

## CHAPTER I

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### MITIGATING THE RISKS OF ‘WICKED PROBLEMS’ IN SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

#### Abstract

This chapter concentrates on the aftermath of conflict and the processing of peacebuilding, especially through training. In societies recovering from conflict, achieving lasting peace involves more than just ending fighting or signing peace deals. In such environments, small-scale efforts that do not grapple with structural issues are unlikely to be effective and may even sow the seeds of the next conflict. You cannot train a few officials to be less corrupt when they exist in a system that is little more than a patronage network serving a few elites. It is not enough to train a few soldiers to protect civilians, leaving systematic racism, sexism and impunity untouched.<sup>1</sup> Worse, you cannot arm an ethnically one-sided army and then be surprised when they continue to commit atrocities.<sup>2</sup> In each case, training without work on wider issues is likely to exacerbate ethnic, political, economic and social divisions and may increase the risk of violent conflict or the chance that civilians are harmed. It is now hard to find someone within national and international militaries who does not accept these stated truths, and yet the problems persist.

The difficulty is dealing with two ever-present ‘wicked problems’: first, training in military or police tactics (or even in human rights or gender sensitivity) will

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<sup>1</sup> Abigail Watson and Megan Karlshøj-Pedersen, ‘Fusion Doctrine in Five Steps: Lessons Learned from Remote Warfare in Africa’ (Saferworld, November 2019), <https://www.saferworld-global.org/resources/publications/1295-fusion-doctrine-in-five-steps-lessons-learned-from-remote-warfare-in-africa>.

<sup>2</sup> Jordan Street and Larry Attree, ‘No Shortcuts to Security: Learning from Responses to Armed Conflicts Involving Proscribed Groups’ (Saferworld, May 2022), <https://www.saferworld-global.org/resources/publications/1389-no-shortcuts-to-security>.

be unable to achieve anything when better-trained officials go back to unreformed institutions;<sup>3</sup> and second, international training is almost exclusively delivered in situations deeply fragmented by conflict and civil war and a monopoly on the use of force does not exist.<sup>4</sup> However, experience has shown some success in mitigating the risks of these two problems. Small training efforts can have more of a positive effect even without huge investment in structural reform when they use cross-departmental teams to develop strategies at the strategic, operational and tactical levels and plan across longer timelines, even if the amount per year is not transformational. Intervening states can better grapple with the lack of a monopoly of force through more localised solutions such as working at the village level to build and engage with security forces and more granular monitoring such as building an understanding of security forces at the same level.

**Keywords:** security sector reform, post-conflict societies, tactical training, monopoly on violence, capacity building.

## 1. Introduction

In post-conflict societies, socio-economic issues and grievances that led to violent conflict, continue to permeate society and thus must be front and centre of approaches to rebuilding lasting and positive security. This is especially true when it comes to training their security forces, be they military personnel or police. Training, then, is never enough alone and must ‘be undertaken as a component of a holistic [security sector reform] approach aimed at tackling underlying or root causes of conflict’.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Erica Gaston et al., ‘Militias or Partners? Local, Hybrid and Sub-State Forces in Afghanistan and Iraq’ (The Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi), October 2019), <https://gppi.net/issue-area/peace-security/militias>.

<sup>5</sup> Jack Watling and Nick Reynolds, *War by Others’ Means: Delivering Effective Partner Force Capacity Building* (Routledge & CRC Press, 2020), <https://www.routledge.com/War-by-Others-Means-Delivering-Effective-Partner-Force-Capacity-Building/Watling-Reynolds/p/book/9780367766405>.

This has been recognised by many national strategies such as those of the United States (US),<sup>6</sup> the United Kingdom (UK)<sup>7</sup>, and Germany,<sup>8</sup> and it is increasingly hard to argue that it is a lack of understanding or failure to engage in the political nature of violence which hinders these states from delivering on these promises.

This article poses an alternative reason: the difficulty of dealing with two ever-present ‘wicked problems’, that is issues which are ‘a symptom[s] or result[s] of multiple, contingent and conflicting issues’.<sup>9</sup> The first problem is that training in military or police tactics, human rights or gender sensitivity will be unable to achieve anything when better-trained officials go back to institutions that require reform.<sup>10</sup> The second problem is that international training is almost exclusively delivered in contexts deeply fragmented by conflict and civil war and so a monopoly of the use of force does not exist.<sup>11</sup> These ‘wicked problems’ have led to much ink being spilled on what training in conflict-affected areas can deliver.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> US Department of State ‘2022 Prologue to the United States Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability’, April 1, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/2022-prologue-to-the-united-states-strategy-to-prevent-conflict-and-promote-stability/>.

