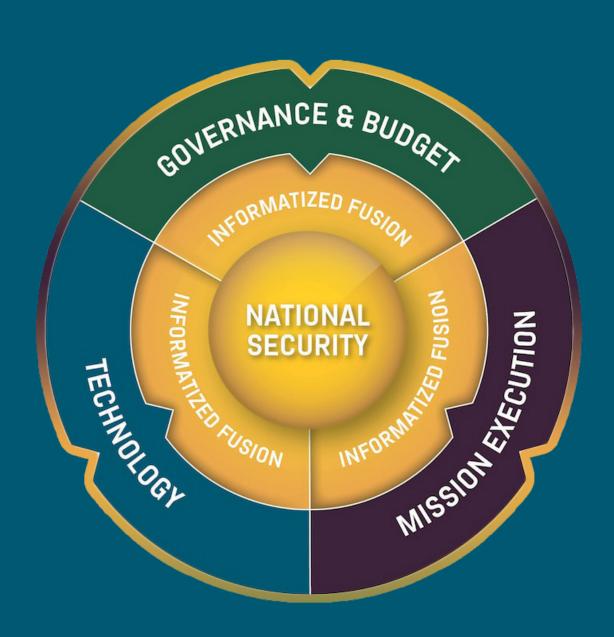# THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL
SECURITY POLICY IN SOUTH SUDAN

—— **BRIAN** ADEBA

ABOUT THIS SERIES

This collection of policy briefs explores national security priorities in the Transitional Period. Published jointly by the Security Studies Network (SSN) and the Center for Strategic and Policy Studies (CSPS), the policy briefs offer succinct and actionable recommendations for South Sudanese policymakers.

From January to April, these papers will be published in sequence on the CSPS website, starting with the brief on the need for a national security policy, discussed below.

SERIES EDITOR

Brian Adeba

ABOUT THE SOUTH SUDAN CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND POLICY STUDIES

The South Sudan Center for Strategic and Policy Studies (CSPS) is a non-profit organization, established in South Sudan just after independence, with the objective of producing policy relevant research that will enable the generation of critical and analytical thinking aimed at informing policy.

ABOUT THE SECURITY STUDIES NETWORK

The Security Studies Network (SSN) is a volunteer and non-profit organization that brings together academics, researchers, practitioners, and students to exchange knowledge on best practices, explore collaborative research projects, link members to research resources, contribute to scholarship, and widen the scope of understanding security policy in South Sudan.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

INTRODUCTION TO POLICY BRIEFS ON NATIONAL SECURITY PRIORITIES

In August 2022, the parties to the conflict in South Sudan agreed to extend the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) for two years to give room to complete benchmarks in the peace deal. While this extension illustrates the immense challenges of the agreement, notably, its slow implementation, it also shows what is possible if politicians compromise to achieve strategic objectives for the country. However, despite the gains achieved so far on critical articles in the agreement pertaining to security arrangements, such as the reunification of forces and cantonment, there are still a lot of challenges to overcome to realize the holistic implementation of the agreement. Articles on institutional reforms that are designed to strengthen accountability and advance transitional justice, for instance, require tremendous effort and political will to achieve. Meeting deadlines has proved to be particularly challenging and will require that politicians exert more capital to achieve unimplemented tasks.

From a broad perspective, the fact that the peace agreement has reduced political violence is commendable. The power-sharing formula has addressed some aspects of the power struggle which birthed conflict in 2013 and 2016. Much work is still needed to inculcate a culture of compromise and respect for the rule of law as stipulated in the agreement. All in all, the achievements of the peace agreement are building blocks that can assist in realizing comprehensive peace and stability in South Sudan.

In particular, the gains achieved so far, and the formation of the transitional government offer an opportunity for the parties to the agreement to restart the state-building process stalled by the war. Key in this perspective, is an examination of national security priorities that require urgent attention by policymakers. It is with this view in mind that the **Security Studies Network** partnered with the **Center for Strategic and Policy Studies** (CSPS) to publish these policy briefs on national security priorities. Although, it is our view that the list of priorities addressed in these briefs is by no means exhaustive, it is our hope that these briefs will spark a wider debate on the urgent tasks politicians must undertake on national security issues in South Sudan.

