

# Conflict and Peace Making in the Republic of Sudan Since 1991: A Horn of Africa Perspective

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### Abstract

This study examines the dynamics of conflict and peacemaking efforts in the Republic of Sudan from 1991 to the present through the lens of the Horn of Africa's geopolitical context. By highlighting the interplay between Sudan's internal conflicts and regional instability, this study confirms the persistent challenges of achieving sustainable peace. The findings reveal that the period from 1991 onwards marks a transformative phase in Sudan's political landscape, characterized by significant internal conflicts such as the Darfur crisis and the South Sudan secession. Despite various peace agreements, Sudan remains trapped in cycles of conflict due to unresolved ethnic, political, and economic issues. The study revealed achievements and shortcomings in Sudan's peace-building journey by analyzing critical peace initiatives like the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA). The research uses qualitative methodology to systematically review the broader regional implications of Sudan's conflicts and their impact on peace efforts in the Horn of Africa. The paper concludes with practical recommendations to foster sustainable peace by addressing root causes of conflict and promoting regional cooperation.

### Keywords

Conflict, Peacemaking, Horn of Africa, Republic of Sudan

## 1. Introduction

In terms of geography, the term "Horn" refers to the northeastern region of Africa, which extends into the Indian Ocean in the southeast and borders the Red

Sea in the northeast. Traditionally, it consists of the major states of Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, Sudan, South Sudan, and Kenya. The Horn of Africa (HoA) has a population of 220 million people. It is one of the world's most conflict-prone regions, made even more vulnerable by its strategically important location, which means that developments in the Middle East have a significant impact on its politics (De Waal, 2017).

The Horn of Africa has long been a region of colonial contestation, with Ethiopia being the only state to resist colonization successfully (Tazebew, 2010). Colonial legacies are often linked to the region's root cause for recurring conflicts that have plagued the region. Sudan gained independence in 1956, Kenya in 1963, Djibouti in 1977, and Somalia in 1960 through the unification of British and Italian Somaliland. Eritrea, federated with Ethiopia in 1952, gained independence in 1993 after a three-decade war, leaving Ethiopia landlocked. Therefore, the Republic of Sudan located in the volatile Horn of Africa has been a focal point of regional conflict and successive trial of peace making. Due to the reasons mentioned the Horn of Africa and Sudan serve as illustrative case studies of this dynamic since 1991.

The case in point Sudan, has a long history of civil wars, including the Darfur conflict and the recent secession of South Sudan in 2011, which was hoped to bring peace but instead led to continued unrest in both nations. These examples highlight the complexities and challenges of peacemaking in the Horn of Africa, where efforts are often undermined by deep-seated political, ethnic, and economic issues, even as these nations contribute to international peacekeeping missions (De Waal, 2015).

The following are worth reading as, based on the Global Peace (2020), out of 163 countries, the Horn of African countries have the following ranks in making peace; Djibouti (112th), Kenya (125th), Ethiopia (133rd), Eritrea (136th), Sudan (153rd), Somalia (158th) and South Sudan (160th). Taking this data, South Sudan is among the five least-rated states globally. Therefore, this region is considered the most volatile region next to the Middle East and Northern African (MENA) Region.

Following independence, Africa anticipated lasting peace. However, the post-independence era was marked by fragmented peace, civil wars, and inter-communal conflicts. Since the 1990s, there has been a shift from interstate to intrastate conflicts and instability (Cilliers & Schünemann, 2013). Even by African standards, the Horn of Africa, the study's geographical focus, has experienced a high level of violence. Over the last few decades, the region has seen radical social revolutions (Ethiopia in 1974 and 1991), regular cross-border interventions, two full-scale inter-state wars (Ethiopia-Somalia in 1977 and Eritrea-Ethiopia in 1998-2000), and countless intrastate conflicts that have resulted in the secession of two states (Eritrea and South Sudan—three if we include the de facto state of Somaliland) and the collapse of another (Somalia).

The Republic of Sudan serves as a compelling case study for the prevalence of

conflict and peace making initiatives in the Horn of Africa Region. Both international and local actors have engaged in numerous efforts to foster peace within the nation, ranging from diplomatic interventions to grassroots movements. These initiatives aim to create a stable and inclusive society. However, Sudan's peacebuilding journey has been fraught with challenges, primarily due to a lack of inclusivity and consistency. These issues have exacerbated the country's already fragile political, economic, and security conditions. Despite the ongoing efforts, sustainable peace remains elusive. This paper aims to delve into these challenges, exploring potential solutions for conflict resolution and peacemaking in Africa, with a specific focus on the Republic of Sudan.

