



## Sudan Crisis and Operation Kaveri

**For Prelims:** [Red Sea](#), [Nile River](#), Sudan Crisis, Operation Kaveri, Rapid Support Forces

**For Mains:** Factors contributing to the crisis in Sudan, and the possible implications for India's foreign policy in the region.

### Why in News?

India has started '**Operation Kaveri**' to evacuate **its nationals owing to the Current Crisis in [Sudan](#)**.

- Around 3,000 Indians are stuck in various parts of Sudan, including capital Khartoum and in distant provinces like Darfur.

### What is Operation Kaveri?

- Operation Kaveri is a codename for India's evacuation effort to bring back its citizens stranded in Sudan amid intense fighting between the army and a rival paramilitary force there.
- The operation involves the deployment of [Indian Navy's INS Sumedha](#), a stealth offshore patrol vessel, and **two Indian Air Force C-130J special operations aircraft** on standby in Jeddah.
- There are about 2,800 Indian nationals in Sudan, and there is also a **settled Indian community of about 1,200 in the country**.

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## What is the Current Crisis in Sudan?

### ▪ Background:

- The conflict in Sudan has its roots in the overthrowing of long-serving President Omar al-Bashir by **military generals in April 2019**, following widespread protests.
- This led to an agreement between the **military and protesters, under which a power-sharing body called the Sovereignty Council** was established to lead Sudan to elections at the end of 2023.
- However, the military overthrew the transitional government led by Abdalla Hamdok in October 2021, with Burhan becoming the de-facto leader of the country and Dagalo his second-in-command.

### ▪ Tussle between Army and RSF:

- Soon after the 2021 coup, a **power struggle between two military (SAF) and paramilitary (RSF) generals** arose, interrupting a plan to transition to elections.
  - A preliminary deal was reached in December 2021 for a political transition, but negotiations hit a roadblock over the integration of the paramilitary **Rapid Support Forces (RSF)** with the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), due to **disagreements over the timetable and security sector reforms**.
- Tensions escalated over the **control of resources and RSF integration**, leading to clashes.
  - There was disagreement over how the 10,000-strong RSF should be integrated into the army, and which authority should oversee that process.
- Also, Dagalo (RSF general) wanted to delay the integration for 10 years but the army said it would take place in the next two years.

## What is RSF?

- The RSF is a group, evolved from Janjaweed militias, which fought in a conflict in the 2000s in the Darfur region in West Sudan nearing the Border of Chad.
  - Over time, the militia grew and made into the **RSF in 2013**, and its forces were **used as border guards in particular**.
- In 2015, the RSF along with Sudan's army began sending troops to fight in the war in **Yemen alongside Saudi and Emirati forces**.
- In addition to the Darfur region, the RSF was deployed to states such as South **Kordofan and the Blue Nile**, where it was accused of committing human rights abuses.
  - In a 2015 report, Human Rights Watch described its forces as **"men with no mercy"**.

## What are the Repercussions of the Current Crisis?

- **Difficulty in Democratic Transition:** The battle between the army and RSF has likely **made Sudan's transition to democracy** more difficult.
  - It is anticipated the tussle may transform into a wider conflict leading to the country's collapse.
- **Economic Crisis:** Sudan's **economy is struggling, battered by hyperinflation and crippled by massive foreign debt**.
  - Billions of dollars given in international support and debt relief were frozen after the ouster of the Hamdok government.
- **Disturbance in Neighbouring Countries:** Since Sudan's location borders seven countries, this conflict may spill over into neighboring countries and destabilize the region. **Chad and South Sudan are particularly vulnerable**.
  - The situation could lead to **major external intervention** if the fighting continues.  
**Refugees from Sudan's contested areas have already arrived in Chad.**

## How are India-Sudan Relations?

- **Strategic Significance of Sudan:**
  - Sudan is located in Northeast Africa and is the **third largest African Nation**.
  - Owing to its strategic location on the [Red Sea](#), **access to the Nile River, the vast swath of gold reserves and agriculture potential**, it has long been coveted by the outside powers, including its neighbours, the Gulf countries, Russia and the Western nations.
- **Bilateral Projects:**
  - It had already implemented **49 bilateral projects through concessional lines** of credit worth USD 612 million in areas such as energy, transport, and agribusiness industry in Sudan in 2021.
- **Support in Juba Peace Agreement:**
  - India supported Sudan's efforts to form a transitional government and also supported the Juba Peace Agreement signed by the government in October 2020.
    - Chad, UAE and **Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)** were the guarantors, while Egypt and Qatar were witnesses to the peace deal.
  - The agreement covered various areas such as governance, security, and justice and was important for future constitutional negotiations.
    - India also supported including armed movements from outside in the negotiation process and a national plan for civilian protection with 1,200 personnel.
- **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation:**
  - Under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) India offered 290 scholarships to Sudan towards capacity building. Besides, India had offered humanitarian assistance including food supplies to Sudan in 2020.
- **Bilateral Trade:**
  - Over the years, the bilateral trade between India and Sudan has grown from USD 327.27 million in 2005-06 to USD 1663.7 million in 2018-19.
  - India's investments in Sudan and South Sudan were roughly USD 3 billion, out of which

USD 2.4 billion was invested in the petroleum sector from ONGC Videsh, a public sector undertaking.

