New publication \ War in Syria: UN peacekeeping mission and deal with Russia are imperative

The invasion of Turkey in northern Syria and the air strikes of the regime on the surrounded east Ghouta have caused yet a further escalation of the war in Syria with hundreds of fatalities. Still, directly after the unanimously adopted UN ceasefire resolution, fighting continued. In the latest BICC Policy Brief, Esther Meininghaus analyzes the major trends in the war in Syria and demands the establishment of a UN peacekeeping mission as part of a Grand Bargain with Russian participation.

In the BICC Policy Brief 2\2018, War in Syria: UN peacekeeping mission and deal with Russia are imperative", Esther Meininghaus concludes in her analysis that a Grand Bargain between the United Nations and Russia is possible. Only Russia’s and the United Nations’ shared responsibility to protect permit an end to the war and to the growing radicalization that not only causes Russian casualties in Syria but also in Russia itself, for instance as a result of the IS attack in Dagestan.

The author argues that de-escalation zones have failed, as the example of east Ghouta shows, and that the protection of the civilian population must be prioritized. She points to the systematic attacks on and the organized displacement of civilians by the regime alliance and a growing radicalization as a result of the forced resettlement of several thousands of jihadi fighters and their families to the province of Idlib. This strategy of the regime alliance has led to the local population being terrorized, abducted, enslaved and forcefully recruited.

Besides a detailed analysis of the war in Syria, the BICC Policy-Brief "War in Syria: Peacekeeping mission and deal with Russia are imperative" gives the following policy recommendations:

\ NATO member states should force Turkey to withdraw from northern Syria

Germany should call upon NATO to expel Turkey from membership unless, it withdraws its troops from Syria. To secure the northern border, the UN could offer the immediate deployment of troops to Afrin, which could be extended to a Grand Bargain for other opposition-controlled areas. This deal would have to include Russia.

\ Grand Bargain: Develop a Joint Mechanism for the deployment of UN blue helmets and negotiations with Russia for a political solution to the war
Provided that major alliances among the armed opposition consent, shared responsibility for protection by the UN and Russia provides an opportunity for ceasefires, the deployment of UN blue helmets, a reformed state system without Assad and deradicalization programmes. It could be achieved through a Grand Bargain.

If Russia were to act as a mediator, it must stop current systematic attacks on civilians immediately

If Russia is to change its role from an aggressor to that of a mediator, the attacks in eastern Ghouta, Idlib, Hama countryside and elsewhere must stop with immediate effect.

Deradicalization as a means of terror prevention requires cooperation between Russia and the UN

The strategic forced relocation of radical fighters by the regime alliances to areas controlled by the Free Syrian Army (FSA), for instance, leads to local populations being terrorized. Growing poverty and financial incentives draw fighters towards extremist groups. Expertise by Russia and the UN must be combined to develop and implement de-radicalization programmes if further escalation of terror is to be stopped locally and globally.

Germany and other donors should continue and coordinate support for the moderate Syrian opposition on the diplomatic level

The moderate civil-political opposition, e.g. Higher Negotiation Committee should be a key actor to shape political reform in the Grand Bargain and to create an internationally acceptable democratic and inclusive framework. Donors should, therefore, continue the financial and ideational support of the opposition. This support, however, ought to be coordinated and allow for self-determined prioritisation of needs (e.g. legal advice, negotiation training).

Please find the full text of “War in Syria: UN peacekeeping mission and deal with Russia are imperative” at: