



Image: Staff Sgt. Gary A. Witte

Conference report

**Assisting host country militaries: assessing lessons  
from NATO, EU and member state experience**

Wednesday 4 – Friday 6 December 2013 | WP1296

In association with:





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# Assisting host country militaries: assessing lessons from NATO, EU, and member state experience

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### Core Messages and Key Lessons

The conference set out to capture the lessons from NATO, EU and member state military training and assistance missions. Experience in Iraq and Afghanistan has highlighted that building the capacity and capability of host country security forces is a critical element of military operations and the key basis for draw down and transition to a reduced international military role.

Conflicts are likely to continue arising in fragile and failing states. There is consensus that Western nations will continue to conduct military capacity building missions but with a move to upstream conflict prevention in an attempt to avoid hard-end intervention, and that such efforts will generally be conducted as part of an alliance or ad hoc coalition. Military capacity building (MCB) has indeed become a central element of the defence policies of several Alliance nations. Moreover, despite the ‘intervention fatigue’ prevalent throughout the Alliance, smaller scale stabilisation interventions may still be unavoidable, as demonstrated by the French-led operation in Mali.

Such missions demand better collaboration modalities to ensure coherence across the security sector in bringing balance to military, police and other host nation security actor capacity development. The requirements for effective assistance are well understood, but implementation remains challenging.

### Key lessons

- Context and understanding are essential. Prior to undertaking military capacity building a nation or organisation must: Think about the problem to include an extensive audit; Design its method of assistance appropriate to the context and based on the principle of host nation sustainability; and Nurture and Sustain the mission, replete with measures of effectiveness.
- Involve local stakeholders from the outset and make it a collaborative process contributing to a shared understanding. Internationals cannot impose their ideas on host nations but instead need to convince them.
- A thorough and honest capacity and capability audit is crucial to mission success. EUTM Mali provided a “no hold back” report to the authorities there on the state of the armed forces which was critical to understanding the context as well as for collaboration with the Malian Government.
- There must be a sound balance of support vis a vis other host nation security actors. The relationship between military training and state building needs to avoid producing a capable military with weak or non-existent government. The

military cannot succeed when the government is failing. This principle should include investment in complementary support to the development of national security architectures and the governance-accountability continuum.

- Having a shared culture and language can be an enormous advantage in order to support understanding. Being embedded within a security force assistance (SFA) programme contributes to a shared understanding.
- Coordination is essential in order to avoid duplication. This will assist in overcoming assessment and planning gaps and will support engagement with other external security actors. Synchronising plans may also prevent recipient states from playing one organisation against another (i.e. NATO vs. EU) as in the case of Libya, which given its independent means, is able to shop around amongst donors.
- Military assistance must be understood as a supporting activity at the service of a sound political strategy. If not, it can be highly counterproductive. Campaign continuity as part of a wider political engagement plan is crucial. SFA is a long-term process which underpins political progress. Early disengagement comes with a cost, as in Libya and Sierra Leone.
- External forces need to be organized and trained to deliver SFA. Military capacity building requires personnel who are highly trained, culturally savvy and have an expeditionary mind set. While France treats “training to train” as part of the job of every French officer, in most NATO and EU countries more attention should be paid in professional military education to the requisite skill sets for delivering security force assistance, and a stronger professional career path in this mission area provided. There is a real need for cadres of professional advisors.
- Short of a cadre of full-time advisors, there remains something of a question mark over how to organise for delivering military capacity building in a way that does not leave donors exposed to taking a naïve approach to the problem set. The regionally focused approach may not fully solve this dilemma. A seed is needed at either the battalion or brigade -level of capable cadre, and not necessarily special operations force (SOF) specific.
- A lack of agreed specific SFA doctrine and common manuals also hampers effective delivery. NATO and EU should work together to synchronise SFA doctrine and concepts.
- The following major policy and strategy traps need to be avoided as they undermine the efficacy of external support and could magnify risks to the interests of NATO and EU members:
  1. The client trap involves uncritically promoting or endorsing a winner’s peace or exclusionary government.
  2. The self-deception trap results from unexamined or divergent strategies for success based on the common misperception that the aims and intentions of the host nation are the same as those of its external supporters.
  3. The nanny trap arises in the rush of external actors to complete a task or solve a problem whereby international advisors design solutions that make sense to them, but perhaps make little sense to the host nation military.
  4. The resource trap arises through the creation of programmes that the host country cannot afford, undermining sustainability. Avoiding the resource trap may require more attention to cost-sharing arrangements or fee service plans that increasingly place financial co-responsibility on the host nation.

