In view of that, the objective of this paper is thus to assess the role of RECs in resolving conflicts in the case of IGAD's peace process in South Sudan. To meet the objective of the study, secondary sources of data were utilized. After gathering the necessary data, qualitative methods of data analysis were employed to discuss, analyze and drawing inferences. Accordingly, the results of the study show that IGAD and its extension IGAD-PLUS had lightened some hopes in opening up ways for negotiation of the warring parties. Meanwhile, the peace process is heavily challenged by factors such as the strong need of the Uganda's troop to stay in South Sudan, the deep division and rivalry among the regional powers, the reluctance of the warring parties and the poor institutionalization of IGAD. Hence, primarily, IGAD should use any means possible to withdraw the Uganda's military force from the country. Without withdrawing this unrecognized and unacceptable military intervention, peace is unthinkable in South Sudan. Moreover, imposing sanctions in addition to the mediation process is a viable solution to stop the violation of the ceasefire accords by the parties in conflict.*

**KEYWORDS:** Conflict Resolution, Peace Process, Ceasefire Accords, Warring Parties, IGAD, IGAD-PLUS, RECs, South Sudan.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa are playing a pivotal role in promoting peace, security and economic sustainability throughout the continent. Especially, since the 2000 Lome Summit of the of AU, which laid down a foundation for the adoption of the Constitutive Act of the AU, the RECs are recognized as a basis for addressing the daunting and rampant conflicts and they are also mandated with accelerating the economic development of the continent through facilitating the integration and cooperation processes in between the African states. That is from this viewpoint that article 3 of the Constitutive Act of AU and the article 88 of the Abuja Treaty envisaged RECs as the operational arms of the AU's goal of a peaceful and prosperous continent. Beyond their conceptual frameworks and theoretical establishment, RECs are also becoming known by their concrete actions whereby they are promoting peace and political stability and act as cornerstones for economic integration in their respective geographical settings. So far, they have shown remarkable achievements in dealing with the causes of conflicts, preventing, managing and resolving fierce disputes and

counteracting to the new and dynamic challenges. IGAD is one of these institutions, which move ahead as far as conflict and its settlement are concerned.

Found in a very turbulent and conflict-ravaged area of the world, IGAD is highly challenged by continuous conflicts which have been seen in different times of all member states of the regional grouping. Since a long time ago, the Horn of Africa (HOA), where IGAD is found, is identified by its political chaos and instabilities. Violent conflict is more the norm than the exception in the Horn of Africa (Muhabie 2015). The current intra-ethnic conflict of the South Sudan, the continued conflict between South Kordofan and Blue Nile, the bloody and violent fighting between Sudan and South Sudan, a long stalemate between Ethiopia and Eritrea and the long-lasting internal warfare of Somalia are some of the typical instances of the region's instability. Soon or later, this creates a high burden on Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in maintaining peace and security throughout the region. With its limitation, IGAD has achieved a number of peacemaking processes in the sub-region. Particularly, since 1996 (after IGADD was transformed into IGAD), the Authority has largely turned its attention to peace and security issues in these countries. It has successfully mediated numerous conflicts together with the OAU and later AU and the United Nations as well (Gumedze 2011).

Since the date of the inauguration of IGAD, member states reached into consensus: to wipe out threats to regional cooperation and peace, to deal with disputes between member states, and to institute effective mechanisms of consultation and cooperation for the peaceful settlement of differences and disputes (IGAD 1996). To do so, in 2002, a Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) was established to manage the inter- state conflicts in the sub-region. Moreover, the deployments of peacekeeping force in the likes of Somalia are the substantial achievements of the inter-governmental integration processes.

The objective of this study is thus to assess the role of IGAD in conflict prevention, management and resolution in the Horn of Africa with a special focus on South Sudan.