<sup>7</sup> Christine Cheng, Jonathan Goodhand, and Patrick Meehan, ‘Elite Bargains and Political Deals Project / Synthesis Paper: Securing and Sustaining Elite Bargains That Reduce Violent Conflict’, UK Stabilisation Unit, April 2018, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c18e70ce5274a46704bdb72/Elite\\_Bargains\\_and\\_Political\\_Deals\\_Project\\_-\\_Synthesis\\_Paper.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c18e70ce5274a46704bdb72/Elite_Bargains_and_Political_Deals_Project_-_Synthesis_Paper.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> German Federal Foreign Office, ‘Shaping Stabilisation: Foreign and Security Policy Concept for an Integrated Action for Peace’, December 2022, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/2586726/4810ccb8aa4d2140817311f68afe74/ausen—und-sicherheitspolitisches-konzept-fuer-ein-integriertes-friedensengagement-data.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Tim Marshall, ‘Wicked Problems’, in *Design Dictionary: Perspectives on Design Terminology*, ed. Michael Erlhoff and Tim Marshall, Board of International Research in Design (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2008), 447–447, <https://link.springer.com/referencework/10.1007/978-3-7643-8140-0>.

<sup>10</sup> Jordan Street and Larry Attree, ‘No Shortcuts to Security: Learning from Responses to Armed Conflicts Involving Proscribed Groups’ (Saferworld, May 2022). <https://www.saferworld-global.org/resources/publications/1389-no-shortcuts-to-security>.

<sup>11</sup> Erica Gaston et al., ‘Militias or Partners? Local, Hybrid and Sub-State Forces in Afghanistan and Iraq’ (The Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi), October 2019), <https://gppi.net/issue-area/peace-security/militias>

<sup>12</sup> Lewis Brooks, ‘Playing with Matches? UK Security Assistance and Its Conflict Risks’ (Saferworld, October 2021), <https://www.saferworld-global.org/resources/publications/1374-playing-with-matches-uk-security-assistance-and-its-conflict-risks.>; Stephen Tankel, *With Us and Against Us: How America’s Partners Help and Hinder the War on Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018); Daniel Mahanty et al., ‘The Protection of Civilians in U.S. Partnered Operations’ (Centre for Strategic & International Studies, 30 October 2018), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/protection-civilians-us-partnered-operations>.

One expert remarked after a review of past capacity-building efforts: ‘Don’t do it. Don’t build partner military capacity in vulnerable states. Don’t even think about it unless you are willing to spend an immense amount of time directly involved in a foreign military’s most sensitive decisions’.<sup>13</sup>

Certainly, with limited resources small but well-intentioned training efforts can do more harm than good in the face of these two problems. However, experience has also shown some efforts which have had success in mitigating the risks of both issues. This article seeks to re-examine these problems in more detail and begin to explore how, with limited resources, the ambitions laid out in national strategies can be delivered in countries emerging from violent conflict.

To do so, it takes each problem in turn and examines ways in which states and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have attempted to mitigate against the potential risks they pose. First, it examines the issue of tactical training in the face of much-needed structural reform, highlighting the dangers of such efforts for long-term prospects of peace and civilians. It then unpicks how small training efforts can have more of a positive impact without a huge investment in structural reform by creating cross-departmental teams to develop strategies at the strategic, operational and tactical levels and planning over longer timelines, even if the amount per year is not transformational. Second, it looks at the risks of training in countries emerging from violent conflict where there is rarely a united military or security force. It then examines how intervening states can better grapple with the lack of a monopoly of force through more localised solutions such as working at a village level to build and engage with security forces and more granular monitoring by building an understanding of security forces at a very local level.

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<sup>13</sup> Jason Fritz et al., ‘Book Review Roundtable: Building Militaries in Fragile States’, Texas National Security Review, 27 March 2019, <https://tnsr.org/roundtable/book-review-roundtable-building-militaries-in-fragile-states/>.