## Session one: the strategic framework

Assistance to host nation militaries is both a current concern and a key challenge for the future and is likely to become an increasing component of bilateral and multilateral engagement in fragile and conflict affected states. The case of Libya all too vividly illustrates the costs of a “hit and run” strategy. There is widespread consensus that such activities are an essential element of crisis management operations and there is a raft of experience upon which to draw for the future. Yet the challenges to conducting capacity building in politically charged environments are great; the human and financial costs are high, coordination remains a perennial issue and there are many policy, strategy and resource gaps that continue to plague these vital efforts.

Military capacity building has a long history. Much significant experience has recently been gained worldwide through multilateral actors such as NATO and EU, particularly in the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan and latterly, albeit after harmful delay, Libya. Two decades of operational experience have taught Western countries that training is a vital component of any comprehensive exit strategy, and that local ownership is fundamental to enduring peace. Yet contemporary efforts have been piecemeal and ad hoc and have not contributed directly to development of national aims, vision or objectives. The raft of tools such as Security Sector Reform (SSR), Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR), and joint exercises all ostensibly support the achievement of national and international objectives. Yet the preparation of these national and multilateral activities in the current environment has not always drawn sufficiently upon some of the hard lessons of earlier efforts. Experiences of the last two decades suggest:

- In light of the interest and growth in building partner capacity there is a requirement to link with other security actors of the host nation; if a national military is in crisis the logic follows that these other actors are too.
- Furthermore, cooperation and coordination across external actors is required to avoid duplication. Providers of assistance need to play to each other’s strengths.
- Military capacity building must be politically savvy. These operations require sound understanding of political relationships and power structures in the host nation in order to avoid an overly technocratic approach.
- Upstream support is better than downstream intervention, using the model of ‘by, with and through’ host nation stakeholders.
- These activities come at a cost as training missions are not necessarily cheap. But if costs are high so are the rewards. Moreover, creative co-financing solutions have successfully been adopted in Iraq and Afghanistan, and a similar structure is under development for Libya.

### **Assistance to host nation militaries falls broadly into three categories**

- Hard security operations without a capacity building element. Operation Unified Protector in Libya, which provided critical operational support to the Libyan opposition fighting to overthrow the Qaddafi regime, taught the Alliance the importance of training the hard way. The lack of capacity building assistance to Libyan security forces following the overthrow of the regime contributed to growing instability in the country. On 19 November 2013 the NATO Secretary General confirmed that the Alliance would assist Libya in developing its security sector.
- Hard security operations with a capacity building element. ISAF is the best example of this. Although a wide-scale training component was not originally foreseen it now forms an absolutely essential part of the mission. A subcategory is where NATO has provided the hard security, which is supplemented by capacity building activities carried out by other actors, such as the EU police mission in Bosnia and Rule of Law mission in Kosovo, which also includes police training.

- Capacity building element only. Examples of this are NATO advising the Macedonian government on the military aspects of SSR and the Serbian government on defence reform. NATO has also provided limited but important operational assistance to the African Union (AU) in the form of logistical support in Sudan and airlift support to the mission in Somalia. NATO as an organisation did not take part in security operations in Iraq, but the NATO Training Mission there (NTM-I) trained some 10,000 military personnel and 5,000 police officers.

As the appreciation of the importance of SFA grows, Western militaries are working to understand these activities and are reorganising their structures accordingly. Questions are being asked about when and how to get involved and through which organisations such as NATO and EU. The Alliance, in particular, has developed its capability to train and build local forces in crisis zones as a fundamental element of the new NATO Strategic Concept, adopted at Lisbon in November 2010, and has been considering the establishment of a dedicated capacity building structure. NATO's progress in this regard will depend on political resolve and national ambitions, but is a key avenue for the Alliance to pursue in the future. Whilst NATO has the military tools to help stabilise crises, it is not best equipped for comprehensive state building. NATO's unique added value is military training and security sector reform (SSR) and security sector stabilisation (SSS), whilst the EU can draw from a wide range of state building instruments.

### **Policy and strategy traps and how to avoid them**

Contemporary operations span a wide spectrum of intensity, from helping a country at peace and preventing potential crises to intervening in war or insurgency. The manner of engagement across this spectrum presents different challenges. Regardless of the level of intensity, there are four critical 'traps' in the delivery of capacity building missions that can severely undermine the efficacy of external support and magnify risks to the security interests of the delivering countries: the client trap, the self-deception trap, the resource trap, and the nanny trap.