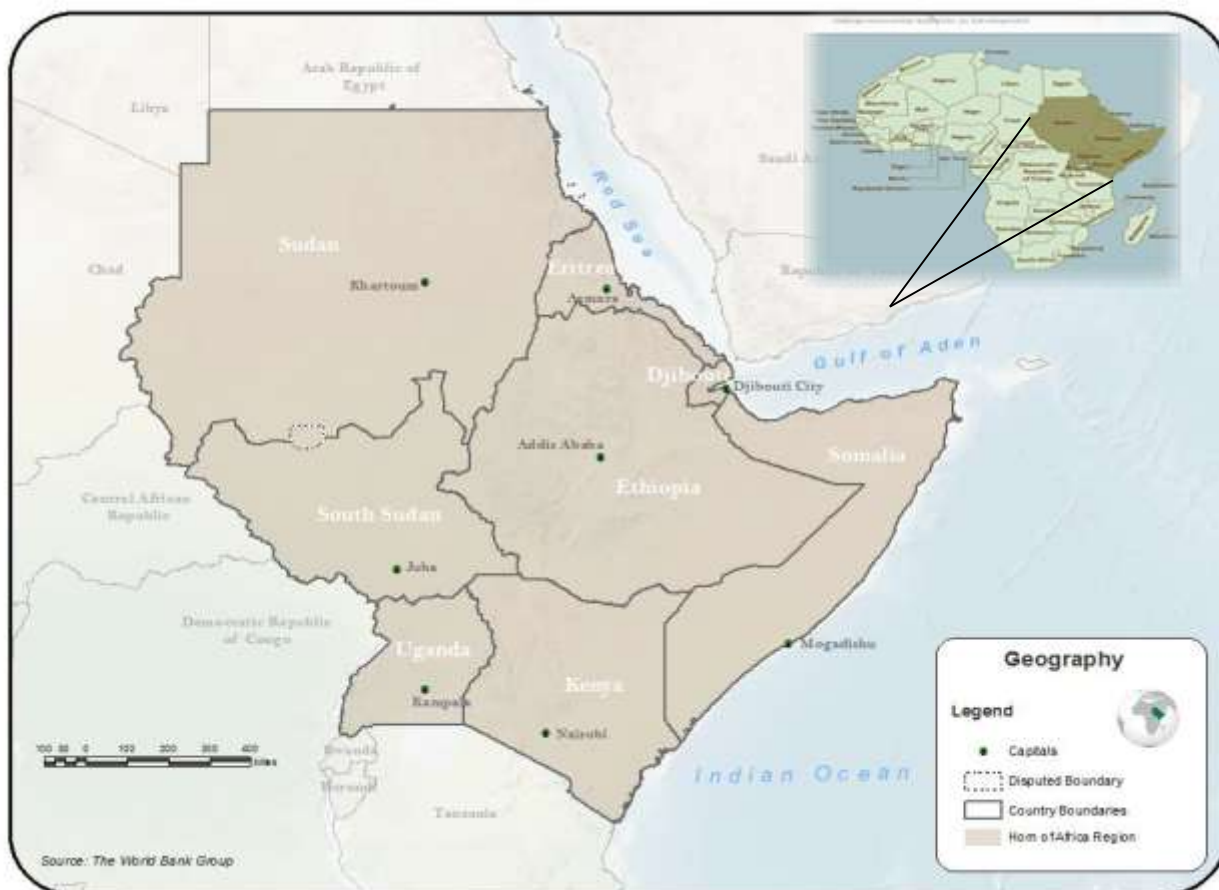
### **IGAD: An Overview**

Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is an extension of its precedent - the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Desertification (IGADD), which was founded in 1986, with a very narrow mandate of addressing environmental issues such as drought and desertification. Though limited in scope, starting from its inauguration and more particularly from the 1990s onwards, IGADD had been served as a political platform and a means for maintaining peace and security in the HOA. Considering the fact that the region is very vulnerable for repeated famine, drought and inter- and intra-state conflicts; the organization of IGADD was very essential. It was initially founded by six sovereign states including Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Somalia, and Uganda. But, soon or later, in 1993, Eritrea joined the bloc after its secession from Ethiopia. Since 2011, South Sudan also admitted as a new member of the authority.