Four key themes on national security priorities are examined in the briefs in this initial series. The first theme focuses on the exigencies of a national security policy upon which strategies can be drawn to address the security challenges confronting South Sudan. The second theme focuses on contested border areas and tackles issues on incursions by neighboring states and unaddressed political issues stipulated in international agreements on border disputes. The third theme addresses public health challenges, namely pandemic preparedness, and mental health in the armed forces of South Sudan. The fourth theme examines the nexus between rapid response and military capability to address national security threats.

Written by experienced experts, these policy briefs offer succinct and actionable recommendations for policymakers. We hope that others can pick up from here and expound on other equally important themes on national security in South Sudan. We also take the opportunity to thank these experts for volunteering to write the briefs.

Policy Brief No. 1, which also includes an introduction to the series is written by **Brian Adeba,** a policy analyst on South Sudan issues. It examines the need for an overarching national security policy to address the security challenges in South Sudan. This piece points out shortcomings in past security-related policy frameworks and pitfalls to avoid in the Transitional Period as policymakers contemplate the drafting of a national security policy.

In Policy Brief No. 2, **Alex Lokaii**, a lawyer, examines the intricacies in the Ilemi Triangle brought about by an increasingly bold presence of the Kenyan government in the contested zone. He argues that if not addressed soon, Kenya's *de facto* presence in the Triangle means that South Sudan will likely lose its claim to the area in the near term. His argument on next steps policymakers in South Sudan should take makes for a particularly interesting read.

Still on the topic of contested border areas, **Dr. Sandra Tombe**, shines the spotlight on the Abyei region, arguing for a rethink of current policies to rejuvenate the implementation of international protocols to resolve the debacle. Policy Brief No. 3 is particularly useful in highlighting the stalemate in Abyei, which has been overshadowed recently by fighting between the Ngok and Twic communities and by political upheaval in Sudan.

On pandemic preparedness, **Dr. Edward Eremugo Kenyi,** a public health professional with wide experience in South Sudan and internationally, argues in Policy Brief No. 4 that it is time for policymakers to devise an appropriate pandemic preparedness strategy. Dr. Kenyi warns that global pandemics are on the rise. South Sudan's weak institutional capacity means that it will feel the full brunt of the next global pandemic—with devastating consequences—unless policymakers act now.

Mental health in the organized security forces ranks as the most neglected issue in the national security realm in South Sudan. Hardly is there any research on the topic, despite its implications for national security. In Policy Brief No. 5, **Dr. Nhial T. Tutlam**, a specialist with years of experience studying mental health, examines the broad outlines of Post-traumatic stress disorder (PSTD) in South Sudan for the first time. He argues that although there are no studies to quantify the issue, it is possible to infer from case studies from countries whose armed forces have experienced protracted conflict, and from populations exposed to the war, that South Sudan is likely sitting on a PSTD time-bomb that needs urgent interventions.

The last brief in this series examines the nexus between rapid response by the armed forces and technical capability in the interest of tackling urgent national security priorities. Written by the **Security Studies Network**, Policy Brief No. 6 examines the airlift capacity of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and identifies gaps that undermine rapid response and how they can be plugged.

All the interventions identified in these policy briefs require anchoring within a broader policy or strategy framework to realize efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability in implementation. In particular, a National Security Policy, would be a useful instrument upon which to draw inputs for addressing the national security priorities identified in these briefs as you will read below.

Yours truly

Brian Adeba

THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY IN SOUTH SUDAN

SUMMARY

• South Sudan needs a national security policy to tackle the complex national security challenges it faces.

• A new national security policy must be broad in definition and prioritize the delivery of security to all stakeholders: the state, the government, and the people.

• A national security policy will show to the world that South Sudan is a responsible member of the community of states. The implements of a national security policy go far beyond addressing internal threats but can also contribute to tackling global security threats, such as pandemics or terrorism, for example.