- The client trap involves uncritically promoting or endorsing a 'winner's peace' or a narrowly based politically exclusionary government. Inclusive political settlements can make military capacity building much more effective. Avoiding the client trap requires an in-depth understanding of the political, social, and cultural fabric of the host nation.
- The self-deception trap stems from the common mistake that the aims and intentions of the host nation are the same as those of its external supporters, when in reality each are pursuing divergent or conflicting goals. Because host nation officials have so much at stake in a conflict, the likelihood of cognitive bias heightens the risk of distorted assessments, self-deception and strategic miscalculation. A way to avoid the painful consequences of this trap is for the host nation and its external supporters to have a forum for governing host country and coalition policy and strategy. International advisors at the policy and strategy levels with the necessary experience and understanding of the host country environment are also critical. Very specific skillsets are required for effectiveness at these levels.
- The resource trap can create perverse strategic incentives that undermine success. Large amounts of aid to host nation militaries can create perverse incentives that prolong conflict, corrupt strategic decision-making, and lead to simply unsustainable structures for which international donors end up paying. Providers of assistance may end up financing a conflict that the host country cannot afford to end. Avoiding the resource trap may require more attention to cost-sharing arrangements or fee service plans that gradually place the financial burden of continued conflict on the host nation.
- Finally, external supporters may fall victim to the nanny trap in which they completely take over efforts to solve host nation military problems. Too often, in a rush to complete a task or solve a problem, western advisors design solutions

that make sense to them but go completely against the grain of the host nation and its military. Capacity substitution rather than capacity building results. Western advisors need to appreciate how host nation systems work and collaborate with local stakeholders rather than try to impose their own solutions. People who take charge of their own problems feel a much greater sense of ownership and responsibility.

Providers of assistance to host country militaries are still in a learning curve. They need to learn how to build capacity in a more structured but cost effective way. Key questions for further analysis include the point at which providers of assistance can walk away, the level of tolerance for failure on the part of host nation stakeholders before external advisors try more actively to step in, effectively managing expectations about what will be delivered, and ensuring that training provided to host nations is actually used.

Overarching considerations for external actors are to avoid duplication and to add value. There is substantial expertise across the full spectrum of defence sector training, ranging from policy development and security sector reform to disarmament, in and out-of-theatre education, and even human resource management. Organisations such as NATO and EU could potentially develop a menu of assistance options but this needs coordination to avoid duplication. There are however significant political constraints to deeper cooperation between the two organisations. These barriers, particularly on the critical issues of police and civilian advisory capacities, are stark, and threaten to undermine the essence of the “comprehensive approach”. In order for Western governments to harness the complementary capabilities of NATO and EU the two organisations need to find a way to collaborate more effectively in order to deal with prevention and upstream issues.

## **Session two: regime overthrow and rebuilding host countries militaries from scratch: the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan**

The West has an official success narrative regarding the industrial scale SSR and defence engagement that took place in Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet, in both countries coalition and NATO forces made major, similar mistakes in efforts to rebuild the Iraqi and Afghan militaries. Lessons from the two countries provide concrete examples of the failings of capacity substitution, building capacity based on Western structures and practice, and sending in poorly prepared personnel to carry out the capacity building mission.

Three common reference points also emerge from assessments of Iraq and Afghanistan regarding key conditions that frame international capacity building efforts. These conditions are the scale of intensity of violence and level of political fragility in the country, the degree of resilience of the host nation government, and the extent of the cultural gap between trainers and trainees. Whilst external interveners can help build another country’s military, it is the effort of the host nation that will always be decisive.

### **Capacity substitution rather than capacity building**

In Iraq and Afghanistan Western countries did not move quickly enough to build sufficiently sized and trained host nation security forces and bring them into the fighting. They relied on capacity substitution for far too long and did not really understand what self-sustainment meant. Once international militaries realised that they needed to build Iraqi and Afghan security forces much faster and to larger scale than initially envisioned, adequate vetting of recruits became more difficult. Measures of effectiveness used by international forces focused for a long time on how successful they were rather than on how well the host country security sector was developing and performing.

In both cases not enough attention was given to understanding the balance required between military and police capacity building, with much greater emphasis placed on the army to the detriment of the police. It is more difficult for international contributors to mobilise the resources needed for police training, again starkly highlighting the need to tackle the external coordination challenges between international actors, particularly NATO and the EU. Western countries need as well to support capacity building in governance structures and institutions more effectively; insufficient investment in these areas simply

courts failure.