IGAD is one of the African Union's (AU) recognized Regional Economic Communities (RECs), with over 200 million people and an area of 5,222,520 square kilometers. Despite the organization's narrow initial scope, IGADD summits provided a venue for meetings between member states to solve supplementary issues of mutual concern including peace and security. IGADD facilitated peace between Ethiopia and Somalia. By 1994, the members of IGADD had come to realize that the developmental problems of the region extended beyond the impact

of environmental degradation. Accordingly, on March 21, 1996, IGADD member states decided to transform the organization into the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The new IGAD was launched in Djibouti November 25–26, 1996 (IGAD 2001).

**Figure 1. Map of IGAD's Operational Area**



**Source:** World Bank, 2014

With the inauguration of IGAD, great emphasis was given to the peaceful settlement of regional conflicts as a means for achieving sustainable development. IGAD member states agreed: a) to take effective collective measures to eliminate threats to regional cooperation, peace, and stability; b) to establish effective mechanisms of consultation and cooperation for the peaceful settlement of differences and disputes; and c) to agree to deal with disputes between member states within this sub-regional mechanism before they are referred to other regional or international organizations (IGAD 1996). To meet the above-enlisted objectives, IGAD has given a due emphasis on conflict prevention, management and resolution together with other developmental spheres. The need for engaging IGAD in the Somali and Sudanese peace processes was one of the major reasons that brought about the transformation of IGAD.

Nowadays, notwithstanding with its limitations, IGAD is showing a day to day improvement with respect to its intended objectives. The coming of relative peace and stability within the member nations and the end of the dictatorial regimes had positively contributed for the better achievement of IGAD throughout the region. But still, the issue of surrendering sovereignty to

the supranational power of the authority is one of the hindrances that are challenging the bloc in a greater manner (Kidist 2009).

### **Institutional Mechanisms adopted by IGAD to Address Conflicts in the Region**

Beginning from its inception, IGAD has assumed strong institutional frameworks so as to address inter- and intra-state conflicts in the region. In its 2003 summit, the heads of states and governments had reached a consensus to launch the Peace and Security Strategy, which aimed at resolving conflicts, maintaining peace and security and synchronizing the peace-building processes.

The IGAD's peace and security framework is based on the Peace and Security Council of the UN and the AU as well as IGAD-specific agreements and mechanisms such as the Protocol on the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN, 2002), the policy framework for the Eastern Africa Standby Brigade (EASBRIG, 2005) and IGAD Capacity Building Against Terrorism (ICPAT). By adopting all these protocols and agreements, the Peace and Security Strategy of IGAD entails to promote collaboration in peace and security threats, strengthening the potential of member states in early warning conflicts, if not resolving them (ibid).

During the 1990s, the HOA was in a state of violent conflicts. It has been identified with several inter-ethnic conflicts, the smuggling of small arms, inter-state wars, and the collapse of the state, which particularly refers to Somalia. Recognizing these all threatening conflicts, in 1995, the member states of IGAD had agreed to form a mechanism that could address inter- and intra-state disputes. Having this objective in mind, in 2002, Heads of States had laid a foundation for the organization of CEWARN, which is mandated for "receiving and sharing information concerning potentially violent conflicts as well as their outbreak and escalation in the IGAD region, undertake analysis of the information and develop case scenarios and formulate options for response."

Even though CEWARN had framed to cover all types of conflicts, it has given more emphasis on monitoring cross-border pastoral conflicts. But in its 2007-2011 strategy, it had planned to extend into other kinds of conflicts.

