

Regional dynamics and their impact on South Sudan

Research Repository Guide

This Research Repository has been compiled by the CSRF to assist donors and aid workers in South Sudan to better understand the context in which they work. The repository is searchable by key words, and is also organised into eight categories to enable easier exploration of specific topics. The CSRF has conducted a meta-analysis for each of the eight categories, analysing a selection of relevant, key literature and extracting some of the most salient questions for donor-funded programming.

Understanding the Literature

The literature on regional dynamics in South Sudan prior to the outbreak of armed conflict in December 2013 tends to focus on Sudan's and other neighbouring and regional states' roles in the political, economic and security dynamics of South(ern) Sudan. Sudan has played a key role in reference to these different dimensions before and after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in 2005. The literature explores relations between Sudan and South Sudan and contested issues such as the status of Abyei, the course and nature of the shared border, the support and hosting of armed opposition and oil. Publications from the post-2013 era put an emphasis on the neighbouring states' role in the ongoing armed conflict, the peace process, the humanitarian response, trade, and in the reception of South Sudanese refugees. Information on trade flows and other economic links between the countries is, however, limited, as the required data is difficult to collect, particularly in the current conflict. The questions below were developed with the aim of linking the interaction of regional actors with current conflict, peace and economic dynamics and better understanding these relationships and their impact on South Sudan.

Go to the source

Jok, Madut J. (2015). [The Paradox of Peace in Sudan and South Sudan.](#)

Mesfin, Berouk (2015). [The Regionalisation of the South Sudanese Crisis.](#)

PAX (2017). [Sustaining Relative Peace: Report on cross-border peacebuilding in South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya.](#)

- 1. To what extent is regional engagement in South Sudan motivated by proxy conflicts?**
- 2. Migration: What is the significance of refugee outflows in the region?**
- 3. Which contentious issues between South Sudan and Sudan have not yet been addressed?**
- 4. How has regional integration included South Sudan?**

1. To what extent is regional engagement in South Sudan motivated by proxy conflicts?

Regional competition and long-standing rivalries between different states shape their relations with South Sudan. It is often the interplay of relations between countries, for example between Sudan and Uganda, that has a proxy effect on South Sudan.

Uganda and Sudan both wish to maintain their influence and political and financial benefits, and to ensure that South Sudan does not harbour opposition movements. The rivalry between Sudan and Uganda began in 1955, when Uganda supported the first rebellion in Southern Sudan. Sudan supported opposition movements against the Ugandan state, such as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Uganda

provided substantial political and military support to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) during the second Sudanese civil war.

Go to the source

Bereketeab, Redie (2015). [Why South Sudan conflict is proving intractable.](#)
International Crisis Group (2016). [South Sudan: Rearranging the Chessboard.](#)
Mesfin, Berouk (2015). [The Regionalisation of the South Sudanese Crisis.](#)

Early in the current armed conflict, Uganda sent troops to support the Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS), while the Government of Sudan (GoS) assisted the armed opposition of South Sudan, the SPLM in-Opposition (SPLM-IO) of Riek Machar. In February 2015, Sudan and Uganda reached an agreement to end support to rebel groups based in both countries through the formation of a 'joint security mechanism'. Recently, relations between Uganda and Sudan have further improved, with more

frequent diplomatic visits between the two, and Uganda's refusal to let the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) – an armed group fighting GoS - leadership operate from its territory.

Tensions and competing interests between Ethiopia, Sudan and Eritrea also shaped the relations of these countries with South Sudan, and their proxy conflicts. Ethiopia is, intermittently, a close ally of South Sudan since 1983 and played a key part in supporting the SPLA during the second civil war, allowing the young movement to set up bases and operations in its territory. Ethiopia was at that time antagonised by Sudan's backing of Eritrean and Tigrayan rebels. When Mengistu fell in 1991, the SPLA was expelled, but relations soon improved and Ethiopia resumed its military support to the SPLA in 1993.

In the latest crisis, Ethiopia has tried to take a neutral stance, not least because it was leading the mediation efforts of Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and wanted to portray itself as a reliable partner to the international community, but also – most importantly – because of Ethiopia's sensitivity to regional escalation and the proxy context. Nevertheless, on various occasions, GRSS has accused Ethiopia of being partial and supporting Riek Machar. The hosting of Riek Machar during the peace process as well as Ethiopia's close relationship with the US, the main proponent of tougher measures against the government, was viewed negatively by the South Sudanese government. When relations between Ethiopia and South Sudan became increasingly tense, the latter pursued rapprochement with Eritrea and Egypt.