### **Capacity building based on Western templates**

In both Iraq and Afghanistan the governments established a very hierarchical top-level decision-making structure with no empowerment downwards. In Iraq, for example, the Prime Minister would personally decide which officers would go on foreign military educational programmes. Decisions were taken by committee with no one taking individual responsibility, making it more difficult to get anything done.

This brought into stark relief the strategic impatience of the international community, which came with its own organisational structures and operating practice and tried to impose these to varying degrees on Iraqis and Afghans. In Iraq, the international coalition formed an Iraqi Joint Staff and tried to get the Iraqi military to embrace a complicated Western planning process. The Joint Staff still exists but is unused and functionless. Rather than building host country security forces in “our own image” there is a critical need to together with a non-patronising attitude understand what works in the host countries.

### **Cultural gap and abilities of external personnel**

The large scale intervention forces deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan West were unprepared for the capacity building tasks required. While understanding of the local environment and culture will always be imperfect, there must be a focused effort to develop through research and education a better appreciation of the range of local stakeholders in the security sector, their relationships with each other, their goals, and how best to engage with them. Examples abound from Iraq and Afghanistan of how local cultural understanding and knowledge are absolutely critical to an effective military capacity building and advisory role. In Afghanistan NATO thought that the Taliban was the enemy, whereas for the Afghan military it was Pakistan. Afghans also found it difficult to distinguish between equipment and capability. The Afghans consequently undervalued the need for education and training relative to equipment.

Successfully addressing cultural gaps in military capacity building missions will require specialist individuals, ideally with the requisite language skills or at least a better ability to work with and through interpreters. Furthermore, keeping the right people with the right knowledge and relationships for the long term will require a concentrated effort. Western militaries need to do a better job with their own leader development and education. This is a major challenge and a key lesson from contemporary operations that is well understood but very largely still unaddressed.

### **Lessons**

As NATO moves from current operations to upstream capacity building, Libya presents another case of rebuilding a military from scratch following the overthrow of the Gadhafi regime. The lack of international capacity building support to Libya government security forces has helped allow a militia dominated security environment to take hold. The Libyan Prime Minister came to NATO with a request for assistance in creating a National Guard in the first instance, but not all of the member states were willing to have NATO take on this role. NATO is now sending a small mission to Libya to advise on defence institution building. It will be critical for the NATO team to assess what the Libyans really need rather than what international advisors may think they need based on Western templates.

In addition to the importance of carrying out this type of honest, thorough assessment, two other lessons stand out. One is the need to find the right balance between bottom up versus top down approaches, quantity versus quality, and local ownership versus international standards and accountability. The second is that relationships matter. In particular advisors require sound listening, influencing and negotiation skills. A challenge to this is the current length of one-year tours for advisors, which suggests that over 10 years there have been ten advisors, a severe constraint on the development and maintenance of enduring relationships.

## Session three: Mali: military training before and after the 2012 coup

### Security Cooperation Challenges

Mali received substantial security force assistance prior to the 2012 coup but that assistance did not take a sufficiently holistic approach in addressing structural weaknesses in Malian security institutions, which did not employ assistance effectively. Nor was there sufficient monitoring from donors in order to evaluate or change course as required. Given the threat from Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the risks to foreign actors, early training programmes were overly focussed on counter-terrorism with little appreciation of the priorities of the Malian authorities. Mali represents another example of the “self-deception” trap, erroneously assuming that a partner has bought into the goals of the international donor.

The failure of international assistance before the 2012 coup to focus on the bigger picture threat resulted in uneven development, failure to increase government service delivery, population disaffection, and insufficient institutional development. Following France’s Operation Serval in early 2013, EUTM Mali was created and has also focused on operational level advising along with tactical training. Other EU assistance programmes, however, have attempted to deliver a more “comprehensive approach” alongside EUTM, including support to the wider security sector.

EUTM took a very important first step in conducting an exhaustive audit of Malian security force capability, and then presented a “no hold back”, completely honest report to the Malian authorities on the state of the armed forces. This approach was a big risk but ended up being well received. The key lesson here is the importance of a thorough, honest audit to support shared understanding. Not only does this approach contribute to shared understanding, but it constitutes as well an essential step in making the host nation feel that the ideas of the international training force are their ideas. Internationals cannot impose their ideas on the host nation but rather need to convince them.

The French-led EUTM brought the advantage substantial cultural familiarity stemming from the colonial heritage. It should not necessarily be assumed that the form colonial power will be rejected, and the cultural links can be invaluable.