WHY SOUTH SUDAN NEEDS A NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

Since independence in 2011, security delivery in South Sudan has not been based on a national security policy or strategy. Efforts to formulate a national security policy were shelved in 2013 when the power struggle in the SPLM gathered full steam and plunged the country into a civil war.[1] The absence of an overarching security policy means security delivery has been conducted on a narrow and *ad hoc* basis that stymied the full potential of realizing outcomes that ensure the security and safety of the people of South Sudan.

The formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity and the extension of the R-ARCSS offers a new opportunity for policymakers to begin thinking of drafting of a new security policy to address the many and complex national security challenges facing the country. Pandemics, natural disasters, militarized cattle-raiding, armed banditry, armed rebellion, porous and contested border areas, and incursions by armed nomadic groups from the Sahel region round out the myriad security threats facing the country. A national security policy is an official document that a country formulates based on its understanding of its national values, interests, goals, strategic environment, and threats.[2] It serves as a framework from which strategies are drawn to inform the delivery of national security priorities across different sectors. A national security policy will outline, for example, the state's rationale for buying military hardware. Often, a national security policy is concluded based on a shared vision of security arising out of a broad consultative process with stakeholders.[3] In this regard, it is important to stop all wars in the country.

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1 Luka Biong Kuol and Peter Biar Ajak, "National Security Strategy Development: South Sudan Case Study," Africa Center for Strategic Studies (September 2020): 2.
2 Luka Kuol and Joe Amegboh, "Rethinking National Security Strategies in Africa, *International Relations and Diplomacy* Vol. 9, No. 01 (January 2021): 9.
3 Bård B. Knudsen, "Developing a National Security Policy/Strategy: A Roadmap," (March 2012).

Most importantly, South Sudan needs a national security policy because it is a requirement in the constitution. Furthermore, the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan has authorized mechanisms for creating consensus on the way forward. One such mechanism is the Revitalized Defence and Security Review Board, which has done some commendable work on several bills that cover the security sector. The requirements of these bills need anchoring in a strategic national security policy to realize efficiency and accountability in implementation. Lastly, a national security policy is an important document that will show that South Sudan is implementing security priorities based on a strategic document endorsed by senior policymakers partnered in a government of national unity. Endorsement by the partners to the peace deal will mean that there is consensus on the document, which will strengthen its utility for bargaining with the international community to lift the arms embargo on the country. Given that the United Nations Security Council is scheduled to review the arms embargo in May 2023, policymakers need to move fast to start the process of conceptualizing a national security policy.

More broadly, a national security policy will show to the world that South Sudan is a responsible member of the community of states that is accountable to its people. The implements of a national security policy go far beyond addressing internal threats but can also contribute to tackling global security threats, such as pandemics or terrorism, for example. A national security policy therefore will show that South Sudan is serious about contributing to global peace and security, which is in line with its membership in the United Nations. It will further enhance South Sudan's credibility in the region, especially its role in the East African Community Regional Force, to which it has contributed troops for regional peacekeeping efforts in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

TOWARD A BROAD DEFINITION OF NATIONAL SECURITY

As policymakers contemplate a new policy, they must move away from defining national security in narrow terms, which is a norm in many countries in Africa. In South Sudan, whenever the term "national security" is mentioned, it evokes thoughts about the state agency tasked with national security and the conduct of its duties. More broadly in Africa, this narrow perspective embraces a state-centric approach to security or a regime-centric perspective. The former is focused on countering existential threats to states by prioritizing territorial defense and protecting political sovereignty at the expense of the security of citizens, or what is known as human security. In this perspective, resources and political effort is geared to building military and economic power for the sole purpose of protecting the sovereignty of the state. The latter approach prioritizes the security of the ruling elites and the incumbent regime in power. This approach earmarks resources for boosting military and economic power for the protection of regimes and their elites, and not the people.[4] These approaches have been identified by researchers as deficient in the face of the evolving security landscape in the modern era. For example, the advent of global pandemics as national security threats renders both narrow conceptualizations of security useless. Complexity in the security landscape demands a broad definition of national security that encompasses the state, its government, and its people, for a policy to have a meaningful impact.[5]

A National Security Strategy usually describes the methods or means of achieving what is outlined in a National Security Policy. Both terms are used interchangeably. A National Security Policy will sometimes outline a strategy for achieving its implements.
4 Luka Kuol and Amegboh, "Rethinking National Security", 4-5.
5 Knudsen, "Developing a National Security Policy/Strategy," 137.