Therefore, in this study, I sought to answer two main important questions:

- 1) What factors have been identified as significant determinants of the ineffectiveness of peacemaking endeavors in the Republic of Sudan?
- 2) How can viable solutions be formulated to overcome the challenges impeding successful conflict resolution and peacemaking efforts in the Republic of Sudan?

## **2. Methods**

This study employs qualitative research methods, focusing primarily on data collected from various documents. A systematic review is the dominant approach utilized, enabling a comprehensive analysis of existing literature, reports, and official documents related to peacebuilding efforts in Sudan. This method allows for an in-depth understanding of the complexities and nuances associated with the subject matter. By critically evaluating and synthesizing information from these sources, the study identifies patterns, themes, and gaps in the current peacemaking strategies. This rigorous approach ensures an in-depth examination of the challenges and potential solutions for post-conflict peacemaking in the Republic of Sudan from the perspective of Horn of Africa.

## **3. Results and Analysis**

### **3.1. Understanding Conflict Dynamics in the Republic of Sudan Since 1991**

Historically, the Horn region served as an athletic field for foreign powers, including Ottoman Turkey and Egypt, France, Britain, and Italy during the colonial period, the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and now various competing Arab countries, Western and emerging South. The Horn of Africa is now the world's first and largest foreign military base (Gashaw & Zelalem, 2016).

The post-1991 period in Sudan has been marked by significant political and social upheaval. The Islamist regime of Omar al-Bashir, which came to power in 1989, pursued policies that exacerbated ethnic and regional divisions (De Waal, 2015; Jok, 2017). The Darfur conflict, which began in 2003, is one of the most notable examples of Sudan's internal strife (De Waal, 2007; Johnson, 2011). This conflict, characterized by mass atrocities and accusations of genocide, drew inter-

national attention and led to the involvement of regional and global actors in Sudan's peacemaking process.

The secession of South Sudan in 2011, following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005, was seen as a potential turning point for peacemaking efforts in the region (Young, 2012; Khadiagala, 2020). However, it also led to new conflicts over border demarcation, resource sharing, and political representation (Salman, 2007; De Waal, 2014). The ongoing violence which escalated in 2023, further underscores the fragility of Sudan's political and security landscape (AP News, 2023a; UN Sudan, 2023).

### 3.2. Understanding Peacemaking Endeavors in the Republic of Sudan

Conflict and peacemaking are central themes in peace and conflict studies, focusing on the origins of disputes and strategies for resolving them (Galtung, 1969). Conflict arises from perceived incompatibilities in goals or interests between parties, which can escalate into violence if not addressed (Kelman, 2002). Peacemaking involves efforts to resolve disputes and establish lasting peace through diplomatic, social, and institutional mechanisms (Boutros-Ghali, 1992).

Peacebuilding efforts focus on promoting reconciliation between conflicting groups and establishing inclusive governance systems that give voice to marginalized communities. These initiatives also highlight the significance of justice and the rule of law in resolving grievances and rebuilding trust within societies. By tackling the underlying causes of conflict and fostering sustainable development, peacebuilding aims to create a stable and supportive environment for lasting peace and prosperity (UN Peacekeeping Office, 2010).

Peacemaking strategies vary based on the conflict's nature. Official diplomacy involves formal negotiations between conflicting parties, often facilitated by mediators (Christie, 2012). In contrast, unofficial diplomacy includes informal dialogues such as interactive problem-solving workshops that bring together community leaders to foster mutual understanding (Kelman, 2002). The evolution of peacemaking reflects changes in the nature of conflicts, especially with the rise of intrastate conflicts after the Cold War (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). Contemporary approaches emphasize inclusivity, addressing root causes, and building local capacities for peace (Christie, 2012).

The collaboration between the UN and AU has been instrumental in addressing conflicts on the African continent, exemplified by joint initiatives and shared strategies to enhance peace and security (United Nations, 2012). Notably, the AU played a crucial role in brokering the Juba Peace Agreement in 2020, which aimed to end decades of conflict between the Sudanese government and various rebel groups. These joint efforts highlight the importance of regional and global partnerships in addressing complex conflicts, promoting reconciliation, and building governance structures that foster long-term stability (African Union, 2020).

Smith (2020) well-argued peacebuilding is primarily a post-conflict process in-

volving practical measures implemented by regional and international bodies, such as the African Union (AU), regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa, and the United Nations (UN) Peacebuilding Commission, to support societies in their transition from conflict to stability.

