Train + Equip = Peace?

Stabilization Requires More Than Capacity Building

Claudia Major, Christian Mölling and Judith Vorrath

Should Germany supply weapons to the Kurdish peshmerga forces battling Islamic State (IS)? This question aroused intense debate last summer, leading once more to the general issue of what role capacity building for third actors can play in crisis management. Germany wants to take on more responsibility in foreign policy but is keen to avoid direct military involvement as far as possible. Providing training and equipment for governments and regional organizations in crisis areas, enabling them to create and maintain peace and security by their own efforts, therefore seems sensible. The German Government has pursued this approach with its capacity building initiative ('Ertüchtigungsinitiative') since 2011, which was relabelled 'Enable and Enhance Initiative' in 2013. However, experience to date clearly reveals its risks and limitations. By providing training and equipment, Germany can make an important contribution to crisis management. But it is not a 'one size fits all' solution; on the contrary, it must be context-specific and geared towards long-term needs.

On 1 September 2014, the majority of Members of the Bundestag backed the German Government's decision to supply Iraq with weapons to support its fight against Islamic State (IS). The weapons were to be delivered to the Iraqi Government for distribution to the Kurdish peshmerga forces at the forefront of the war against IS. The decision was preceded by a sometimes heated debate in politics and the media about the pros and cons of such assistance. In January 2015, the German Parliament approved the Government's proposal for a Bundeswehr training mission in northern Iraq. It will comprise about 100 Bundeswehr soldiers, who will train and advise the Kurdish peshmerga

fighters for combat against IS. While supplying weapons to the Kurdish fighters may be a novelty in the German approach, training per se is not. Yet ultimately, both decisions indicate the growing interest in building the capacity of partners as a conflict management tool.

Capacity building: old concept, new interest

The concept of capacity building – in other words, providing advice, training and equipment to strengthen partners' own capabilities – featured on the agenda long before the escalation in Iraq, albeit mostly in the

Dr. Claudia Major is a Senior Associate in SWP's International Security Division
Dr. Christian Mölling and Dr. Judith Vorrath are Associates in SWP's International Security Division

context of broader crisis prevention and management efforts. The approach has been practised in a comprehensive way by the UN for many years, for example in security sector reforms. The EU, too, has supported military and civilian capacity building for some years through missions such as EUTM Somalia and EUPOL RD Congo. In Germany, this approach has attracted more attention since 2011 as a result of the Federal Chancellery's initiative to enable partners (then called 'Ertüchtigungsinitiative'). Originally, the aim was to develop a new framework for justifying arms exports to problematical target countries, predicated on the notion that Germany and the Western countries recognize these states as 'strategic partners'. However, efforts to convince the NATO countries to back this approach at their 2012 summit in Chicago ended in failure. The German Government then successfully pitched the idea – now relabelled the 'Enable and Enhance Initiative' (E2I), with the added dimension of capacity building – to the EU in 2013.

The topic of equipment assistance has also become a focus of attention because of Germany's involvement in EU training activities. The lesson of the missions in Somalia (since 2010) and Mali (since 2013) was that police and military training adds little value if the requisite equipment is lacking.

In regional terms, these initiatives mainly focus on Africa. Indeed, the German Government's new *Policy Guidelines for Africa*, adopted in May 2014, and the debate about providing equipment assistance to Tunisia, for example (cf. *SWP Comments* 53/2014), suggest that Germany plans to intensify its engagement on this continent in future. Not surprisingly, the first test cases that Germany and the EU chose in 2014 to apply E2I all turned out to be in Africa, starting with Mali and Somalia.

In Africa in particular, programmes that aim to build partners' crisis management and stabilization capacities have long been an integral part of the toolbox. For example, the UN, the EU and bilateral partners are assisting African countries and regional organizations to develop their civilian and military capabilities, notably in Somalia. The experience gained to date raises a number of fundamental questions, however. Besides the effectiveness and possible negative spillover effects of capacity building, the scope of these measures also requires critical analysis. Strengthening partners' capacities can certainly be successful, but it is not a 'one size fits all' solution.

Capacities are not enough

Ultimately, capacity building is always a crisis prevention tool as well. The establishment of functioning security structures not only stabilizes the countries themselves; it should, ideally, also enable them to contribute to regional stability and crisis prevention. Wide-ranging measures at an early stage to reform and strengthen partners' security sectors could thus serve as a positive alternative to (last-minute) arms deliveries to authoritarian regimes. This preventive approach is very much in line with the position defined by Germany in the Action Plan 'Civilian Crisis Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Post-Conflict Peace-Building' and the coalition agreement.

A glance at various recent crises, however, shows that Germany's and Europe's willingness to commit substantial diplomatic, financial and, if need be, military resources early on to prevent an escalation is still very limited. From our current perspective, for example, it is difficult to imagine that Germany (or the EU, for that matter) would have invested the same amount of resources and effort in preventive action in Mali, i.e. before the security situation deteriorated in 2012, as it does now that the situation has escalated.

But even if Germany implements its proclaimed prevention strategy, it must be prepared to assume responsibility for the subsequent phases of crisis management as well, for the fact is that prevention measures can fail. Germany would then have a choice: either Berlin accepts that

the outcome of many years of development and reform efforts is being called into question, along with confidence in the Federal Government; or attempts are made to avoid this scenario, if necessary by military means.