2. What is the significance of refugee outflows in the region?

By early 2018, about 2.4 million South Sudanese have fled to neighbouring countries since December 2013, and more than a million South Sudanese refugees are registered or await registration in Uganda. This influx puts enormous pressure on the country's resources, in particular on land and basic service delivery systems, in an already marginalised part of Uganda. It puts at risk the practicability of Uganda's generous refugee policy¹ as humanitarian and development partners do not have the capacity to adequately respond to the crisis. Some South Sudanese have returned to South Sudan despite ongoing violence and insecurity, because of limited service provision in Uganda. Tensions have also emerged between hosts and refugees over access to services. Ethiopia hosts more than 360,000 South Sudanese refugees and is wary of the destabilising impact of refugees on the fragile Gambella region. The influx of large numbers of refugees to Gambella have the potential to fuel existing power struggle

¹ Uganda provides refugees with freedom of movement, the right to work and establish businesses, the right to documentation, access to social services, and allocation of plots of land for shelter and agricultural production through a generous asylum policy.

between Anuaks and Nuers – ethnic groups present both in South Sudan and in Ethiopia in this region, though this has not yet materialized.

Kenya hosts about 80,000 South Sudanese refugees, but there is a substantial Diaspora settled in cities like Nairobi. There are longstanding ties between political and business elites in the two countries, with many South Sudanese officials maintaining houses, families and assets in Nairobi.

Sudan hosts about 400,000 South Sudanese refugees who fled due to violence or food insecurity. Their status is ambiguous. In contrast to the previous civil war when many Southerners fled to the North, South Sudanese are no longer de jure citizens of Sudan. It is unclear what this means for their livelihoods, access to services and working conditions.

Go to the source

Action against Hunger (2017). [Bridging the Gap: Long-Term Implications for South Sudanese Refugees in West Nile, Uganda.](#)

El Hassan, Idris S. (2016). [South Sudan “arrivals” in the White Nile State \(Sudan\). Not citizens, not IDPs, not Refugees: What are they?](#)

Feyissa, Dereje (2014). [The spillover Effect of South Sudan in Gambella.](#)

3. Which contentious issues have not yet been addressed between South Sudan and Sudan?

The border between Sudan and South Sudan is highly contested. The contested border zones include the Kafia Kingi enclave, the border with Northern Bahr el-Ghazal and Abyei, and areas of Unity and Upper Nile. Since the independence of South Sudan, there have been localised fighting and clashes over the border in different areas. In 2012, fighting broke out over the Heglig/Panthou oil production site, an area claimed by both Sudan and South Sudan. The SPLA occupied the site previously under the control of GoS. Disputes have periodically closed the border and undermined food security in the northern areas of South Sudan.

Go to the source

International Crisis Group (2016). [South Sudan: Rearranging the Chessboard.](#)

Johnson, Douglas H. (2010). [When Boundaries become Borders: The Impact of Boundary-Making in Southern Sudan’s Frontier Zones.](#)

James, Laura. M. (2015). [Fields of Control: Oil and \(in\) security in Sudan and South Sudan.](#)

Sudan’s primary economic interest in South Sudan is access to its oil and the substantial transit fees agreed for the use of its pipeline to Port Sudan. Tension over payment of transit fees led in 2012 to a shutdown of oil production. This oil shutdown, and the overall decline in oil production and the decreasing price of oil in recent years has severely damaged both economies. The shutdown led to a Cooperation Agreement in September 2012, which included a restructuring of transit fees as well as the promise to stop harbouring or supporting each other’s armed opposition forces, however the Agreement was

never fully implemented.

The status of Abyei has not yet been resolved. According to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, residents of Abyei have the right to decide in a referendum whether to join South Sudan or not. An unrecognised, unilateral referendum was held by the Dinka Ngok, which neither Sudan nor the international community recognised; Sudan argues the transhumant Misseriya are eligible to vote. In 2011 and 2015, Misseriya militias from Sudan with support of the Sudan Armed Forces attacked Abyei. UN Peacekeepers have been stationed in Abyei since 2011 through UNISFA, under an agreement with the governments of both Sudan and South Sudan.

4. What role does South Sudan play in the region?

In addition to the African Union, South Sudan is a member of three regional organisations: IGAD, the East Africa Community (EAC), and the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). Joining the EAC in September 2016 was notably controversial, given the ongoing conflict and the deteriorating economic situation. In 2012, Kenya, South Sudan and Ethiopia signed an agreement for the Lamu Port, South Sudan, Ethiopian Transport Corridor (LAPSSET). The project, which would provide an integrated rail, road and oil pipeline, has however been delayed.

South Sudan is being courted for its support as an upstream country in the Nile Basin. Although South Sudan's own hydroelectric ambitions have been frustrated by the conflict, South Sudan's growing ties with Egypt has created tensions with Ethiopia. This is notably apparent with respect to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, under construction on the Blue Nile and strongly opposed by Egypt, which seeks Juba's support to counter Addis Ababa.

[Further publications on regional dynamics and their impact on South Sudan are available in the CSRF repository](#)