



Dramatically Increased Pressure and Diplomacy Needed to Advance Peace in South Sudan

December 13, 2019

In advance of the critical meeting that the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) will be hosting next week on the state borders dispute in South Sudan, the international community should begin preparations to dramatically increase the pressure on any spoilers in the event that the negotiations fail to generate progress.

To build more significant leverage ahead of the February deadline, the United States and Europe should use financial measures accompanied by a diplomatic surge to sway the calculations of South Sudanese officials across the political divide. To help begin to alter the incentive structure away from continued war and looting, the international community should target the spoiler networks undermining peace in the country, including officials in the highest levels of South Sudan's government and in the ranks of the armed opposition, along with their commercial facilitators inside and outside South Sudan. After having waited for one deadline after another to lapse, the approach must now be more proactive and integrated with diplomatic efforts.

Network sanctions—sanctions that not only target officials themselves, but also their close business associates, their family members, and the international collaborators instrumental to their financial enterprises—are critical in this two-pronged strategy of increasing leverage. The US should also consider a new executive order or should amend EO 13664 with new authorities that empower the US government to target the illicit financial activity that fuels atrocities, conflict, and state capture in South Sudan. Building on existing pressures recently initiated by the US, the EU could follow suit with network sanctions, anti-money laundering measures, asset freezes, and visa bans on officials who are complicit in obstructing progress on the peace agreement. To complement the pressures above, the EU should consider issuing advisories to international banks about the risks of money laundering in South Sudan. Engaging regional powers Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia—financial and commercial hubs with ties to South Sudanese businesses—is critical for the success of this strategy and should be a component of diplomatic efforts.



Furthermore, the US should immediately appoint a special envoy for South Sudan to work with its Troika partners in Norway and the UK, and with others in the broader region, in surging diplomatic efforts to catalyze progress in the talks. The pressures described above will only be effective if they are integrated into a coordinated diplomatic strategy handled by a dedicated, senior US envoy, one who understands how to deploy the leverage created by such financial pressures. Sanctions and anti-money laundering measures in a vacuum are far less effective than those that are integrated into a diplomatic strategy led by a seasoned envoy.

As the Afghanistan Papers reveal, ignoring and not countering rampant corruption increases the stakes for war and derails the international community's good-will efforts for sustainable peace and good governance in developing countries. Such is also the case in South Sudan. Fortunately, the international community possesses the tools to rectify years of inaction in the face of state capture and to support a sustainable peace in South Sudan that can launch the country on the path of development.

The Sentry stands ready to support the international community's efforts to build the requisite leverage to advance the prospects of peace, human rights, and good governance in South Sudan. In this regard, The Sentry will continue to turn over evidence in its possession to governments and financial institutions around the world in support of positive action for peace.