While it is important to define national security in broad terms, South Sudan's politicians must ensure that the process of drafting a new policy is transparent, evidence-based, non-partisan, and led by a competent technical leadership. Competency, transparency, and endorsement by the country's leaders will accord legitimacy to the process and to the product. Furthermore, policymakers should stipulate a periodic review of the policy to hold accountable, leaders and government agencies, tasked with implementing the policy.

PREVIOUS MISTAKES AND LESSONS TO LEARN FROM PROCESSES OF FORMULATING SECURITY POLICY DOCUMENTS IN SOUTH SUDAN

The drafting of official policy papers for the security sector in South Sudan started after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005. To a large extent, the formulation of security policy was driven by the exigencies of security sector reform, meaning there was a considerable donor-driven effort behind processes. One major problem in this realm is the fact that there is no dedicated effort to implement what is spelt out in policy. A good example is the *SPLA White Paper on Defence* issued in 2008. Although steps were taken to operationalize the policy by the military, which culminated in the development of strategies such as *Objective Force* and the *SPLA Transformation Strategy 2017,* there is no evidence to suggest that these strategies were implemented.

The lack of communication to the public of progress in implementing the stipulations of the White Paper, means it is difficult to measure its outcomes. Furthermore, South Sudan does not have a culture of stringent legislative scrutiny of government policy, which inhibits publicly available knowledge about implementation. Subsequently, although the political context under which the White Paper was written has evolved significantly[6], the policy has not been updated and appears to have long ceased to guide action on defense matters. Rarely does the public hear officials citing the paper. Yet, legislators have not taken steps to question the executive about the fate of the White Paper.

> *Complexity in the security landscape demands a broad definition of national security.*

Holding government executives accountable, is not only the prerogative of the legislature. The media, religious organizations, academics, and civil society have a role to play in oversight. But an insufficient grounding on security issues, an unfavorable political situation, poor training, and lack of resources, has meant that these organizations cannot play the important role of public scrutiny. Lack of a talented pool of security analysts is also a problem that is inhibiting the dissemination of knowledge on security matters. Such analysts are usually the drivers of public discourse on emerging trends and perspectives. The absence of their voice in various forums, means the media is unable to pick up issues of concern in the security sector.

6 Brian Adeba, "Beyond Force Transformation: Rethinking South Sudan's Defence Policy," *RUSI Journal* Vol. 168, Issue 6 (2018): 65.

Regarding the national security policy, a draft was completed in October 2013, but it was not approved by cabinet nor adopted by the National Legislative Assembly.[7] The process of drafting the policy was led by a 13-member committee consisting of individuals from the National Security Service, the army, police, and civil society.[8] Courtesy of involving the governors from the 10 states, a focal point from each state was appointed to be involved in the process. At the state level, the consultation ran for three days in each state and involved legislatures, judiciaries, religious leaders, traditional authorities, women, youth, and civil society organizations.

Earlier on in March 2013, a zero draft was ready. Subsequently, a countrywide consultation process supported by UNMISS and targeting all levels of government, ensued, to create awareness about the draft, inform stakeholders, solicit views, create consensus, and finalizing a draft for review by cabinet and the National Legislative Assembly.[9] Furthermore, one-day consultations at the national level were conducted with the National Legislative Assembly, the ministries of defense, interior, the cluster of ministries tasked with governance and development, and civil society organizations. In total, an estimated 4,000 people were consulted on the process in a period of six months.[10] The involvement of donors from the UK, Norway, and the U.S was instrumental in advancing work on the draft policy and overall security sector reform in South Sudan.

