

## Commentary

### FROM PEACEKEEPING TO PARTNERSHIP: INDIA'S EVOLVING ROLE IN SOUTH SUDAN

India's engagement with South Sudan began before its independence with signing of Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that supported by India in 2005. India remained committed in extending the support to South Sudan through investments in the region's hydrocarbon sector since 2003 giving economic support to the new nation. India's support to South Sudan remained primarily in the areas of security, bilateral trade and capacity building. However, it is pertinent that the strategic cooperation between India and South Sudan should be derived by the objectives of the India's foreign policy towards Africa and South Sudan's development priorities considering the regional challenges like South Sudan's civil war from 2013 to 2018 and ongoing tribal skirmishes till today. After the civil war ended South Sudan adopted Revised - National Development Strategy (R-NDS) 2021 - 2024 with focus on stabilizing economy and sustainable development. To ascertain the level of cooperation achieved between the two nations an analyses of cooperation achieved from 2005 till 2024 has been drawn. Also, India's interest, South Sudan's development priorities and regional challenges have been ascertained for identifying the emerging opportunities to secure India's interest in the region and realigning the strategic cooperation framework.

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#### India - South Sudan Strategic Cooperation: Overview

India and South Sudan cooperation dates back since 2005 when India supported signing of CPA and established consulate in 2007. India recognized South Sudan's independence in July 2011 and elevated its consulate to an embassy. India's 12<sup>th</sup> Vice President, Shri Mohammed Hamid

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\* Presently, he is serving in the Peacekeeping Mission at UNMISS as Coy Commander and contributed on various studies for UN peacekeeping operations.

Ansari also attended the independence celebrations in Juba to show solidarity<sup>1</sup>. India remained committed in extending the support to South Sudan since 2003 when OVL<sup>†</sup> had invested in the region for the first time, since then US \$ 2.5 Billion have been invested in the hydrocarbon sector of South Sudan giving vital support to the economic development of the nation. The bilateral trade between two nations in 2016\* valued at \$ 3.42 Million which peaked at \$100.50 Million in 2018 and by the end of 2023 it reduced to \$ 33.44 Million that is one – third from the peak<sup>2</sup>. Indian companies also have presence in South Sudan in fields including hotel industry, constructions, boring, printing and suppliers. India signed a MoU with South Sudan in 2019 covering aspects of bilateral relations & friendship that became premise for cooperation<sup>3</sup>.

South Sudan adopted the South Sudan National Development Plan (SSNDP) 2011–2013 after the independence with South Sudan's Vision 2040: towards freedom, equality, justice, peace and prosperity for all, however, same was not achieved due to the internal ethnic conflict which ended in 2018 with signing of Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS)<sup>†4</sup>. The SSNDP also succeeded by the South Sudan National Development Strategy (SSNDS) 2018 - 2021<sup>5</sup>. Due to the challenges in implementation, including COVID -19 and other issues the objectives of Strategy could not be achieved. The R-ARCSS mandates the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU)<sup>‡</sup> to review and revise the NDS as an instrument for implementation of the R-ARCSS and for taking South Sudan towards the development. Hence, in 2021, a Revised – National Development Strategy (R-NDS)<sup>§</sup> has been formulated by the Government of Republic of South Sudan (GRSS) which extends till 2024<sup>6</sup>.

These development strategies acted as the core drivers for strategic cooperation with India. India extended the cooperation in the areas of security, bilateral trade, capacity building, institutional development, bilateral institutional mechanism for close cooperations, tourism and cultural interactions that can be considered as aligned to the development strategies of South Sudan. A roadmap of strategic cooperation achieved till 2024 between India and South Sudan since 2005 post signing of CPA is given in Figure 1.

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<sup>†</sup> OVL is ONGC Videsh Limited, it is a Public Sector Unit of government of India working in the field of extending Indian Investments in Global Energy Sector especially crude oil exploration

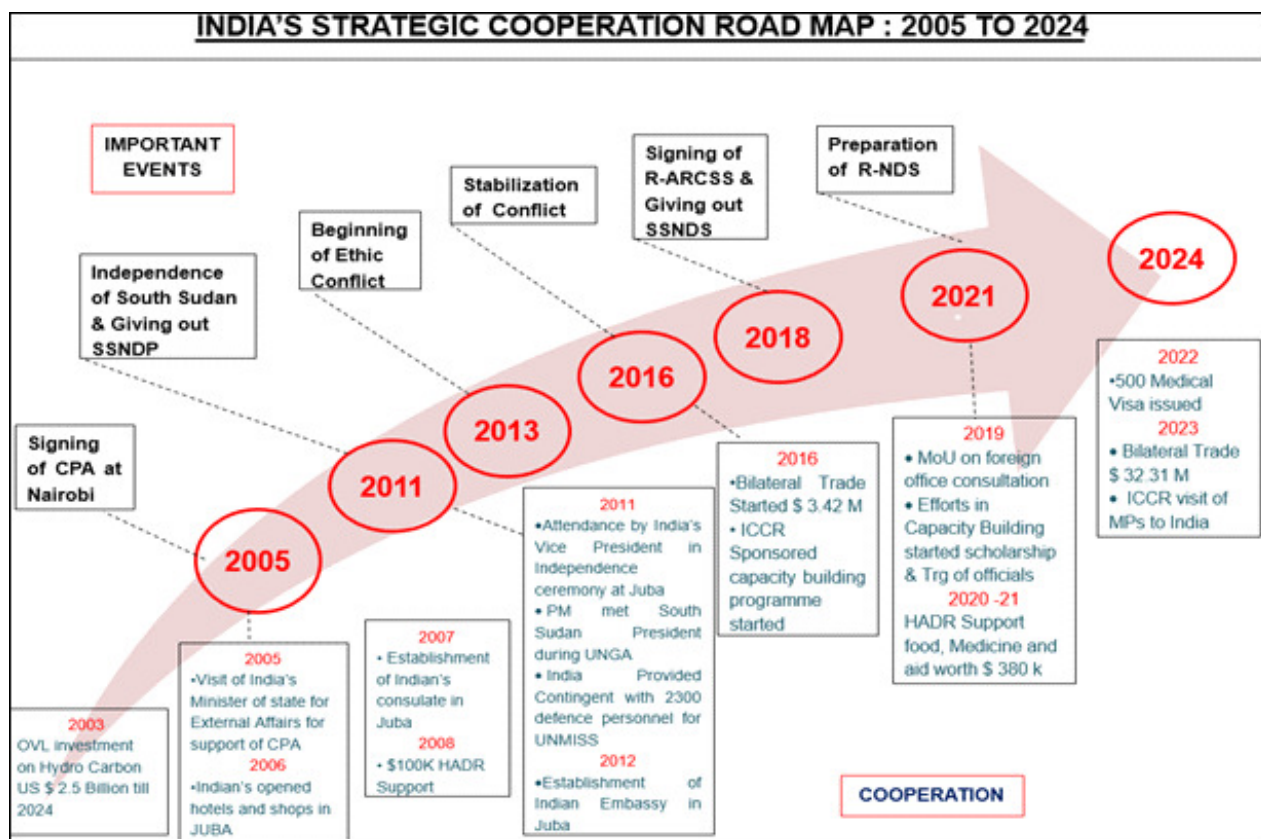
\* Precise data is not available as the trade is through Kenya, Uganda and UAE and Department of Commerce of India website has data from 2016.

<sup>†</sup> R-ARCSS was finalized on 12 September 2018 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the document specifies various terms for resolution of conflict to bring stability in South Sudan and establishment of a Transitional Government.

<sup>‡</sup> The present government is not an elected government and known as Transitional Government which has representation of various ethnic tribes.