Additionally, the primary aim of peacebuilding activities is to establish sustainable peace by addressing the root causes of conflict and fostering reconciliation among conflicting parties. This involves promoting inclusive governance, ensuring the rule of law, and supporting economic and social development to prevent the resurgence of violence. Peacebuilding efforts also focus on strengthening national institutions, protecting human rights, and facilitating the return and reintegration of displaced populations. By integrating these multifaceted approaches, peacebuilding seeks to create stable and resilient societies capable of maintaining long-term peace (Boutros-Ghali, 1992).

Generally, peacebuilding is not easy to ensure. Scholars have proposed various approaches to building peace, emphasizing the need for comprehensive strategies that address both immediate and long-term challenges. According to Lederach (1997), sustainable peace requires the establishment of relationships across societal divides and the creation of inclusive dialogue platforms. This holistic approach, he contends, helps to rebuild trust and understanding among formerly antagonistic groups, laying the groundwork for lasting peace.

Other scholars highlight the importance of addressing structural inequalities and promoting social justice as essential components of peacebuilding. Galtung (1969) emphasizes that peace must be understood as not just the absence of direct violence but also the elimination of structural violence, such as poverty, discrimination, and social injustice. He argues that true peace can only be achieved by transforming societal structures that perpetuate inequality and exclusion. Similarly, These scholars advocate for an integrated approach that tackles both the symptoms and root causes of conflict, ensuring a more resilient and equitable peace.

### 3.3. Locating Conflict and Peace Making Efforts in Africa

Conflict is prevalent in Africa due to a variety of factors, including ethnic and religious tensions, political instability, economic disparities, and competition over natural resources. The persistence of conflict creates a cycle of violence and poverty, making it difficult for societies to achieve stability and prosperity. Therefore, the following table best illustrates the conflict situation of the Horn (Table 1).

Therefore, due to the conflict in Africa, peacebuilding is essential because it addresses the root causes and consequences of conflict, aiming to create sustainable peace and development. Effective peacemaking involves not only ending violence but also rebuilding trust, fostering reconciliation, and promoting inclusive governance.

There are many views regarding the commencement of peace-making efforts in Africa. However, a peacebuilding study posited that peacebuilding initiatives in

Africa commenced during the post-independence era as a significant mechanism for recovering from conflict and instability. Therefore, the following revealed the main efforts made through local and international institutions more than others for peacemaking in Africa.

**Table 1.** Summary of conflicts in the Horn of Africa.

Countries Involved	Cause of Conflict	Level of Conflict	Level of Conflict	Notes
Ethiopia & Somalia	Somalia's Control of Ethiopia's Somali-inhabited Ogden region	Conventional War	1964	Known as the First Ogden War, Ethiopia gain victory as usual.
Kenya & Somalia	Control of Kenya's Northern Frontier District (NFD)	Insurgency and Tensions	1963-1967	Referred to as the Shifta War, ethnic Somalis in Kenya sought secession to join Somalia, leading to insurgency and counter insurgency operations.
Ethiopia & Somalia	Control of Ethiopia's Ogaden region	Conventional War	1977-1978	Known as the Ogaden War, Somalia invaded the Ogaden region but was repelled by Ethiopian patriots, military and full support of the people.
Ethiopia & Egypt	Dispute over the Nile River's waters	Political Tensions	Throughout history	Selfish nature of Egypt over the contributors of the water. Undermining the voices heard from upstream countries for justice.
Sudan & Egypt	Territorial dispute over the Hala'ib Triangle	Political Tensions	1958-Present	Both nations claim the Hala'ib Triangle, leading to occasional tensions but no full-scale war.
Sudan & Eritrea	Allegations of support for insurgencies	Political Tensions	1994-1998 and still now	Relations were strained due to mutual accusations of supporting rebel groups within each other's territories.
Sudan & Ethiopia	Border disputes and assassination attempt	Political Tensions	Since border demarcation	Tensions rose following an assassination attempt on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa, with Sudanese rebels suspected.
Yemen & Eritrea	Dispute over the Hanish Islands	Armed Conflict	1995	A brief conflict over the Hanish Islands in the Red Sea, resolved through international arbitration favoring Eritrea.
Eritrea & Ethiopia	Border dispute over Badme	Full-Scale War	1998-2000	A devastating war over the town of Badme, resulting in significant casualties; a peace agreement was signed in 2000, but tensions persisted.
Eritrea & Djibouti	Border dispute over Ras Doumeira	Armed Clashes	2008	Clashes erupted over a border dispute; Qatar mediated a ceasefire, but tensions remained.
Kenya & Uganda	Dispute over Migingo Island in Lake Victoria	Political Tensions	2009-Present	Both nations claim the small island, leading to diplomatic tensions and occasional skirmishes.