The EUTM Mali has included trainers from fourteen different countries. A major mission challenge was consequently to apply a single doctrine to the training mission. NATO doctrine was too complicated for the EUTM Mali mission, and France provided a simplified template that it had used in Senegal. Not all of the trainers were French speakers so there was a need for translators, which works but is not ideal.

### Lessons/ Recommendations

- The importance of an audit team with strong local knowledge and cultural understanding able to carry out a sound baseline audit to shape programme design, support shared understanding and promote local ownership and buy-in.
- Focus on civilian protection and rebuilding the relationship between armed forces, government, and civilian population.
- Hold military accountable for extrajudicial detentions and other human rights abuses and include role of law and ethics in the syllabus (given the wider failure of this in fragile and conflict states – need to make theory practical).
- Better end use monitoring of SFA efforts to plan an audit of the armed forces to be trained prior to the finalisation of the concept.
- Don't assume partner nation buy in is a given.
- SFA needs to be part of a holistic state and peacebuilding approach that addresses structural weaknesses.
- To establish strong and close permanent liaison with the local armed forces it is very advantageous if the lead nation has solid cultural links with the host nation,



in particular from being the former colonial power.

- To ensure appropriate doctrinal coherence for training and train the trainer efforts.
- Being embedded and building military to military relationships is a significant advantage and provides influence.

### **Way ahead**

EUTM Mali has developed from a modest and short mission into a broader military restructuring mission where wider security threats such as border security are being addressed. Future plans, including institutional capacity building, are under development but movement will be cautious and deliberate and slow, and will require commensurate host nation commitment. There is extreme concern over ensuring that while the military succeeds the government will not fail. Mali will require greater diplomatic support to implement local political agreements. The overall view was that the Mali response was good enough in the context of the region and therefore there was a willingness to overlook weaknesses.

### **Session four: a view from recipient states**

Many initiatives have attempted to operationalise the concept of local ownership, some successful and others less so. In the Security Force Assistance arena tensions arise between what host nation stakeholders say they want and what the international donors think they need. Some of the common challenges faced by SFA in Africa and in Afghanistan resulted from these tensions and the different assumptions made by local and external actors. NATO, EU, and individual member states of both organisations have been providing assistance to African military capacity building.

The African Union (AU) as well as African regional organisations have benefited from many initiatives supported by international contributors aimed at enhancing their operational capabilities, including through: support to the development of common doctrine in order to develop common doctrine. Regional training centres have been created to assist the African Standby Force (ASF), with funding and training assistance provided by international contributors. The development of common doctrine remains a continuing challenge though.

The first lesson is to be aware of the basis of decisions. In Afghanistan initial assessments of existing capability were significantly off, and subsequent decisions on force size, and resource allocations were not based on accurate information. Highlighting the lack of cultural understanding was the Western forces' presumption of local loyalty to the state and therefore of the notion that the purpose of military service is to safeguard the nation. Furthermore, better assessments on the ability of governments such as Afghanistan to become self-financing should be completed earlier.

In Africa, countries do not provide sufficient funding for the military and they consequently use international funding designed for training as an "escape route". There is a feeling that in some cases donor support has become a "business".

From a host nation perspective, there are a number of common challenges that stem from international SFA initiatives. These include:

1. Sustainability. There is insufficient domestic funding for militaries designed by external actors. Strings are attached to training programmes, which while well meaning, mean that delivery was done through private companies which resulted in incentives for contract renewals and partner job creation may not reflect reality.
2. Coherent doctrine issues. There are doctrinal differences between donors as evidenced by EUTM. Is there a better way to do this?
3. Donor coordination. Recipients are managing multiple offers and are able to pick and choose. It is widely understood that which partner is present affects the approach (for example the British in Sierra Leone). The question arises of how to

manage interactive processes with host country authorities to define real needs, given that donor imposition needs to be ruled out. In Mali the approach was not to ask the local authorities to request specific programmes but to show them the conclusions of the audit.

4. Culture. There remains a perception that external actors tend to convey a feeling of superiority. A little humility can go a long way towards achieving success.

## **Session five: configuring western militaries to deliver foreign training and assistance**

Many Western states are currently in the early stages of reorganising following more than a decade of large-scale intensive operations. Part of this reorganisation involves a new examination of how better to carry out military capacity building missions in the midst of decreasing force sizes amongst NATO member states militaries as well as continuing fiscal constraints. There are two broad approaches to addressing this challenge. One is to take the position that military capacity building should be a generalist skill that everyone in the military is trained to carry out. The alternate approach is to create a set of forces with some level of specialisation in this mission area.