<sup>§</sup> R-NDS superseded SSNDS to consolidate peace, stabilize the economy and return to sustainable development

Figure 1: India's Strategic Cooperation Road Map 2005 to 2024



### India's Strategic Cooperation Paradigm with South Sudan

Strategic cooperation with any nation is aligned with the bilateral requirements, interests and benefits of the two nations. India's strategic cooperation with South Sudan is essentially based on two pillars i.e India's foreign policy towards Africa and South Sudan's R-NDS. Understanding these two pillars is necessary to understand the cooperation paradigm.

- **India's Foreign Policy towards Africa:** India's Foreign Policy towards African nations was initially based on the support for anti-colonial movements and the anti-apartheid struggle<sup>7</sup>. Later, as the India's ambition of becoming global power progressed, India has considered to create an environment for working with African nations as equals, which aimed at supporting African nations in leadership roles and India as facilitator. The vision to develop as equals as given by PM Modi in the Kampala Principles\* during his address to the Uganda's Parliament in 2018, this has been well appreciated by the African nations and India has taken the place of most trusted partner.<sup>8</sup> These policies have also

\* It comprises of 10 core tenets related of India – Africa cooperation

governed the India's relation with South Sudan. The goals which India intend to achieve with the cooperation and support from the African nations<sup>9</sup> are:

- Secure African support in India's bid for a permanent membership in the UN Security Council.
- Work with African countries to restructure global financial and multilateral institutions to prioritize the Global South.
- Partner with African countries to suppress terrorism and ensure freedom of movement in the Indian Ocean.
- Secure India's resource and energy security.

- **South Sudan's R-NDS:** South Sudan as a nation is still in the process of stabilizing from the nearly half a decade long ethnic war after independence. It requires support from the other nations to achieve peace & stability to begin the journey towards development. Hence, the country has prepared R-NDS 2021 - 2024 which provides the medium-term development framework to implement the country's vision 2040. South Sudan is looking for the strategic partnership and cooperation which supports achieving the core objectives defined under five clusters of R-NDS<sup>10</sup>:

**South Sudan as a nation is still in the process of stabilizing from the nearly half a decade long ethnic war after independence.**

- *Governance Cluster:* Establish and/or strengthen institutions for transparent, accountable and inclusive governance.
- *Economic Cluster:* Foster macroeconomic stability and lay foundations for the diversification of the economy.
- *Infrastructure Cluster:* Build critical infrastructure for sustainable development, including roads, energy, public buildings and broadband capability.
- *Service Cluster:* Increase support to the social sector for human capital development and protect the vulnerable population, to leave no one behind.
- *Gender, Youth and Other Cross Cutting Issues Cluster:* Mainstream gender in all development policies & programs and empower women and youth as drivers of growth & nation-building.

The recommendations of strategic cooperation between India and South Sudan depends upon achieving objectives of the India's foreign policy by aligning it with South Sudan's priorities based on the R-NDS of 2021-24 as shown in Table 1 as well as next medium term National Development Plan for the year 2024-28 (also known as NDP II) which is yet to be prepared and it focuses on four strategic challenges including economic diversification, human capital development, transitioning to a green economy and population settlement.

Table 1: Priorities for Revised – National Development Strategy

<b><u>PRIORITIES: R - NDS</u></b>	
<b><u>Constitution, Rule of Law, Security and Peace</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a permanent constitution</li> <li>• Strengthening security institutions and personnel</li> <li>• Build more courts to improve access to justice</li> <li>• Focus on implementing the Peace Agreements</li> </ul>	<b><u>Macroeconomic Stability</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening public financial management</li> <li>• Manage natural resources</li> <li>• Manage consumption, savings and investment</li> <li>• Promote inclusive growth</li> <li>• Diversify the economy</li> </ul>
<b><u>Economic and Social Development</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a hierarchy of social safety nets</li> <li>• Support education and vocational training</li> <li>• Train and support teachers</li> <li>• Establish clinics and health centers across the</li> </ul> <p>Ensure quality and safety of the basic package of health and nutrition services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build national, state and local health systems</li> <li>• Poverty index, and targeted support to reduce</li> <li>• Focus on gender and women's issues</li> <li>• Create jobs</li> </ul>	<b><u>Governance</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen local governments and devolve powers</li> <li>• Support anticorruption institutions</li> <li>• Reform the public sector</li> <li>• Set up and support national elections bodies</li> <li>• Develop information and communications technology (ICT) and e-governance</li> <li>• Promote women's participation in governance</li> </ul>
<b><u>Infrastructure</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrade and build new public buildings</li> <li>• Build and rehabilitate roads</li> <li>• Invest in broadband</li> <li>• Develop grid and off-grid energy</li> </ul>	<b><u>Environment and Climate</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop policy, institution and resources for disaster prevention and response in vulnerable communities</li> <li>• Manage the environment</li> <li>• Reduce the carbon footprint</li> <li>• Address climate vulnerability</li> </ul>