According to the reports of CEWARN, it has shown some success stories especially on the areas of database development and management on recurrent conflicts, capacity building and creating trust between member states. However, it has been challenged by capacity-related problems, inadequate infrastructural facilities and the wide and complex nature of the conflicts that exists in the region.

### **The Role of IGAD in Resolving South Sudan's Conflict**

#### **The Historical Evolvement of South Sudan's Conflict**

On July 9, 2011, South Sudan, the newest nation in the world, was born. The people of South Sudan had suffered a lot in search of peace, stability and development. Indeed, independence was the only way to liberate the country from decades of human right violation, exploitation, corruption and marginalization by the Albeshir's government. Meanwhile, the referendum of South Sudan did not save the country from entering into another form of chaos and instabilities. Following its secession, it was horrible to hear that the country had got into a continuous border fighting with Sudan. That had cost the country to incur millions of dollars and loss of hundreds

of human life. Provided that, within two years of independence the country had got into a civil war. This has been triggered by the political division that has been erupted between President Salva Kiir and the former Vice President Riek Machar.

Though the beginning of the conflict was because of the power competition between the two presidents, currently it has changed into an ethnic conflict. How does it transform? As soon as the country seceded from Sudan, there was a power sharing between the two largest ethnic groups of South Sudan (Nuer and Dinka) wherein Kiir has been appointed as a President of the country and Machar as a vice president. Nevertheless, in 2013 things has been changed. Following the Kiir's leave of the country for some time, members of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) party had blamed Kiir of dictatorial and ethnic tendencies. As a result, President Kiir dismissed the entire cabinet and Vice-President Riek Machar. This was the fundamental cause for the eruption of the civil war between Nuer and Dinka members of the presidential guard. Since that day, the fighting spreads all over the country.

As a response to the dispute, a number of peace talks and ceasefires were put into place to curb the disputes; however, nothing has been yet changed. Until these days, the fighting in this young nation led by the two prominent rival political leaders; Riek, a Nuer and Salva Kiir, a Dinka, has caused a killing of thousands of peoples and displacement of about 2.2 million peoples and almost half of the population of the country have let to rely on aid.

This multi-dimensional intra-state conflict calls the sub-regional, regional and the international community to play a role in resolving the conflict. Researchers on the area disclosed that IGAD among other peace process players of the country is mentioned for its repeated intervention in the peace-building processes. Therefore, the following section of this paper focuses on the role and contributions of IGAD in mediating the South Sudan peace agreements.

### **IGAD's Peace Process in South Sudan**

The peace negotiation in South Sudan had taken almost two years. But the outcome is still negligible. In the mediation process, different parties have been participated. Among these, IGAD has been mentioned as the primary organ that struggles for ending the civil war in the country. The peace talks, mediated by IGAD, were led by special envoys that came from the big three regional powers of the authority. These are Ethiopia, Kenya, and Sudan. Though IGAD had put much effort to the greatest extent possible, the warring parties are reluctant to reach into agreement. Apart from the disputants, the member states of IGAD are also accused of their rivalries and deep-rooted regional division in the processes of mediation. To overcome these shortcomings, IGAD has widened its mediation process into the "IGAD-PLUS" initiative, which is composed of the IGAD itself, the AU, UN, China, U.S., UK, European Union (EU), Norway and the IGAD Partners Forum (IPF).

The "IGAD-PLUS" initiative is intended to provide an international facade behind IGAD in resolving the conflict that severely degrades the country within this short period of time. Meanwhile, it is not effective as it has been designed due to the fact that the parties in processes are disappointed by the IGAD as well as the country in question.

Notwithstanding with the challenges of IGAD, it has to be appreciated for its prior responses in addressing the conflict. Starting from the beginning of the conflict, IGAD has led much effort in mediating the worrying parties to come into negotiations and to stop the disputes. Since



2014, IGAD has led more than seven peace round talks between the conflicting parties. Sadly enough, all rounds of peace talks were concluded by a very short - may be days or hours-long - agreements or complete disagreements that have resulted with substantial setbacks (The Sudan Tribune, 2014).