The US and the UK are taking the second approach. Both are creating regionally focused brigades that will give personnel engaged in military capacity building greater understanding of local mores and sensitivities and the ability to gain situational awareness more quickly. Forces would deploy with a much greater depth of understanding of the local context than was the case in Iraq and Afghanistan. While cultural and linguistic immersion will not be possible due to resource constraints, the goal is to have these regionally aligned forces provide personnel who are trained for SFA, are culturally savvy and have an expeditionary mind set.

France treats military capacity building as a highly strategic capability. French doctrine emphasises that any intervention needs to convert quickly into a training and capacity building mission to avoid taking on the appearance of an occupying force. The French have decided that “training to train” must be part of the job of every French officer. An “acculturation centre” has been created to contribute to this objective. French experience also offers lessons with regard to the benefits of colonial relationships and cultural and linguistic understanding.

Both of these approaches have strengths and weaknesses. If “training to train” is treated as a generalist skill not every officer may be well suited for it and the suppression of “alpha male” instincts, for example, that the mission requires. At a time of shrinking forces and severe financial constraints, though, it may not be realistic to create specialised forces for delivering security force assistance, much less cadres of professional advisors? Certainly more attention should be paid to the requisite skill sets for delivering security force assistance in military educational requirements, and a stronger professional career path in this mission area provided. The right individuals must be given incentives through the attractiveness of a professional career path for these activities and skill sets. At the moment a “defence cultural specialist unit” is most likely to be perceived in at least some militaries as a “defence career suicide unit”.

### **Implementation**

If a specialist route is chosen for implementation, it is vital to select the right people who are sensitive, with critical thinking and language skills, who are culturally savvy, understand the requirement for relationships, possess a strong moral compass, and have a geographical focus. They will need career incentives and supporting doctrine. There could be an increased use of reservists and civilians. The Defence Attaché network could also potentially constitute a key asset.

It is important to understand and prepare personnel for the difference between mentoring, advising and training. Training, while taking place with host nation consent, entails the trainers having authority over those they are training. Mentoring entails a relationship

between equals, while advisors are in a subordinate role to the host nation commander.

### **Force protection remains a challenge to delivery**

Embedding trainers, mentors and advisors will often be the most effective means of delivering SFA but can create challenges with regard to force protection. In order to gain the benefits of establishing very close, embedded relationships, it may be necessary to accept risks with regard to force protection. Although force protection issues with regard to military capacity building became a major problem in Afghanistan, this may not be as acute a problem in most other contexts.

## **Working group findings**

### **Effective Organisation, Preparation and Delivery of Military Capacity Building**

Via policy pronouncements and various national level security strategies, NATO and EU member state governments have opted into the upstream mission of delivering foreign military assistance and training. The requirement to do much more on security assistance as an upstream activity is clear, but what is not yet clear is how much of a force driver it will be.

The current state of military capacity building is characterised by often redundant operations and fragmented donor coordination carried out against the backdrop of a decade of conflict in both Afghanistan and Iraq, wavering political sentiment to remain forward deployed in mass numbers, and select instances of bolstering repressive regimes. The desired state for Western forces is to develop tailorable, scalable, cost effective military assistance capability that is aligned within broader security sector reform policy objectives to achieve enduring effect.

### **What overarching principles are required?**

- Political primacy and adequate mandate.
- Joint, whole-of-government, and if possible, a multinational approach.
- Tailorable approach to MCB.
- Politically palatable (maintains support through the broad array of stakeholders to include regional actors), supportable and justifiable (at home).
- Aims to do no harm (does not strengthen repressive regimes and the host nation has absorptive capacity) by recognising the potential impact of international assistance and its second order effects.
- Persistent, modulated engagement and sustainability.
- Encompasses broader security sector reform (rule of law, policing, paramilitaries).
- Common vision conducted in consultation with the host nation, regional and international partners.
- Works towards the national-level objectives of both the sponsor and sponsored.
- Local ownership fully enabled.

### **What are the factors that affect the delivery of MCB?**

- Limited political mandate.
- Lack of whole-of-government approach.
- Limited local ownership.
- Dilemma of top-down or bottom-up delivery.
- Are we delivering a capability vs. capacity?
- Resources.

- Language.
- Historical backdrop.
- Cultural awareness.
- Lack of agreed specific SFA doctrine and common manuals.
- Time and expectation management/strategic patience.

International donors must consider the concentric rings of security: policing, paramilitary and military forces. What is the right force balance/mix? What is the international role; should it be to advise or to mentor? What do military advisors need to know and what do they need to do?