### What are the Evacuation Operations carried out by India?

<b>Operation Ganga (2022):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is an evacuation mission to <b>bring back all the Indian nationals who are currently stranded in Ukraine</b>.</li> <li>The <b>tensions between Russia and Ukraine</b> are currently heightened, with war erupting and military launched a series of attacks recently.</li> </ul>
<b>Operation Devi Shakti (2021):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Operation Devi Shakti was India's complex mission to evacuate its citizens and nationals</b> after its swift takeover by the Taliban.</li> </ul>
<b>Vande Bharat (2020):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When the <b>Covid-19 pandemic</b> hit the world, the Centre launched the Vande Bharat train to bring back Indians stranded in foreign countries.</li> <li>In the multiple phases of the operation, <b>about 60 lakh Indians</b> were brought back to India.</li> </ul>
<b>Operation Samudra Setu (2020):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was a <b>naval operation</b> as part of the national effort to bring home Indian citizens and nationals during the <b>pandemic</b>.</li> <li>It successfully brought back <b>3,992 Indian citizens</b> to their homeland by sea.</li> <li>Indian Naval ships <b>Jalashwa (Landing Platform Dock)</b>, and <b>Airavat, Shardul and Shakti</b> participated in this operation which lasted over 55 days and involved traversing more than 10,000 nautical miles.</li> </ul>
<b>Evacuation from Brussels (2016):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In March 2016, Belgium was hit by terrorist strikes at Brussels Airport in Zaventem, a central Brussels.</li> <li>A total of 242 Indians, including 28 crew members, returned to India in a Jet Airways flight.</li> </ul>
<b>Operation Raahat (2015):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2015, a conflict raged between the <b>Yemeni government and Houthi rebels</b>.</li> <li>Thousands of Indians were stranded and Yemen was not accessible by air due to a no-fly zone.</li> <li>Under Operation Raahat, India <b>evacuated nearly 5,600 people from Yemen</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>Operation Maitri (2015):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is the <b>joint relief and rescue operation</b> by the Indian government and the Indian Air Force during the 2015 Nepal earthquake.</li> <li>The joint Army-Air Force operation brought over 5,000 Indians back from Nepal by Air India. The Indian army successfully <b>evacuated 170 foreign nationals</b> from the US, the UK, Russia and other countries.</li> </ul>
<b>Operation Safe Homecoming (2011):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>India launched 'Operation Homecoming' to <b>bring back Indian citizens stranded in Iraq</b>.</li> <li>Under the operation, <b>India evacuated 15,400 Indian nationals</b>.</li> <li>The air-sea operation was conducted by the Indian Navy and Air India.</li> </ul>
<b>Operation Sukoon (2006):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As Israel and Lebanon broke into military conflict in July 2006, India rescued its stranded citizens through an evacuation operation, which is now famously known as <b>the 'Beirut Sealift'</b>.</li> <li>It was the <b>largest naval rescue mission</b> since the <b>'Dunkirk' evacuation</b>.</li> <li>The task force <b>evacuated about 2,280 people</b> including some Nepalese and Sri Lankans.</li> </ul>
<b>1990 Kuwait Airlift (1990):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 1990, when 1,00,000 Iraqi soldiers armed with 700 tanks marched into Kuwait, the UN imposed a blockade on Iraq, cutting off its access to the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea.</li> <li>The general public was left behind to fend for themselves.</li> <li><b>Over 1,70,000</b> of those stranded in Kuwait were Indians.</li> <li>India <b>kicked off the evacuation process</b> in which over <b>1,70,000 Indians</b> were evacuated.</li> </ul>

## Way Forward

- Since India cannot depend only on West Asian countries such as Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia that constitute the global energy heartland, it has **consciously cultivated relations with oil-rich African states like Sudan, Nigeria, and Angola** to meet its growing energy demands.
  - It will be important for India to protect its investments, trade and other interests in the Horn of Africa.

- The Red Sea region is **crucial to India's maritime security strategy**.
- In view of the existing structures of Indo-Sudanese ties and Sudan's location in the Horn of Africa, **India needs to guard its trade, investments, and interests in the region** before taking any hasty step of recognising the new regime.

### UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

**Q. Very recently, in which of the following countries have lakhs of people either suffered from severe famine/acute malnutrition or died due to starvation caused by war/ethnic conflicts? (2018)**

- (a) Angola and Zambia
- (b) Morocco and Tunisia
- (c) Venezuela and Colombia
- (d) Yemen and South Sudan

**Ans: (d)**

**Source: TH**

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