In 2014 alone more than six peace talks were held. To mention some,

**The First Round Peace Talks:** With a focus of reaching into a cessation of hostilities agreement, a release of the prisoners and a process of dialogue, the first round talks began on January 4, 2014, in Ethiopia. This round was full of delays and setbacks. However, in the end, the cessation of hostilities agreement was signed on January 23, 2014. But it was terrible to hear that the disputants had breached the agreement just after two days of their consensus.

**The Second Round Peace Talks:** It was conducted on March 2014. With respect to its designed objectives, the second peace talk was not as effective as intended. The only thing that was successful during this round was the authorization of an IGAD Protection and Deterrent Force (PDF), which was designed to monitor and enforce the ceasefire. As part of this force, 90 Ethiopian peacekeepers were deployed in South Sudan.

**The Third Round Peace Talks:** Just after a month of the second round peace talk, the third was taken place in April 2014. As like that of the above two peace talks, this round was also ineffective and short-lived. It has been manifested by the fighting of the two opposing groups on May 22, 2014, that caused the displacement of 2000 peoples in the Upper Nile State.

**The Fourth Round Peace Talks:** Conducted on June 9, 2014, this round was focusing on the formation of a transitional unity government. Nevertheless, it was not an easy task provided the divergent views of the parties in conflict. What a form of government should be formed was the point of departure at this time.

**The Fifth Round Peace Talks:** This round was held on July 20, 2014, to compromise the complaint (Unfair inclusivity of IGAD in the selection of stakeholders' process) of the rebelling parties. However, it has failed because of the rejection of the opposition parties to attend the talks. It was really sad for both the mediators and the international community who want to see an effective peace agreement in between the disputants.

**The Sixth Round Peace Talks:** The last but not least peace talk in 2014 was carried out on November 10, 2014. This round was expected to be fruitful since there were a great zeal and devotion from both sides to be abided by the cessation of hostilities agreement signed in the first round and other documents that include the likes of the implementation matrix. In this round, IGAD seemed to be serious in warning the warring parties to be abiding by the COH agreement and to work on the power-sharing accord. Meanwhile, the peace agreement was concluded by a heavy fighting between the opposition and government forces.

In 2015, the February's and March's peace talks were the bold peace negotiations that were resumed by the government of South Sudan and the rebels, which were facilitated by the Horn of Africa bloc, IGAD. On February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, President Kiir, and Dr. Machar have signed a new ceasefire yet had permissions to continue their discussions on some argumentative issues like power sharing and formation of the transitional government. After a month on March 5, 2015, which otherwise was called as the final peace deal between the government of the country and the SPLM (IO) ruined with no agreement. The collapse of the talk had exacerbated the conflict than it was before. The March 2015 IGAD report shows that after the violation of the

peace deal, civilians were killed, women and children were abused and major infrastructural facilities in the Upper Nile and Unity states were destroyed.

Following the ineffectiveness of the above IGAD-led peace talks, on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2015 IGAD publicized a new peace negotiation approach called as the IGAD-PLUS formula. Initially, the formula was expected to be implemented on April. However, due to the lack of commitment and political will from the conflicting parties, it has been fully implemented on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2015. Therefore, the major decisions and challenges of the August 17 and 26 Peace deal will briefly discussed in the following sections.

On August 17, 2015; a historical IGAD-PLUS peace negotiation (deal) was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The proposal was comprehensive and inclusive. In the first place, it demands a permanent ceasefire between the warring parties not later than 72 hours after signing the accord. In the second place, the peace proposal has given 30 days for militants to assemble and canton. Moreover, it explicitly stated that the Kampala's troops to leave the country within 45 days and other overseas militia forces to be disarmed and back to their home. The peace deal is also promising to return Dr. Machar to his former position, the vice presidency.