While the drafting process was progressing, it was also running alongside the rising tensions within the SPLM. The firing of the cabinet in July 2013 indicated that the pace of the tensions within the SPLM body politic had accelerated dramatically. Not only did the sacking of the minister responsible for the drafting of the policy sever the process from the political leadership, but it also left the process in limbo. The new minister in the security portfolio prioritized the national security act instead and subsequently, the draft National Security Policy was shelved when hostilities broke out in December 2013 and the country was put on a war-footing.

The shelving of the draft policy illustrates two important factors. The first is about how lack of consensus by political actors can stymie the formulation of coherent and well-meaning policies to manage national security priorities, culminating in *ad hoc* strategies that are not tethered to an overall strategic inclination. These policies are often managed without accountability and independent oversight by the legislature, meaning their full potential to realize outcomes in favor of the citizens is shortchanged. Additionally, the torpedoing of the draft national security policy demonstrates the importance of political leadership in realizing legitimacy and final outcomes. For a national security policy or strategy to "have the gravitas essential for its implementation, it must have the unambiguous imprimatur of a senior government official who has formal authority for overseeing national security matters, usually the head of government."[11] As policymakers contemplate the next process, they should heed the lessons learned from this debacle and take appropriate measures to ensure that a repeat of the past does not happen again.

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7 Kuol and Ajak, "National Security Strategy Development," 2.
8 Ibid, 3.
9 Ibid, 4.
10 Ibid, 4-5.
11 Malia DuMont, "Elements of National Security Strategy," Atlantic Council (February 2019), https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/strategy-consortium/elements-of-national-security-strategy/

The second factor regards the involvement of external donors in the security sector in the period ranging from the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005 to 2013. The CPA signaled the end of war and the advent of liberal interventions aimed at installing a democratic government in South Sudan and establishing security forces that are subject to democratic civilian control through various mechanisms that involve the crafting of laws, the creation of security institutions, the establishment of oversight institutions in the legislature and in government departments. To that effect, donors poured in money and technical assistance of various kinds. The U.S alone spent between $150 and $300 million between 2006 and 2012 in non-lethal support to professionalize the SPLA.[12] Collectively, the U.S., the U.K, and Switzerland were the largest group of donors. Their assistance was mainly focused on professional military education, developing guidelines for the military transformation process and the training of non-commissioned officers.[13] While donor support was critical, it was mainly focused on technical aspects. Donors, despite the large sums of money they donated for the security reform process—which constituted a major point of leverage—shied from paying attention to the political tensions brewing within the SPLM. Attempts to alert donors about the potential negative consequences of a fallout in the ruling party were not heeded. The missed opportunity to leverage the SPLM leaders and influence their decisions accelerated brinkmanship and war.

The key takeaway from the donor involvement is that policymakers must ensure that the process to draft the next national security policy should be locally owned and funded. In any case, donors have so far refused to fund any projects in which the government is involved. This stance is unlikely to change soon. Although politicians have decried the lack of donor involvement in the ongoing security arrangements, donor absence could be a blessing, in that it may foster local ingenuity in terms of funding and installment of a new political culture of compromise to realize strategic outcomes in the security realm that conform to democratic principles.

CONCLUSION

A national security policy is a constitutional requirement, where the National Security Council is directed to analyze threats to the security of the country and "define" a national security strategy.[14] The absence of a national security policy means that the country is willfully violating its own constitution, a move that is detrimental to democratic principles. A policy is a necessary document to guide government action and to promote oversight and accountability. The R-ARCSS envisages South Sudan to develop into a liberal democracy that is accountable to its people. If all the stipulations of the agreement are implemented, South Sudan stands to become a truly free, peaceful, and prosperous country with a comprehensive set of principles that secure the security to its people.