Source: Priorities from national consultation "Revised National Development Strategy 2021-2024, Page 37" <sup>11</sup>

### Strategic Cooperation Alignment Matrix

The matrix (refer Table 2) analyses and demonstrates the alignment of India's efforts of cooperation with South Sudan till date with both India's objectives and South Sudan's NDS. India's efforts are mainly aligned & focused on the Security, political & institutional support, capacity building, HADR, medical assistance and negligible efforts for Infra development, economic development & women empowerment. India's effort which are visible in South



Sudan is majorly through the troop's contribution as part of UNMISS. Still there is a wide gap between development priorities of South Sudan and support provided by India. This matrix becomes the basis for identifying the gaps and scope for developing a strategic cooperation paradigm between the two nations for subsequent cooperation.

**Table 2: Strategic Cooperation Alignment Matrix: India – South Sudan (2011 – 2024)**

<b>South Sudan's Revised National Development Strategy</b>		<b>India's Strategic Engagement Initiatives</b>	
<b>Cluster</b>	<b>Development Priorities</b>	<b>Initiatives</b>	<b>Categories</b>
<b>Governance</b> (Incl Peace, Security, Law & Justice, Information and communications Technology (ICT))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen local governments and devolve powers</li> <li>Support anticorruption institutions</li> <li>Reform of civil services</li> <li>Set up and support national election bodies</li> <li>ICT and e-governance</li> <li>Promote women's participation in governance</li> <li>Develop a permanent Constitution</li> <li>Strengthening security institutions and personnel</li> <li>Build more courts to improve access to justice</li> <li>Focus on implementing the Peace Agreement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eight visits &amp; interaction of Government officials including ministers</li> <li>MOU on foreign office consultation (Annual)</li> <li>Interaction at PM and President level in India as well as at other forums</li> <li>South Sudan's minister level delegation visits to India</li> <li>50 South Sudan police personnel and 65 foreign diplomats trained</li> <li>Indian Peacekeepers in South Sudan – UNMISS and UNISFA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Security</li> <li>Political &amp; Institutional Support</li> <li>Capacity Building</li> <li>Bilateral Diplomatic Engagement</li> </ul>
<b>Services Cluster</b> (Social Development: Education, Health & social protection)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a hierarchy of social safety nets</li> <li>Support education</li> <li>Training of teachers and extending support</li> <li>Establishment of clinics and health centers across the nation</li> <li>Ensuring quality services for health and nutrition</li> <li>Building a health ecosystem at national and local levels</li> <li>Monitoring of Poverty index and focus to reduce poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ITEC 200 vacancies given</li> <li>122 ICCR Scholarship (2019-2024)</li> <li>IAFS -III Scholarships to 43 Students</li> <li>Pan Africa online training in education to include Vidya Bharti and e-Arogya Bharti: 188 students enrolled</li> <li>Distinguished visitor programme</li> <li>Med Tourism</li> <li>Distribution 6 MT medicines worth \$118K</li> <li>Medical and veterinary camps by INDBATT</li> <li>Artificial Limb Fitment Camp - \$180K</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capacity Building</li> <li>Health &amp; Medical</li> </ul>