On the due date, only Riek Machar, leader of SPLM/IO and Pagan Amum, on behalf of the Former Political Detainees signed the deal. However, President Salva Kiir regrets to sign the agreement and requests an additional 15 days for consultations. Finally, on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2015, he signed the deal with the rebelling parties except some serious reservations.

As it has been discussed earlier, even if seven and more ceasefires have already been agreed from both sides of the parties in conflict, all of the agreements were breached within few days, if not hours. So, this could lead us into raising questions like why those peace agreements proposed by IGAD as well as IGAD-PLUS were not effective. This can be seen from both sides i.e. from the IGAD's/IGAD-PLUS's ill-defined peace agreement proposals and the reluctance and refusal of the warring parties to be abided by such agreements.

To Brian Adeba (2015), the peace proposal suggested by IGAD is problematic. He argued on three key elements of the proposal which have been provided by IGAD. These include the why and the wherefore of the transitional government, the power-sharing formula and inclusivity issues.

Power sharing is one of the controversial issues that are expected to disrupt the peace deal. According to the July 2015 proposal of IGAD, at the national level, the power sharing proportion for the government, the SPLM-IO and the SPLM-FD and other political parties would be 53, 33 and 14 percents respectively. The arrangement is fully accepted by the SPLM-IO. Nonetheless, there is a doubt from the Kiir's government side to accept the quota which could hold him down from prior demand (70 percent). Brian Adeba (2015) additionally argued that the origin and the role of the members of the SPLM-FD have been misread by IGAD. Giving a political party role for these peoples is deceitful. All opposition parties cannot deserve the role of political parties in South Sudan. But IGAD failed to recognize that.

The other contentious issue of the proposal is that the formation of a transitional government by returning Dr. Machar into his former vice-presidency position, which is suspected by the international community for aggravating the crisis. Nyagoah Tut (2015) expressed his concern that the failure to reach consensus may lead to a devastated violence that the country has experienced for the last 20-plus months.

## **Challenges of IGAD in the Peace Process**

South Sudan's peace process is not an easy task. It requires the collaborative effort of the IGAD member states, strong and vibrant institutional frameworks and well-thought out decision-making processes. Despite the seriousness of the problem, IGAD's peace process in South Sudan is critically challenged by the following factors, among others.

### **Uganda' Military Deployment in South Sudan**

Uganda, as a member of IGAD, is confusing whether she is pushing the confronting parties to reach agreement or assisting the Kiir's government on the battlefield. Since the eruption of the civil war in South Sudan, Kampala deployed a military force in Juba. At the outset, the deployment had a cover to deter the escalation of the conflicts in the country. Meanwhile, the long-time operation of the defense force is unclear for most stakeholders of the peace process. But in general, one can estimate that it is one of the hindrances for the IGAD peace process in South Sudan. The rebels and the IGAD member countries except Uganda are continuously requesting to withdraw the force from the country. But Uganda is rejecting their questions for its own self-interests.

Analysts glimpse Museveni's intervention in South Sudan from different angles. But for most of them, it is strategically designed by Kampala to meet its economic and political interests. Economically, the two countries have a trading partnership and Uganda has a comparative advantage in supplying staples, vegetables, fruits and construction materials. Furthermore, since Museveni has hostility towards Sudan and a long stalemate with Dr. Machar, he is siding with the South Sudan's government though it is controversial and a hidden mission. Whatever interest Uganda has in South Sudan, but she should not poison the peace deals extended by IGAD.

