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New publication \ **Transformation of the security sector in South Sudan needs a critical re-think**

More information:
SUSANNE HEINKE

*Head of Public Relations
Leiterin Presse- und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit*

+49 228 911 96-44, Fax -22
pr@bicc.de

There is no end in sight of the violent conflicts in South Sudan. The fact that fighters have not been demobilized sustainably and security sector reform has so far not taken place are major contributors to this. The new BICC study “In Need of a Critical Re-think: Security Sector Reform in South Sudan” (in English; Working Paper 6\2016) names the existing patronage system as main obstacle to a transformation of the South Sudanese security apparatus and advises a clear break.

The authors **Claudia Breitung, Luuk van de Vondervoort** and **Wolf-Christian Paes** give the following policy recommendations:

\ Reconstitute the security sector and then abolish the practice of buying short-term peace by integrating militias into the army

Given the current divisions in the country, which largely followed infighting and divisions inside the SPLA and the political system, the South Sudanese security sector will in reality need to be built up from scratch. This will include proportional representation on the basis of ethnicity and a dismissal of generals found responsible for gross human rights violations. Once that has been achieved, ensure that rules and regulations for promotions within the military are in place and adhered to (these should be based on military success, loyalty, and education). Consider having generals' appointments being approved by parliament. Moreover, militia integration should in principle be banned. One should avoid by all means making similar mistakes like in the past, opting for an open-ended integration process and integrate again all types of armed actors into the national armed forces. Unfortunately, Kiir's most recent incorporation of friendly militias into the army in 2015 indicates that this kind of policy is still the SPLA's fallback option for dealing with unrest. However, in light of the economic collapse, the sinking oil prices, and lack of international donor support, even as a short-term strategy South Sudan can simply not afford 'buying peace' in such a manner.

\ Treat the security sector as part of a broader political challenge facing the country

Donors should see their engagement with South Sudan as a complete package, whereby SSR and DDR cannot be technical interventions separate from broader political processes. Setbacks in one area (civil society harassment, financial transparency) should have repercussions for support to the security services (training and equipment, invitations to international courses and seminars). Donors should also understand that their support helps maintain the current practice of using the SPLA and SPLA-IO to form and maintain political patronage networks. This needs to be abolished if security sector transformation efforts are to succeed. Donor support over the years has come to supplant social services, freeing up additional resources for the security sector in the process. Support of social services cannot continue unabated while government budgets

for the security sector go up. Downsizing activities (whatever form these might take in future) should not be regarded as a social benefit programme to serve the interests of certain commanders and small groups of people but as a tool of building a sustainable security apparatus. Introducing biometric registration is a first step.

\ International assistance to South Sudan's security sector should involve more conditionality and focus on enhancing accountability mechanisms

'Train and equip' programmes should only be supported if they are closely tied to accountability measures. Priority ought to be given to enhancing military justice. Donors should also introduce conditionalities within projects, whereby receiving the next tranche of financial support is dependent on first achieving certain concrete results. For example: Submission of biometric data is a precondition for candidates being accepted. Coordination is crucial: Different donors can support different aspects of the professionalization drive, but political objectives need to be aligned in order to avoid being played out against one another.

\ Interventions targeting South Sudan's security sector ought to take the current state of the SPLA and SPLA-IO as a baseline to work with

Interventions should not aim at an ideal type military apparatus. Instead, policy planners should work primarily from what is possible and feasible and combine that with realistic estimates for what institutions can achieve within the South Sudanese context. It is obvious that neither the SPLA nor the SPLA-IO have a profound interest in downsizing their forces. In light of this challenge, it is essential to compromise on a way forward and taking note of the incentives of the parties to retain or reduce their forces. In addition, observers and practitioners, including donors, should not shy away from examining individual and group relations inside the security services and between the political and military realm in order to understand the impact of their interventions.

\ Membership of political parties must be outlawed for the SPLA and SPLA-IO

The political and military sphere in the Republic of South Sudan is still very much interconnected. The only sustainable way to promote a demilitarization of the South Sudanese society and to break political patronage is to disconnect the security services from the SPLM. An army that serves the unity of the country and defends each and every South Sudanese ought to be apolitical. Therefore, members of the organized forces should not be allowed to be a member of any political party. The usage of military titles for civilians should be prohibited.

\ To increase community security and protection, the role of the SSNPS needs to be strengthened vis-à-vis the SPLA and the SPLA-IO

SSNPS's ability to protect the life and property of the citizens remains limited due to limited capacity, training, infrastructure, equipment and funds. Above all, the military in the past has assumed tasks and responsibilities that should in fact be assigned to the police. What is needed in future is a gradual withdrawal of the military from the sectors that have to be managed by SSNPS. Concurrently, SSNPS' role and image ought to be promoted to build trust between the police and the population. Benefits for SSNPS

should be indexed against (a reasonable rate of) inflation while SPLA benefits should remain flat. Consider more flexible forms of policing based around local security arrangements. This, combined with increasing movements of SPLA units around the country, will make it more interesting for youth to either engage with, or become part of SSNPS instead of SPLA. Furthermore, military commanders engaging in law enforcement operations should be formally answerable to civilian authorities and the police. Civilian disarmament (e.g. in form of a weapons linked to development approach) may only start once the SSNPS is able to guarantee a modicum of security in the rural areas to be targeted for disarmament.

\ Implement youth-at-risk programmes and other employment schemes in regions with a high concentration of mobilized youth and adults

The current crisis has revealed the fragility and division of the country and has shown how easy it is for individuals to mobilize and incite large numbers of people. Reports from various regions in South Sudan indicate that youth groups like the White Army gathered to engage in the conflict. This quick mobilization of (youth) groups was possible partly because many of them have been excluded from the benefits of the country's independence. In the framework youth-at-risk projects, young people should be targeted especially in those regions with a high concentration of mobilized youth. To ensure a peace dividend, quick impact employment schemes such as labour intensive projects or public works programmes (separate from the military) at grassroots level ought to be initiated. Ideally, these would aim at youth as well as adults.