<b>Infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrade and build new public buildings</li> <li>• Build and rehabilitate roads Infra – highways, food reserve depots, feeder roads</li> <li>• Control and mgt for airports and Utilization of river</li> <li>• Invest in broadband &amp; make regulations</li> <li>• Develop grid and off-grid energy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handpumps for IDP Camps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infra Support</li> </ul>
<b>Economic Development &amp; Macroeconomic Stability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening Public Financial Management (PFM)</li> <li>• Manage natural resources – irrigation scheme, water supply scheme</li> <li>• Improve trade avenues</li> <li>• Manage consumption, savings and investment</li> <li>• Diversify the economy – promote agriculture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bilateral Trade from 2016-17</li> <li>• Imports: 2016 - \$ 0.18 M &amp; 2023 \$ 1.13 M</li> <li>• Export: 2016 - \$ 3.24 M &amp; 2023 - \$ 32.31 M</li> <li>• Investment by OVL in Hydrocarbon Sect - \$ 2.5 B (from 2003 till date)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bilateral Trade</li> <li>• Investments</li> </ul>
<b>Gender, Youth &amp; Other Cross Cutting Issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on gender and women issues. (Establishment of MSME)</li> <li>• Vocational training to create jobs</li> <li>• Develop policies, institution and resources for disaster prevention and robust response mechanism</li> <li>• Management of environment and climate impacts/challenges</li> <li>• Reduction of the carbon footprint</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training as part of capacity building measures</li> <li>• Humanitarian &amp; Food Assistance worth \$265K</li> <li>• Female Engagement Team as part of UNMISS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity Building</li> <li>• Women Issues</li> </ul>

### Recommendations for Strategic Cooperation

India's strategic cooperation with South Sudan should align with South Sudan's R-NDS (2021–2024), NDP-II (2024–2028), and India's Africa policy.

The focus should be on quick-impact, visible projects that support development and strengthen bilateral ties.

- **Governance & Institution Building:** South Sudan continued to face governance issues due to non-elected transitional government, corruption, humanitarian crisis, community

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violences, increasing crime rates which are law and order issues<sup>12</sup>. There is a need to strengthen governance & rule of law institutions. India can assist in strengthening democratic and institutional structures.

- *Elections*: Support conduct of first elections by constituting its election commission and conducting elections in remote areas.
- *Finalization of Permanent Written Constitution*: Share expertise in drafting a diverse, inclusive constitution based on India's experience and similar ethnic diversity.
- *Formalising Law & Order System*: India can assist in building a robust judicial system up to the county levels and train judiciary & police, including border security and customs enforcement.
- *Training of Military Personnel*: Indian Army deployed under UNMISS peacekeeping force can impart training to support the reorganization & restructuring of SSPDF.\*
- ***Service & Social Development***: South Sudan population is one of the world's lowest in Index of healthcare, sanitation, hygiene and education. It has very high child mortality rate, chronic malnutrition, malaria as an epidemic, weak healthcare system and untrained community health workers. Population has negligible access to safe water and sanitation facilities. Only 41% of the population has access to clean water with non-existence of piped water supply<sup>13</sup>. Half of the population in urban areas and 80% of the population in rural areas defecate in open. 30% of the population in rural areas and 50% of the population in urban areas can read, write & do basic numeracy. Gross enrolment rate (GER) is very low for primary schools, girls & women have very high dropout rates being paternalist communities.<sup>14</sup> The opportunities of strategic cooperation in the areas of social development are as under:
  - *Education*: Renovate rural schools, open Vocational Training Centers (VTCs), expand *E-Vidya Bharti*† programs, and increase scholarships for South Sudanese students.
  - *Healthcare*: Train community health workers, rehabilitate primary health centers, support immunization drives, and supply essential medicines & equipment.
  - *Water & Sanitation*: Install handpumps, build toilets, waste disposal units and set up sanitary pad production & incineration facilities for supporting women's health.
- ***Infra Development***: South Sudan has the poorest connectivity in the world with lowest road density, not all-weather roads, most of the roads are earthen or gravel. Nearly 16% cost of any item covers transportation cost in South Sudan.<sup>15</sup> The highways are

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\* SSPDF is South Sudan People's Defence Force it was erstwhile Sudan's People Liberation Army (SPLA). As of now majority of troops are from Dinka Tribe and unification of other tribal militia groups is under progress as part of unification of SSPDF.