### **The Rivalry and Internal Division among the IGAD Member States**

Given the fact that there is no regional power in the horn, the South Sudan peace process is suffering from a deep regional divide among member states of IGAD. The historical animosity between Sudan and Uganda and the rivalry between Uganda and Ethiopia for leading the deal in front and many uncooperative inter-state relations of the horn are some of the cases that hinder the effectiveness of the prior peace agreements. It is also a fundamental cause for member states not to have a common position in the settlement process. Sudan is one of the horn countries that can determine the fate of South Sudan from its geographic proximity, a huge interest of the Albeshir's government on the country and deeply rooted people to people contacts. Even though Sudan can work with both the government and the rebels, the Support that it provides to the SPLM/A-IO is not accepted by the Kiir's government. But still Sudan will continue to maintain its support for the IGAD mediation process since it needs to shield its benefits, especially the Upper Nile oil field regions (International Crisis Group, 2015).

The Kenya's longing for the peace deal is to protect its wide-range of economic interests and mounting diplomatic relations in the region and ahead of the region. Most case scenarios indicate that Uhuru has a strategic interest in South Sudan in which he wants to meet that by assisting the countries government than the oppositions and the former dittanies.

The last but not least regional power in the region is Ethiopia. With a huge number of population and military power, Ethiopia is acting as a regional power in the Horn of Africa. Since 2008, she is chairing IGAD and leading the peace envoy by its diplomat, Seyoum Mesfin.



By deploying a military force in Somalia's and Sudan's civil war, Ethiopia had played a crucial role. Though Ethiopia is following a neutrality policy, but it has been benefited from securing its western region, which is adjacent to South Sudan.

From the above analysis, one can understand that the different interests and the competition of member states of IGAD have ruthlessly affected the peace deal in South Sudan.

### **The Rejection or Violation of the Peace Agreements by the Warring Parties**

According to the chairperson of the IGAD Special Envoy, diplomat Seyoum Mesfin, the international community loses patience with the South Sudan peace deal. For the last twenty-one months, considerable political capital and economic resource were invested on South Sudan. However, the mission is unsuccessful. The lack of commitment and dwarfed political devotion of the warring parties is the major factor for the fragmentation of the agreement. If these parties worry about their people, who suffered a lot without their sins, even hours are enough to end up the crisis that has engulfed the country since 21 months ago. IGAD has made many trials to bring South Sudan into peace; however, without an earnest dedication of the parties in war, peace in the country is unthinkable.

### **Poor Institutionalization of IGAD**

It is known that IGAD has established a Special Envoy for South Sudan to mediate the peace process whereby it is made to be responsible for the Heads of the States. The envoy has shown a good progress in bringing the country into the peace track. However, as soon as the one talk is ended, the envoy is apt to left Addis Ababa. This indirectly means that the peace process stops at that point until the envoy re-assumed in the next time. At this time, the parties in conflict will go for war rather than peace. Furthermore, the International Crisis Group (2015) identified that the sidebar negotiation of Uganda in South Sudan seriously deters the effective functioning of the Special Envoys, especially its potential for convincing the warring parties. At times when the Envoy's relations were strained, the conflicting parties assumed that they would go to the Heads of States, which could by any means undermine the IGAD's capacity to take institutional positions.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The South Sudan's civil war, turmoil, and crisis are one of the big assignments that the International Community is entangled for almost two years. Actors from inside and outside the country can play a decisive role in relieving or more worsening the conflicts that the country is suffering from every corner of its frontiers.

Though the contribution of various national and international organizations and personalities in resolving the South Sudan's conflict is appreciated but none of them are still effective in stopping the escalation of conflicts from time to time. IGAD and its extension- IGAD-Plus were the major actors that continuously intervene in the peace processes of this country. The several round peace processes of IGAD so far had lightened some hopes in opening up ways for negotiation of the warring parties. Meanwhile, the authority is accused of its inability to withdraw the troops of Uganda in south Sudan, which raises the tension between the conflicting parties. Thus, IGAD should find solutions like diplomatic negotiations to withdraw the Uganda's troop, which is now and then mentioned as an obstacle for the peace talks between

the disputants. Besides to mediating the conflict, imposing sanctions could be a viable solution to stop the violation of the ceasefire accords.

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**APPENDIX A: MAP OF SOUTH SUDAN**