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12 Richard Rands, 2010. "In Need of Review: SPLA Transformation in 2006-10 and Beyond," Geneva: Small Arms Survey. HSBA Working Paper 23. (2010): 32.
13 Lesley Anne Warner, "The Role of Military Integration in War to Peace Transitions: The Case of South Sudan (2006-2013)." (PhD dissertation, King's College London, 2018): 157-60.
14 See Article 161 (2) in the Transitional Constitution of South Sudan.

Important in this configuration is the issue of making the proposed national security policy a publicly available document to promote a shared national understanding of security. A public document tells the outside world what South Sudan deems to be its legitimate security interests. By openly articulating objectives, a publicly available policy contributes to transparency at both the regional and global levels.[15] More importantly, a publicly available document allows South Sudanese to evaluate officials on whether they are implementing the objectives of the policy.

In the face of complex security threats, some of which are global and regional, and are constantly evolving, a national security policy will serve as an important guideline to counter these threats in realistic terms that will enable the country to secure not only its own security, but also contribute to global peace and security.

RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY IN THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Form a committee of eminent personalities who are well-grounded in a scientific understanding of security to establish the building blocks of a national security policy. This committee should be diverse in representation and should draw its membership from various sectors. Women, youth, and the disabled should be adequately represented on the committee. Its members should be individuals held in high-esteem and who are independent in thought. The criteria for membership should be publicized and the process should be as transparent as possible. The committee should be allowed to carry out its work without interference from the executive. The minister should present a policy paper to the National Security Council to build consensus on the way forward. The next step in buy-in is to involve the Council of Ministers and the legislature to outline the need for a national security policy and a roadmap to achieve a positive outcome within a stipulated timeline.

FOR THE SECURITY COMMITTEE IN THE LEGISLATURE

The Chair of the Security Committee should garner consensus within the committee and the wider legislature and pass a binding resolution in the NLA that obligates the executive to formulate a national security policy within a realistic timeframe. Furthermore, the resolution should ensure a secure funding stream from government coffers for the process of drafting a national security policy. The committee should sponsor a policy document that outlines what a national security policy should like for the purpose educating parliamentarians on its implements to enhance informed debate on the matter. More broadly, legislators should stipulate a requirement for a periodic review of the policy that should happen every three years to account for the evolving security threats facing South Sudan.

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15 Knudsen, "Developing a National Security Policy/Strategy," 140.

FOR THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

Authorize the establishment of an independent think tank that is funded by the government to enhance policy analyses in the country. This think tank will conduct independent studies to inform government policy of evidenced-based options to solve problems in the security sector. Current think tanks in South Sudan are few, donor-funded, ill-funded, have staffing shortages, and produce an insufficient body of knowledge on the challenges facing South Sudan. Particularly concerning is their lack of focus on security and defence challenges. A well-funded think tank will serve as a training ground to produce a steady pool of talented analysts for the country.

FOR THE MEDIA

Media owners should take a conscientious approach that dedicates resources and personnel to cover the security challenges in the country by establishing "beat" reporting on security issues. Beat reporting allows reporters to gain expertise on security issues. Their informed reporting of these issues will in turn educate the public and enhance their participation in discourse about the national security policy.

FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society organizations should form a committee that is dedicated to following security issues. This committee should review existing policy and craft their own white paper on national security. An evidence-based paper, subjected to a well-crafted advocacy campaign with relevant stakeholders in government and the legislature, will enable informed decision-making.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brian Adeba is an analyst on South Sudan policy issues and is currently a doctoral student at the Royal Military College of Canada, where his research focuses on the use of force in United Nations peacekeeping. He was previously a journalist for a newspaper that covered foreign affairs and regulatory issues in Canada, where he was a member of the Parliamentary Press Gallery, covering the defence and immigration committees in the House of Commons and the Senate. He also supervised the coverage of the conflict zones of Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile in Sudan for the Sudan Radio Service, which was funded by the Boston-based international non-profit organization, the Education Development Center. Brian also served as a project coordinator at The Centre for International Governance Innovation, a think tank in Canada. His peer-reviewed research on security and defence issues in South Sudan has appeared in the journals *Intelligence and National Security* and *The RUSI Journal.*

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