† E Bharti vidya programs provides online short/long term courses to the youth of African nations.



underdeveloped with poor connectivity with neighboring countries & poor customs at land border ports at Nadapal, Nimule & Kaya create bottlenecks and informal payments, excessive checkpoints & cargo security causes inconvenience to travelers. River as mode of transport has great potential, however, constraint of navigational aid along Nile, lack of docking & cargo handling facilities, inefficiency of vessels and more over high costs makes it less viable option to be used as means of transportation<sup>16</sup>. Electricity is again a major challenge with a very less population that is only in urban areas have access to electricity. Population also uses firewood, kerosene, captive generators for light and hydroelectricity has limited grid. Solar introduction has major impact which can be one of the opportunities for India for strategic cooperation.

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- *Road Construction*: Construct key trade and strategic roads, Juba-Kaya, Juba-Nimule, and Juba-Malakal to enhance mobility and regional trade.
- *River Transportation*: Build river ports and cargo handling facilities on a revenue-sharing model.
- *Tourism Support*: Develop eco-villages along the Nile to promote tourism and attract Indian private sector investment.
- *Electricity*: Support solar and wind power projects to extend rural electrification.
- *Economic Development and Diversification*: South Sudan's Economy is primarily dependent upon crude oil production; it has been impacted by the dispute in Sudan as the crude oil supply route/pipeline is through Sudan. Diversifying economy is key agenda of GRSS by shifting towards agriculture and animal husbandry as the land of South Sudan is fertile and provide opportunity of agriculture at industrial scale which will end the food insecurity of the country<sup>17</sup>. India with the experience of green & white revolution can extend the support to the South Sudan in expediting diversification of economy.
- *Agriculture*: Construct canals, storage ponds, and train farmers in modern techniques.
- *Animal Husbandry*: Establish milk, meat, and fish processing infrastructure.
- *Extending Line of Credit*: Facilitate concessional financing via India's ties with Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)<sup>18</sup>.

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- *Information & Communication Technology (ICT)*: Build ICT infrastructure, promote digital governance, and offer technical training.
- *Special Economic Zone (SEZ)*: Assist in developing region-specific Special Economic Zones.
- ***Gender Youth and Other Cross Cutting Issue***: India had always contributed towards capacity building of young population of South Sudan through various programmes to include vacancies in barefoot college, providing scholarship, training of young government officials and cultural exchange programs<sup>19</sup>. India has also collaborated towards the crosscutting issues in South Sudan like disaster management and climate change by providing aids. The impact of climate change is highly visible in South Sudan as large number of population is affected by regular floods which lead to displacement and impact the infra development in the region<sup>20</sup>. India has opportunity to further extend cooperation in the area to tackle climate change impact in South Sudan.

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Indian Army Engineer contingent part of UNMISS has been creating flood mitigation measures for the local population of South Sudan and INDBATTs\* have been tasked for HADR support to the local population.

- *Youth Empowerment*: Open skill development centers, offer more scholarships and encourage Indian universities to set up campuses.
- *Gender*: Prioritize women's training, establish girls' schools and promote women empowerment.
- *Disaster Management*: Provide HADR training & equipment, satellite-based disaster monitoring and help set up a national disaster management authority.

### Challenges in Strategic Cooperation

Strategic cooperation between India and South Sudan has been affected by several interlinked challenges across political, economic, security, social, environmental, and global governance domains. These issues indirectly delay project implementation and hinder effective bilateral engagement.

- ***Political Challenges***: India and South Sudan both recognize each other sovereignty and shares similar culture as well as ideology being erstwhile colonies. Both countries understand the importance of Independence. The political challenges impacting cooperation include:

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\* INDBATT are Indian Battalion contingents of Indian Army deployed in South Sudan for peacekeeping operations.