Generally speaking, capacity building should take place over a longer period of time. Until Mali's security forces are fully operational and possible flanking security sector reforms take effect, for example, Europe has a duty to guarantee stability. In addition to training, a long-term presence of international forces is likely to be required; Afghanistan is a case in point. Germany must be prepared for the fact that a mission can mean a lengthy presence in the area of deployment. Kosovo, for example, is comparatively manageable in size, but the international community has been engaged here since 1999.

Mitigating risks, increasing prospects of success

Based on Europe's experience with enabling state and regional partners so far, various risks can be identified and lessons learned.

There is a risk that if a government changes or is overthrown, well-trained forces and equipment can fall into the hands of actors who are opposed to the goals being pursued by Germany or the EU in the context of security sector reform. In Mali in 2013, for example, soldiers trained by the US deserted to Islamist groups and then fought French troops deployed with Operation Serval. A very large number of weapons circulating on the black market in West Africa come from official stocks, having been sold illegally by the security forces.

Equipment assistance can potentially open up export opportunities for German industry. However, under the unstable conditions outlined here, it can pose a threat to security in the destination areas.

For that reason, it is important to consider the overall conditions in which capacity building takes place, focusing particularly on political control of the security forces. On their own, additional funding,

training and equipment may, in some circumstances, not only prove ineffective; in the medium term, they may even be counterproductive and jeopardize security. What's more, capacity enhancement may enable authoritarian regimes to assert their agenda by force, in direct confrontation with the domestic opposition and with rivals in the immediate neighbourhood – possibly indirectly conflicting with Western policies.

In the past, the frameworks for meaningful capacity building were in some cases rudimentary or non-existent. Any capacity building measures that are, nonetheless, undertaken in these circumstances offer no benefits to partners or donors, but simply waste resources that are needed elsewhere. The EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) in Libya, for example, was called into question, not only due to the steadily deteriorating local security situation. When the mission started, the relevant Libyan authorities existed largely on paper, casting doubt on whether the training provided to strengthen the border services could ever be successful without genuine demobilization of militias and security sector reform.

Even under favourable conditions, capacity building only makes sense if substantial support is provided. Otherwise, it quickly becomes a token gesture or action for its own sake, doing little to remedy the actual problems of a lack of materiel and facilities. The UN and EU, for example, are assisting the African Union (AU) to establish the African Peace and Security Architecture as a regional alternative to deploying their own forces. At present, the AU is still heavily dependent on external support. If the five brigades forming the planned African Standby Force are to carry out their own operations, merely equipping the infantry with small arms is not enough, for there is also a lack of reconnaissance means, transport aircraft, vehicles and combat helicopters. If Germany wants to make a contribution here, it should encourage the EU to plan for the progressive handover of materiel and its monitoring.

Much-needed cooperation

As a rule, capacity building will take place in an international framework established by the UN, the EU or a coalition of the willing, as is the case with the equipping of the Kurdish fighters. Usually, the various actors have found it difficult to agree among themselves, even within the UN and indeed the EU, where the coordination between the Commission, the Member States and the European External Action Service (EEAS) is often deficient. The comprehensive approach that all actors claim to be pursuing may in some cases result in duplication of programmes. What's more, the solutions adopted are often only partial: in an effort to achieve a consensus, initiatives focus solely on those elements of crisis management for which stakeholders are able to agree common goals. This is the reason behind the limited mandates of EUTM Mali and EUCAP Nestor in Somalia, for example.

There is clearly a need, then, for consultation and coordination between the crisis managers – the UN, the EU, NATO, regional organizations, countries and NGOs. This is the prerequisite for efficient use of resources, and it also increases the prospects of achieving the desired outcomes in the field. Security sector reform and provision of training and equipment should therefore be embedded in a broader framework of international engagement.

For the EU, the most suitable partner is the UN, as it has been engaged in Africa for much longer, on a larger scale and, to some extent, more successfully. Instead of directly equipping countries where conditions are potentially problematical, the Europeans could, as an alternative option, provide more support for the UN. The UN is by far the most significant actor: it currently has 17 peacekeeping operations worldwide, with 118,043 deployed personnel, including 83,000 troops. However, many are working with outdated equipment and are poorly trained. Like the much smaller Netherlands, Germany could provide combat helicopters, which would make a significant contribu-tion. Helicopters make a real difference in Africa and would cost the Bundeswehr no more than deploying troops of its own. Three to five helicopters would suffice – a manageable number despite the Bundeswehr's acute shortage of materiel. More systematic and comprehensive support for UN missions would greatly increase Germany's credibility in crisis management, given that no Western country is currently providing this type of support.

Ultimately, it is the acceptance of these measures by target groups that will determine their success, so it is extremely important to involve regional partners in the planning process at a very early stage.

Conclusion:
Clear goals, adequate instruments

It is essential to establish clarity on one's own goals and interests. These are identified by the EU, for example, in its regional strategies for the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. A good option is to cooperate with regional organizations, such as the AU, whose Peace and Security Architecture is already receiving substantial support. If capacity building for states and regional organizations is intended to signal a greater commitment to crisis management, then Germany must clarify its policy and provide additional resources as well as ensure the political engagement of the relevant ministries. Otherwise, partners might view training and equipment assistance as a form of 'low cost leadership'. A more detailed analysis of needs is also required. If warfare has indeed changed substantially, then the toolbox must be adapted accordingly and new approaches to crisis management identified.