## 2. Wicked Problem One: Tactical Training in the Face of Structural Problems

In 2018, the US Stabilization Assistance Review stated:

*'In support of counter-terrorism objectives, the international community is providing high volumes of security sector training and assistance to many conflict-affected countries, but our programs are largely disconnected from a political strategy writ large and do not address the civilian-military aspects required for transitional public and citizen security.'*<sup>14</sup>

Such an admission regarding US security sector assistance highlights the challenges of providing military training to weak and fragile countries without addressing structural issues. In the short-term, it can undermine human security when populations are trapped 'between increased violence of abusive security forces and the terror of non-state armed groups'.<sup>15</sup> In the longer term, building the capacity of predatory armed forces can feed a self-perpetuating cycle of violence and conflict. Nigeria scholar Jean Herskovits noted that while 'approximately 25 percent of Nigeria's budget for 2012 [was] allocated for security forces [...] the military and police routinely respond to attacks with indiscriminate force and killing'.<sup>16</sup> In the case of Kenya, human rights groups have reported that Kenyan security forces have committed human rights violations including extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances during counter-terrorism operations. These alleged acts have mainly targeted Muslim communities in the northeast and coastal regions of the country. One Somali expert in-

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<sup>14</sup> US State Department, US Department of Defense, and USAID, 'Framework for Maximizing the Effectiveness of U.S. Government Efforts to Stabilize Conflict-Affected Areas', 2018. <https://www.state.gov/reports/stabilization-assistance-review-a-framework-for-maximizing-the-effectiveness-of-u-s-government-efforts-to-stabilize-conflict-affected-areas-2018/>.

<sup>15</sup> Emily Knowles and Jahara Matisek, 'Western Security Force Assistance in Weak States', *The RUSI Journal* 164, no. 3 (April 16, 2019): 10–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2019.1643258>.

<sup>16</sup> Jean Herskovits, 'Opinion | In Nigeria, Boko Haram Is Not the Problem', *The New York Times*, January 3, 2012, sec. Opinion, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/02/opinion/in-nigeria-boko-haram-is-not-the-problem.html>.

interviewed in Nairobi in 2022 said of the Kenyan security forces: ‘How do they distinguish between Somalis and al-Shabaab? To them, we are all the same’.<sup>17</sup> Interviews with UK soldiers delivering training in Somalia, Kenya, Mali and Nigeria reveal major concerns around providing greater military capacities to those countries’ armies as doing so was a ‘huge recruitment tool’ for violent non-state armed groups.<sup>18</sup>

This also reflected the findings of a study on young Fulani people in the regions of Mopti (Mali), Sahel (Burkina Faso) and Tillabéri (Niger). International Alert found that ‘real or perceived state abuse is the number one factor behind young people’s decision to join violent extremist groups’.<sup>19</sup> According to Herskovits, for many Nigerians from the northeast of the country ‘the army is more feared than Boko Haram’.<sup>20</sup> Another expert based in Kenya noted that ‘al-Shabaab uses police brutality in Kenya to recruit people’.<sup>21</sup>

There are no easy fixes to these challenges, but it is worth exploring how some of them have been mitigated by developing cross-departmental planning teams and by working to longer timelines, even if constrained by limited budgets. For the first, bringing a diverse group of stakeholders together is likely to provide a better overview from the outset of how tactical efforts could fit within national

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<sup>17</sup> Abi Watson, Camilla Molyneux, and Abdullahi Hassan, ‘Scaling up Insecurity? Risks of the UK’s Persistent Engagement Strategy in Kenya and Somalia’, <https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1405-how-to-scale-up-the-ukas-persistent-engagement-strategy-in-kenya-and-somalia>.

<sup>18</sup> Abigail Watson and Megan Karlshøj-Pedersen, ‘Fusion Doctrine in Five Steps: Lessons Learned from Remote Warfare in Africa’ (Saferworld, November 2019), <https://www.saferworld-global.org/resources/publications/1295-fusion-doctrine-in-five-steps-lessons-learned-from-remote-warfare-in-africa>.

<sup>19</sup> Luca Raineri, ‘If Victims Become Perpetrators: Factors Contributing to Vulnerability and Resilience to Violent Extremism in the Central Sahel’, (International Alert, 5 June 2018). <https://www.international-alert.org/publications/if-victims-become-perpetrators-violent-extremism-sahel/>.