- *Weak Government Institution:* South Sudan's transitional government is built on a fragile coalition with competing interests. Without stable, elected leadership, long-term cooperation remains uncertain.
- *Limited Bilateral Engagement:* Political interactions between both nations have been minimal - only eight official visits or exchanges, with head of state level meetings occurring only in 2011 and 2015. Regular diplomatic engagement is essential for deepening bilateral ties.
- *Security Challenges:* The country continues to face internal conflict, ethnic tensions, and insecurity due to armed groups. These factors disrupt development and investment efforts. A stable security environment is a prerequisite for any strategic cooperation
- *Economic Challenges:* South Sudan has one of the weakest economies globally, it is overly dependent on oil revenues, which are poorly managed. GRSS has planned diversification into agriculture and livestock that offers limited returns and there is limited thought for establishing industries due to lack of infrastructure, low productivity, and funding shortages. India, as a developing country, needs viable returns to justify investments. Hence, South Sudan must improve its economic management and offer a more secure investment environment.
- *Social and Cultural Challenges:* Issues like internal displacement, low literacy, gender-based violence, and ethnic divisions affect social stability and limit human capital development. These barriers reduce the effectiveness of social cooperation projects and community-level engagement.
- *Environmental Challenges:* South Sudan is increasingly affected by climate change, especially flooding and irregular rainfall, which directly impact infrastructure and agriculture. India's investments must prioritize environmental sustainability to ensure long-term success.
- *Global Governance Challenges:* South Sudan's geopolitical landscape is influenced by competing global interests. China has entrenched itself through major oil and infrastructure investments. India's cooperation with South Sudan has been impacted by the China's interest in the region.
  - The China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) owns a 41 % stake in South Sudan's oil sector.<sup>21</sup>
  - China-backed projects, including an oil pipeline to Djibouti<sup>22</sup> and the LAPSSET\* Corridor<sup>23</sup>, may reshape regional trade and limit India's strategic space. Both the projects have consent of GRSS, giving China favourable spot in region.

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\* LAPSSET is Lamu Port (Kenya)– South Sudan – Ethiopia Transport Corridor planned in 2013 and work started in 2019, project is worth \$25 Billion which is nearly stalled.

## Way Ahead for Strategic Partnership

In a competitive and multipolar world, India must seize global opportunities, particularly in emerging markets like South Sudan – especially to address its negative Balance of Trade (BoT)<sup>†</sup>. Aligning with its Africa foreign policy, India should pursue a strategic, multi-sectoral partnership with South Sudan, focusing on the following priority areas from the recommendations of strategic cooperation:

### ● Trade & Investments

- **Oil production & Exploration:** South Sudan, the only oil-producing country in East Africa, presents vast untapped reserves (90% unexplored). India's ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL) already holds significant stakes in oil ventures. India should expand exploration and consider co-funding a \$3 billion refinery in Block 5A to boost output for which GRSS is looking for investors since March 2024<sup>24</sup>, this can even facilitate the regional exports to petroleum product to Kenya, Uganda and Republic of Congo. Supporting South Sudan in oil revenue management will also ensure sustainable economic growth.
- **Agriculture & Food Processing:** South Sudan urgently needs to diversify its oil-dependent economy. One key opportunity lies in transforming from a food-deficit to a food-surplus nation through a green revolution. India can be a strategic partner in this transformation by supporting agriculture as an industry. India could provide training to farmers and help monitor initial production cycles & developing food processing industry that will ensure food security of South Sudan.
- **Capacity Building:** India should continue aiding South Sudan in capacity building by offering training to government officials, scholarships, student exchanges, and vocational education aligned with its skill development programs. Training healthcare workers, empowering women, and supporting primary education will help India connect with South Sudan at the grassroots. This soft power approach enhances India's image and builds a future market while aligning with South Sudan's Revitalized National Development Strategy (R-NDS).
- **Foundational Reforms:** India can support key reforms such as drafting a permanent constitution, establishing a judicial system, aiding in election commission setup and helping reorganize the armed forces to be more professional and effective.
- **Traction & Impact:** India should focus on impactful infrastructure projects aligned with R-NDS, including:
  - **Construction of Roads:** Improving roads, especially those connecting the capital with border points, is vital for trade in this landlocked country.