Source: Compiled by author.

Since 1991, Sudan has undergone significant conflict and peacemaking efforts, with international organizations playing key roles. The UN established the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) in 2005 to support the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) aimed at ending the civil war (United Nations, 2005). Similarly, the African Union (AU) deployed the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) in

2004 to monitor ceasefire agreements and protect civilians in Darfur (African Union, 2004). These efforts, alongside contributions from donor agencies, have been vital in promoting peace and stability.

Civil society organizations and grassroots initiatives are vital components of peacebuilding in Africa. Organizations like the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) and local NGOs engage in peace education, mediation, and reconciliation processes at the community level. These efforts are crucial for addressing underlying social tensions and fostering a culture of peace. By empowering local actors and promoting inclusive dialogue, civil society plays a significant role in bridging divides and building social cohesion (Boege, Brown, & Clements, 2009).

Africa's Regional Economic Communities (RECs), such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), have been instrumental in regional peacebuilding efforts. ECOWAS, for example, has successfully mediated conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire through diplomatic interventions and peacekeeping operations. These regional bodies leverage their understanding of local contexts to facilitate negotiations, enforce peace agreements, and support democratic transitions, thereby contributing to sustainable peace in the region (Adebajo, 2002).

Institutional peacebuilding efforts in Africa have been pivotal in addressing the complex dynamics of post-conflict reconstruction. The African Union (AU) has played a crucial role in fostering peace through its Peace and Security Council, which provides a continental framework for conflict prevention, management, and resolution. The AU's involvement in peacekeeping missions, such as in Somalia (AMISOM) and Darfur (UNAMID), underscores its commitment to stabilizing conflict-affected regions and supporting post-conflict recovery (African Union, 2020). The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has also played a pivotal role in facilitating peace and stability in the Horn of Africa, including the Republic of Sudan.

Therefore, the following section of this paper will highlight the peacebuilding experiences of a selected case in Africa: the Republic of Sudan.

#### **4. A Case in Point: After Conflict a Try of Peacemaking Efforts in the Republic of Sudan**

Historically, Sudan as a country suffered by colonial legacy until it gained independence from British colonial rule in 1956. However, following independence, Sudan has endured more than five decades of violence and brutal conflicts (Johnson, 2011).

Salman (2007) provided the following summary of peace-making process:

Notable peace talks include the Addis Ababa talks (Ethiopia, 1972), the Koka Dam talks (Ethiopia, 1986), and another round of Addis Ababa talks (Ethiopia & Egypt, 1989). The Abuja talks in Nigeria (1992-93) were significant, followed by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) peace



talks on the Sudan conflict (1993-94). The “Peace from Within” talks or the Khartoum Peace Agreement (April 1997) aimed to address internal conflict. The Egyptian-Libyan initiative (1999-2002) and the IGAD-led Sudan peace process (1997-2005) included crucial milestones such as the Machakos Protocol (July 2002), the Framework Agreement on Security Arrangements (September 2003), the Agreement on Wealth-Sharing (January 2004), the Protocol on Power-Sharing (May 2004), the Three Areas Protocols (May 2004), and ultimately the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (January 2005). Additionally, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA)-government talks culminated in the Cairo Agreement (June 2005) (Salman, 2007: p. 17).

Sudan has pursued several peace agreements to resolve long-standing conflicts, reflecting the complexities of achieving lasting peace in a divided society. The Addis Ababa Agreement (1972) aimed to end the First Sudanese Civil War through southern autonomy but failed due to weak implementation (Johnson, 2011). The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005 ended the Second Sudanese Civil War and led to South Sudan’s independence, though unresolved issues like border disputes and oil revenues hindered its success (Young, 2012).

Later agreements, such as the Abuja Agreement (2006) and the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (2011), sought to resolve regional conflicts but faced criticism for excluding key actors (De Waal, 2007). The Juba Peace Agreement (2020) took a more inclusive approach by addressing governance, wealth-sharing, and security reform, which Khadiagala (2020) views as crucial for addressing Sudan’s structural conflicts.

These agreements show that sustainable peace in Sudan requires inclusive participation, addressing root causes, and full implementation of peace deals.