#### **Know**

- Understand the environment
- Mission
- Cultures
- Bureaucratic cultures
- Constraints (legal, host nation expectations, physical environment, political)
- Technical constraints
- Limitations
- Language/communications
- Negotiations

#### **Do**

- Practice humility
- Expectation management
- Establish relations
- Co-locate with host nation
- Build relationships
- Adapt training to trainees
- Illustrate values
- Common approach to doctrine and training

Prior to undertaking military capacity building, a nation must: think about the problem by conducting an extensive audit; design forces to match the problem with an appropriate method of assistance based on the requisite language skills, doctrine, and training methods as well as on the principle of sustainability; and nurture and sustain that force replete with measures of effectiveness.

There is still a lack of fidelity regarding the organisational approach to take for delivering military capacity building between a cadre of full-time advisors and something short of this type of dedicated capability that does not leave donors exposed to taking a naïve approach to the problem set. The regionally focused approach may not solve this dilemma. One possible model is for a larger force to deploy with components to mentor, advise, support and train, while another model could be based upon that of the International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT), whose core staff and expert roster can provide targeted support to the security sector reform programme of a national or multinational donor. When a larger force deploys and will engage in military capacity building, a seed of capable cadre is needed at either battalion or brigade level. The seed should not necessarily be SOF specific. This cadre must have a force protection element and the ability to sustain itself

while being capable of providing the equipment and support to the host nation as required.

### **Measuring and Monitoring Effectiveness**

There is a clear requirement to improve evaluating impact based on a detailed understanding, which is driven both by budgetary constraints and also recognition that international donors have spent a lot of time and money on such missions with unclear results. If militaries are going to focus more effort on this area, then the need to assess impact becomes more important.

There are a plethora of institutions which provide specialist expertise, and a wealth of literature and expertise on how to do this analysis and how to measure performance and impact, including on difficult areas such as institutional development. There are also decision-making processes, which at least in theory require rigorous evaluation, yet shortcomings and gaps remain.

### **Shortcomings and gaps**

#### **Organisational**

- Campaign continuity. It is important to recognise SFA is a long-term process which cannot be chopped and changed. There is consequently a need to ensure that internationals have a long-term engagement plan, which underpins a political settlement.
- Who is the proponent for security assistance and programme management expertise and how are delivery bodies held to account?
- Military culture. There is a tendency to “mark own homework” and move progress indicators from orange to green during individual tours.

#### **Internal culture in our government departments**

- Resolving multiple objectives and being honest about desired results is an identified challenge which needs to be addressed (e.g. a programme may be about buying influence rather than really about building some capacity).
- Departments focus on protecting their patch rather than on truly integrated approaches.

#### **M&E technical**

- Involve local stakeholders from the outset and make it a shared process leading to a shared understanding.
- Capability maturity models based on readiness models exist but need to be a) improved and b) taught.
- Influence. There is a need to develop further measures to quantify this desired effect.
- Values and beliefs. How best to measure changes in these indicators rather than just in “hard” systems and processes and capabilities?
- Complex adaptive systems. How best to apply system stewardship and adaptive planning approaches?

### **Approaches to addressing gaps and overcoming obstacles**

#### **Proponency**

- Be proportionate in use of M&E. Measure what matters.
- Embed analytical thinking into decision-making process. Ensure that budget process/planning process unpacks assumptions; tries to calculate return on investment.
- The internal governance mechanisms in the executive branch and uniformed services need to appoint influential proponents for the use of good practice programme management including analysis and M&E.

- But this needs to be made “honest” by entities above the DoD/MoD.

### **Methodology**

- Do more retrospective evaluation through historic case studies/comparisons.
- Do more evaluation with partners of impact.
- Do more work to understand how programmes can shape values, beliefs, incentives and also impact on complex systems. Don't just fall back on “easy” capability measures.
- Collate and apply best practice material; embed this into the relevant professional military education system. The key is to standardise approaches and ensure they are being followed.

### **Compliance and accountability**

- There is a need for independent evaluations carried out rigorously. This can build on the development model of independent evaluation teams but needs to be institutionalised (mechanisms like SIGAR/SIGIR; ICAI in the UK are good models)
- This may report to Congress/Parliament or to the executive branch – e.g. the interagency/defence engagement board.