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<sup>†</sup> BoT is the difference between Import and exports of a country in a period.

- *Land Ports*: Establishing ports on borders with Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Sudan will boost connectivity, it will support India's export through Kenyan ports to South Sudan.
- *Solar & Wind Electricity Projects*: Solar and wind projects can attract Indian companies and bring sustainable energy solutions.
- *Irrigation Canal and Water Supply Scheme*: Irrigation canals and water supply schemes will support agriculture, livestock, and flood control as the full potential of Nile River remain unutilized.

## Conclusion

India and South Sudan enjoy strong ties, but aligning support with South Sudan's R-NDS can boost development and partnership. South Sudan must ensure stability to fully benefit from cooperation. India should focus on opportunities in energy sector, agriculture, capacity building, foundational reforms and infrastructure projects that provides traction & aligned with the country's current needs and long-term growth goals.

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- <sup>1</sup> "India-South Sudan Bilateral Relations", Embassy of India, Juba, South Sudan, 2023, Microsoft Word - Bilateral Brief for website Sept 2023 (2) (Accessed on 25 September 2024).
  - <sup>1</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>2</sup> "MoU on Consultations between India and South Sudan" , Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, 22 February 2019, Treaty Detail | Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India (Accessed on 20 October 2025).
  - <sup>3</sup> "Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan," I.G.A.D, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 12 September 2018, IGAD South Sudan Office - Signed Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (Accessed on 20 September 2024).
  - <sup>4</sup> "Revised National Development Strategy 2021-2024, Page 12-17," Government of South Sudan, Juba, 2021, South-Sudan-NDS\_Print-14-June-2022.pdf (Accessed on 20 March 2025).
  - <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>6</sup> Ruchita Beri, "Indian Foreign Policy and Africa: Continuity and Change," IDSA, 2023, Indian Foreign Policy and Africa: Continuity and Change (Accessed on 25 September 2024).
  - <sup>7</sup> HHH Viswanathan and Abhishek Mishra, "The Ten Guiding Principles for India Africa Engagement", ORF Occasional Paper, vol. Occasional Paper 200, 2019, The ten guiding principles for India-Africa engagement: Finding coherence in India's Africa policy (Accessed on 25 September 2024).
  - <sup>8</sup> Paul Nantulaya, "Africa - India Cooperation Sets Benchmark for partnership", African Center for Strategic Studies, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/africa-india-cooperation-benchmark-partnership/> , 12 December 2023 (Accessed on 25 September 2024).
  - <sup>9</sup> Government of South Sudan, No. 5.
  - <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>11</sup> UNDP, "Access to Justice, Security and Human Rights Strengthening Programme in South Sudan," Annual Report, 2023, Annual Report 2023: Access to Justice, Security and Human Rights Strengthening Programme in South Sudan | United Nations Development Programme (Accessed on 01 October 2024).



- <sup>12</sup> “Republic of South Sudan Interim country Strategy Paper (I-CSP) 2022-2024”, African Development Bank Group, Juba, November 2021, south\_sudan\_-\_interim\_country\_strategy\_paper\_2022-2024.pdf (Accessed on 01 October 2024).
- <sup>13</sup> “Systematic Country Diagnostic,” Report Number - 99383-SS, Country Department, Eastern Africa-3, World Bank Group, 05 Oct 2015, World Bank Document (Accessed on 01 October 2024).
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup> African Development Bank Group, no.13.
- <sup>16</sup> “Strengthening Agricultural Value Chains : Opportunities and challenges,” Policy Brief, UNDP, 2023, Policy Brief: Strengthening Agricultural Value Chains & AfCFTA Linkages in South Sudan: Opportunities and Challenges | United Nations Development Programme (Accessed on 05 October 2024).
- <sup>17</sup> Paul Nantulaya, no.9.
- <sup>18</sup> Embassy of India, South Sudan, no. 1.
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