## 5. Problems of Post-Conflict Peacemaking in the Republic of Sudan

Post-conflict peace negotiation in the Republic of Sudan faces numerous challenges that complicate the transition to sustainable peace. These include the deep-seated ethnic, political, and economic divisions that have fueled decades of conflict, as well as the logistical difficulties in implementing peace agreements. Effective peacebuilding requires addressing the root causes of conflict, such as inequitable resource distribution, political exclusion, and historical grievances, while also fostering reconciliation and trust among diverse communities. The presence of various armed groups and the fragility of state institutions further exacerbate these challenges, making comprehensive and inclusive peace efforts essential for lasting stability in Sudan.

Despite being separate nations, Sudan and South Sudan are still at war, Eritrea is still isolated, and Somalia is still in a state of crisis. The regional security landscape is essentially unchanged from fifteen years ago (LSE Africa, 2024).

The Horn of Africa’s strategic position connecting Asia and Europe through key waterways like the Red Sea and Suez Canal makes it a focal point for global



powers seeking resource access and influence (Horn, 2023). This external competition complicates peacebuilding efforts in Sudan, as part of East Africa.

Over the years, the Horn of Africa has become the most unstable and crisis-ridden region in the world due to international challenges to peace and security, as well as various forms of intra- and inter-state conflicts (Yirga, 2021). Here, academics argue that conflicts emerge from competition over limited resources, such as land, water, or natural resources (Homer-Dixon, 1994). Therefore, the Republic of Sudan is a showcase for conflict due to natural resources.

Economic disparity also remains a critical obstacle to peacebuilding efforts. Decades of conflict have left Sudan's economy in messes, creating widespread poverty and unemployment. Addressing economic inequality is crucial to preventing the resurgence of violence, as it directly impacts social cohesion and political stability (De Waal, 2014; UN Sudan, 2023). Effective peacemaking strategies must incorporate economic development plans that prioritize marginalized regions and address resource-based conflicts.

However, since April 2023, Sudan has been engulfed in a civil war between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), leading to a severe humanitarian crisis (AP News, 2023a; Global Observatory, 2024). The conflict has resulted in over 24,000 deaths and displaced millions, with nearly 25 million people in need of assistance (AP News, 2023a; UN Sudan, 2023). Peacebuilding efforts have faced significant challenges, including a lack of political will among combatants and external interference. International initiatives, such as a proposed U.N. resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire, have been hindered by actions like Russia's recent veto (AP News, 2023b). Despite these obstacles, organizations like the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund continue to work towards stabilizing conflict hotspots and advancing political processes in Sudan (UN Sudan, 2023). However, the ongoing violence and complex political dynamics underscore the urgent need for a comprehensive and inclusive approach to peacebuilding in the region particularly for Sudan.

## 6. Recommendations

In addressing conflict and peace making in Sudan, it is essential to recommend strategies that focus on fostering inclusive governance, addressing the root causes of conflict, and ensuring the full implementation of peace agreements. Sudan's complex socio-political dynamics, coupled with regional and international influences, necessitate a multifaceted approach that prioritizes reconciliation, equitable resource distribution, and institutional reforms.

Furthermore, strengthening local capacities for peace and promoting regional cooperation can create a sustainable framework for lasting stability and development. Additionally, Paris (2004) emphasizes that effective peacemaking requires robust local institutions capable of managing disputes, delivering essential services, and promoting economic development. Parallel to this achieving economic development will serve as a cornerstone of sustainable peace-building in Sudan.

Collier (2007) suggests that post-conflict economic policies should focus on stimulating growth, attracting investment, and ensuring an equitable distribution of resources. Additionally, fostering entrepreneurship and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises can empower local communities. Finally, Sudan must demonstrate a commitment to fostering peaceful relations with its neighbors, particularly with Ethiopia in the Great Gondar area, which spans over 500 km<sup>2</sup>. This commitment can be strengthened through diplomatic engagement and collaborative initiatives aimed at addressing shared challenges such as resource management and border security.

## 7. Conclusion

The study focus which is the republic of Sudan is found in the most volatile Horn of Africa region. The region is now an athletic field of foreign and regional powers with varying interests. Accordingly, more than 19 foreign military bases have been established due to the region's geopolitical significance that connects different regions to the Red Sea, Indian Ocean, and the Strait of Gibraltar. As part of the Horn region the Republic of Sudan's conflict and peacemaking journey since 1991 marked by complexities of conflicts. In turn, achieving sustainable peace was found difficult in a deeply divided society. This vividly shows that even if there were many peace agreements signed but remain in paper. The study finding indicates that peace building efforts are hindered by political instability, ethnic divisions, and economic challenges. Correspondingly Sudan's path to peace did not address the root causes of conflict. Most importantly, the interplay between Sudan's internal dynamics and the regional security landscape in the Horn of Africa further complicates the peacebuilding process.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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