<sup>20</sup> Jean Herskovits, ‘Opinion | In Nigeria, Boko Haram Is Not the Problem’, *The New York Times*, January 3, 2012, sec. Opinion, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/02/opinion/in-nigeria-boko-haram-is-not-the-problem.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Abi Watson, Camilla Molyneux, and Abdullahi Hassan, ‘Scaling up Insecurity? Risks of the UK’s Persistent Engagement Strategy in Kenya and Somalia’, <https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1405-how-to-scale-up-the-ukas-persistent-engagement-strategy-in-kenya-and-somalia>.

social and political dynamics and, more importantly, how such efforts could potentially exacerbate structural issues. In the UK, Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS) processes bring together a range of UK government officials to establish a shared understanding of the key issues and risks in places the UK is engaging around the world through joint assessment.<sup>22</sup>

The advantage of these is that there is a shared strategic understanding of risks early on, the disadvantage is that they are not easily adapted as programming develops. The UK has also developed cross-departmental working groups at lower levels to tackle this issue and has openly blended civilian and military advisory missions working in conflict-affected countries.<sup>23</sup> In Somalia, it developed the Somalia Stabilization Team which consisted of officials from the UK Foreign Office, the Department for International Development and the Ministry of Defence and focused on stabilization through ‘short-term, targeted and catalytic assistance’.<sup>24</sup> In December 2019, the US recognised the benefits of a cross-government commitment to conflict prevention in the development of the Global Fragility Act (GFA) which calls for all parts of the US government to work out a coherent strategy and repurpose foreign assistance toward averting conflict.<sup>25</sup> The US and the UK have also seen increased chances of success when training has been part of longer-term political efforts. The GFA also dedicated \$1.15 billion over 10 years

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<sup>22</sup> Abigail Watson and Megan Karlshøj-Pedersen, ‘Fusion Doctrine in Five Steps: Lessons Learned from Remote Warfare in Africa’ (Saferworld, November 2019), <https://www.saferworld-global.org/resources/publications/1295-fusion-doctrine-in-five-steps-lessons-learned-from-remote-warfare-in-africa>.

<sup>23</sup> Jack Watling and Nick Reynolds, *War by Others’ Means: Delivering Effective Partner Force Capacity Building* (Routledge & CRC Press, 2020), <https://www.routledge.com/War-by-Others-Means-Delivering-Effective-Partner-Force-Capacity-Building/Watling-Reynolds/p/book/9780367766405>.

<sup>24</sup> UK Stabilisation Unit, ‘Monitoring and Evaluation of Conflict and Stabilisation Intervention’, What Works Series, October 2014. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/765613/What\\_Works\\_-\\_Monitoring\\_and\\_Evaluation\\_of\\_Conflict\\_and\\_Stabilisation\\_Interventions.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/765613/What_Works_-_Monitoring_and_Evaluation_of_Conflict_and_Stabilisation_Interventions.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> US State Department, US Department of Defense, and USAID, ‘Framework for Maximizing the Effectiveness of U.S. Government Efforts to Stabilize Conflict-Affected Areas’, <https://www.state.gov/reports/stabilization-assistance-review-a-framework-for-maximizing-the-effectiveness-of-u-s-government-efforts-to-stabilize-conflict-affected-areas-2018/>.

to programmes in five countries or regions. For the US, this is a relatively modest sum – for instance, compare it to the Department of Defense’s 2024 budget request of \$842 billion<sup>26</sup> – but it commits the US to stay for longer in the hope of building momentum for structural change. This was also a key factor in the success of the UK’s efforts to train security forces in Sierra Leone. In 2002, the UK signed a 10-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the government of Sierra Leone and deployed the International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT) which included a promised £40 million a year for the duration of the MoU. Despite several significant and enduring problems, IMATT has achieved many successes. For instance, Sierra Leone conducted a generally violence-free election only seven years after the end of a civil war.<sup>27</sup> Many also account for UK training for enabling the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces to effectively ‘step up to the mark’ during the Ebola outbreak in 2014.<sup>28</sup>

### 3. Wicked Problem Two: No Monopoly on Violence

In countries deeply fragmented by civil war, there is rarely a united security force. In Nigeria, John Campbell – US Ambassador to Nigeria from 2004 to 2007 – noted that ‘the military and police are made up of various ethnic, religious and regional groups, few [...] native to the areas in which they serve’.<sup>29</sup> UK soldiers in Somalia interviewed in 2018 claimed the Somalia National Army was ‘just another militia, albeit an apparently legitimate militia’.<sup>30</sup> By 2014, many Iraqis bemoaned

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<sup>26</sup> US Department of Defense, ‘Department of Defense Releases the President’s Fiscal Year 2024 Defense Budget’, (March 13, 2023), <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3326875/departments-of-defense-releases-the-presidents-fiscal-year-2024-defense-budget/>.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Albrecht and Paul Jackson, *Security System Transformation in Sierra Leone, 1997-2007*, 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Abigail Watson and Megan Karlshøj-Pedersen, ‘Fusion Doctrine in Five Steps: Lessons Learned from Remote Warfare in Africa’ (Saferworld, November 2019), <https://www.saferworld-global.org/resources/publications/1295-fusion-doctrine-in-five-steps-lessons-learned-from-remote-warfare-in-africa>.