### **The role of NATO and EU**

Whilst EU and NATO are very different organisations they have many commonalities and indeed are also very complementary. NATO is in transition and is reshuffling strategically in light of the drawdown in Afghanistan, and the EU is in an experiential phase as it stands up the European External Action Service (EEAS). At the same time NATO and EU approaches to conflict are very complementary, where NATO takes the hard power, yet more limited approach and EU the soft power approach drawing on a wider range of instruments, such as police training. Whilst there is military cooperation between the two, problems remain at the political and strategic level. The organisations should explore what they have in common and what they can share and do better:

### **Recommendations**

- Synchronise SFA doctrine and concepts.
- Agree a division of labour. Examine the appetite and political will to propose a division of labour between NATO and the EU? There is duplication of work, but big gaps are left open.
- Revision of Berlin Plus to see how the two organisations can revive and address capabilities and duplication. The conduct of a lessons learned exercise on Berlin plus to draft an agreement between the two organisations would help shape and define the political framework of such an agreed division of labour.
- Coordination must improve. Synchronisation of plans and of programme implementation will prevent recipient states from playing one donor against another (i.e. NATO vs. EU).
- Political direction to SFA. Military assistance can be highly counterproductive if it is not tied to a specific political line of effort. Neither NATO nor EU are doing much of that in Afghanistan.
- Improve existing tools. Make better use of the EU/NATO Capabilities Group, the existing tool for more transparency and systemic improvement of understanding. It is currently only used to identify what capabilities exist, but it could be used to develop capabilities. The group currently meets as necessary, but could meet more often if appropriately tasked to figure this out.
- Engage civil society. Think tanks working on NATO/EU issues could be used to leverage public discussion and put outside pressure on NATO and EU to better

coordinate.

- Establish a common situational awareness: NATO has a Comprehensive Crisis Operation Management Centre (CCOMC) to improve planning. Through redesigning the way it communicates internally the CCOMC has opened up opportunities for outside engagement. This could be one area where NATO could engage with EU.
- Synchronise ability to share information by working on classification systems so that documents can be shared more readily.
- Where possible, do a shared pre-deployment assessment that puts everyone on the same understanding of the situation, nature of the mission, what are the overall objectives including a regional approach, what are the strategies (political, diplomatic, economic) and then apportionment of who does what.

## Conclusion

There is widespread agreement on the fact that training missions are enabling factors and provide leverage to prevent crises. This is not a new kind of mission. Colonial powers carried it out for decades, although in a very different context and with very different objectives. Four main issues that still arise as Western nations reorganise for upstream military capacity building are:

1. How to ensure success of MCB?
2. Who, how and what to train?
3. How to establish enduring capacity that is accountable?
4. What lessons have been learnt for the future?

### Future Considerations for Assistance to Host Nation Militaries:

1. Better understanding is required to ensure that SFA is not only a technical tool but is also politically savvy and is the manifestation of a political decision based on sound goals and objectives. Western capabilities must be enhanced to ensure sound understanding of the bigger picture and knowledge of culture and language.
2. A balance between human and financial resources is key in times of austerity. How can nations and organisations do better with less? This implies a requirement to adapt resources to the mission and adapt host nation forces to regionally appropriate models. This will further require an honest and realistic assessment.
3. Don't duplicate and go for role specialisation.
4. Sustainability. How to best enable host nation forces to organise themselves based on a realistic assessment of what is achievable and sustainable? In most circumstances there is a host nation thirst for the best equipment, yet more often training and education along with the ability of host nation authorities to inculcate morale and motivation to fight are most critical. Western forces require the skills of humility, listening and teaching in order to empathise with their hosts and have a chance at leaving behind the requisite knowledge and skills.
5. A well-understood division of labour will enable cooperation and coordination in a crowded space. This calls for a better understanding of local and international partners and working to best organisational advantage.
6. Doctrine is a key enabler to SFA. There is widespread concern about the loss of operational military skills fade. How can these skills be institutionalised? Military are fast learning and fast forgetting systems. Given the plethora of bilateral and multilateral actors, which contribute to SFA, there is a need for common approaches and common doctrine.
7. Values and political will. The entire effort can be subverted if values-based-training is not delivered, Yet, internationals must be very conscious of the nanny trap and of the risk of imposing western values, balancing those considerations against domestic risk of legal issues is required when undertaking these kinds of operations.
8. Link security force assistance to human rights promotion. The international track

- record in promoting SSR and discouraging human rights violations has not been as successful as required. SSR can often clash with the vested interests of senior leadership, who do not take forward reforms.
9. Design credible narratives. In light of the apparent interest to engage in long-term SFA commitments, which will be conducted in difficult environments, there is a requirement to sell these engagements to both local and international publics. This is doubly challenging given political impatience.

**Dr Stephanie Blair**

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