<sup>29</sup> John Campbell, ‘To Battle Nigeria’s Boko Haram, Put Down Your Guns’, *Foreign Affairs*, September 9, 2011, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/africa/2011-09-09/battle-nigerias-boko-haram-put-down-your-guns>.

<sup>30</sup> Emily Knowles, ‘Falling Short of Security in Somalia’, *Oxford Research Group*, January 1, 2018, [https://www.academia.edu/35813373/Falling\\_short\\_of\\_security\\_in\\_Somalia](https://www.academia.edu/35813373/Falling_short_of_security_in_Somalia).



that the Iraqi Army would be ‘lucky if it can be considered the fourth strongest army in Iraq – behind, Kurdistan’s Peshmerga forces, the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF, largely Shia paramilitaries) and Iraqi tribal fighters’.<sup>31</sup>

Providing training in these circumstances can have some short-term good in, for instance, ‘improving military interoperability, building tactical military capacity or securing other forms of immediate counter-terrorism assistance’, but there is a risk it comes at the expense of long-term ‘achievement of viable political outcomes in unstable countries’.<sup>32</sup> In Mali, the European Union (EU) trained large numbers of local troops in basic soldiering without exerting much pressure on the government in Bamako to introduce structural reforms despite accusations of ethnic bias.<sup>33</sup> In Syria, US forces trained the Kurdish group the People’s Defence Units (YPG) which was a majority Kurdish and ‘was intrinsically linked to the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK)’, a group designated by the US and others as a terrorist organisation.<sup>34</sup> Efforts to broaden the membership to include more non-Kurdish fighters led to a re-labelling of the group the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) but were limited.<sup>35</sup> Such training can sow the seeds of the next conflict by exacerbating social, ethnic, political and religious tensions by, for example, strengthening some militias over others.

This has had a hugely destabilising impact on Iraq where various militias ‘have a

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<sup>31</sup> Faleh A. Jabar and Renad Mansour, ‘The Popular Mobilization Forces and Iraq’s Future’, Carnegie Middle East Center, April 28, 2017. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2017/04/the-popular-mobilization-forces-and-iraqs-future?lang=en>.

<sup>32</sup> Jack Watling and Nick Reynolds, *War by Others’ Means: Delivering Effective Partner Force Capacity Building* (Routledge & CRC Press, 2020), <https://www.routledge.com/War-by-Others-Means-Delivering-Effective-Partner-Force-Capacity-Building/Watling-Reynolds/p/book/9780367766405>.

<sup>33</sup> Abigail Watson and Megan Karlshøj-Pedersen, ‘Fusion Doctrine in Five Steps: Lessons Learned from Remote Warfare in Africa’ (Saferworld, November 2019), <https://www.saferworld-global.org/resources/publications/1295-fusion-doctrine-in-five-steps-lessons-learned-from-remote-warfare-in-africa>.

<sup>34</sup> Jack Watling and Nick Reynolds, *War by Others’ Means: Delivering Effective Partner Force Capacity Building* (Routledge & CRC Press, 2020), <https://www.routledge.com/War-by-Others-Means-Delivering-Effective-Partner-Force-Capacity-Building/Watling-Reynolds/p/book/9780367766405>.

<sup>35</sup> Emily Knowles and Abigail Watson, ‘No Such Thing as a Quick Fix: The Aspiration-Capabilities Gap in British Remote Warfare’ (Saferworld, July 2018), <https://www.saferworld-global.org/resources/publications/1294-no-such-thing-as-a-quick-fix-the-aspiration-capabilities-gap-in-british-remote-warfare>.

new-found hold on the Iraqi state'.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, in Libya, after years of international support to different and often competing groups 'militias have become the state' with 'pragmatic arrangements' between leading military actors harbouring 'considerable potential for conflict'.<sup>37</sup> In Yemen between 2001 and 2011, the fact that President Saleh disproportionately assigned new, internationally supplied 'equipment to military units under the command of his family members' convinced many tribal leaders that he 'was seeking to weaken them and enable his family to rule without tribal support' which eventually led to him being forced from office.<sup>38</sup>

In many cases, civilians have paid the price as international firepower has been manipulated to pursue ethnically driven agendas. The Malian government 'used newly furnished formations to attack Fulani herders in late 2014 and early 2015'.<sup>39</sup> In Syria, while the SDF 'proved effective [...] in pretending there was a meaningful difference between [the YPG and SDF], the US played down, rather than clamped down upon, the alleged ethnic cleansing by the YPG'.<sup>40</sup> In Somalia, groups often used US counter-terrorism raids to settle clan disputes by accusing competing clans of being part of al-Shabab.<sup>41</sup>

For instance, an investigation into one US raid near Bariire in August 2017 in which civilians were allegedly killed because of false information that they were connected to al-Shabab, found that the group supplying the information was

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<sup>36</sup> Jack Watling and Nick Reynolds, *War by Others' Means: Delivering Effective Partner Force Capacity Building* (Routledge & CRC Press, 2020), <https://www.routledge.com/War-by-Others-Means-Delivering-Effective-Partner-Force-Capacity-Building/Watling-Reynolds/p/book/9780367766405>.

<sup>37</sup> Wolfram Lacher, 'Libya's Militias Have Become the State', *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)* No. 44 (July 2023), <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/libyas-militias-have-become-the-state>.

<sup>38</sup> Jack Watling and Nick Reynolds, *War by Others' Means: Delivering Effective Partner Force Capacity Building* (Routledge & CRC Press, 2020), <https://www.routledge.com/War-by-Others-Means-Delivering-Effective-Partner-Force-Capacity-Building/Watling-Reynolds/p/book/9780367766405>.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Emily Knowles and Abigail Watson, 'Remote Warfare: Lessons Learned from Contemporary Theatres' (Saferworld, June 2018), <https://www.saferworld-global.org/resources/publications/1280-remote-warfare-lessons-learned-from-contemporary-theatres>.

linked to a rival clan.<sup>42</sup> Again, there are no easy answers to these challenges, but some past and current efforts may give insight into better mitigating the risks of training in complex political environments in the future. There have been some successes in developing localised responses to security and in monitoring changes at a more granular level. First, several states and NGOs have developed localised approaches to security which, because they have focused on local priorities and cleavages, were better able to account for societal differences than national efforts. For instance, Saferworld, connects communities, local community and religious leaders, the media, informal security providers, police, authorities and government officials to find joint solutions through its community security process, ensuring a gender-sensitive approach.<sup>43</sup> In one example, it helped support Somalia Police Advisory Committees which included improving community-police relations, monitoring prison conditions and providing services to detainees.<sup>44</sup> In a much more kinetic illustration, US Special Operations Forces (SOF) ran a programme called Village Stability Operations which involved supporting communities that wanted to resist the Taliban, and working with them to build and support local defense forces.<sup>45</sup>

There were issues with the model, with strongmen often selected based on their ability to fight the Taliban (or at least groups categorised as Taliban) rather than on legitimacy among local communities. However, some examples

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<sup>42</sup> Christina Goldbaum, 'Strong Evidence That U.S. Special Operations Forces Massacred Civilians in Somalia', *The Daily Beast*, November 29, 2017, sec. world, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/strong-evidence-that-us-special-operations-forces-massacred-civilians-in-somalia>.

<sup>43</sup> Abigail Watson, 'Different Strategy, Same Mistakes? The UK Persistent Engagement Strategy' (Saferworld, November 2021), <https://www.saferworld-global.org/resources/publications/1375-different-strategy-same-mistakes-the-uk-persistent-engagement-strategy>.

<sup>44</sup> Abi Watson, Camilla Molyneux, and Abdullahi Hassan, 'Scaling up Insecurity? Risks of the UK's Persistent Engagement Strategy in Kenya and Somalia', <https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1405-how-to-scale-up-the-ukas-persistent-engagement-strategy-in-kenya-and-somalia>.

<sup>45</sup> Sam Wilkins, 'The Rise and Fall of Village Stability Operations in Afghanistan: Lessons for Future Irregular Warfare Campaigns', Modern War Institute, 9 August 2022, <https://mwi.westpoint.edu/the-rise-and-fall-of-village-stability-operations-in-afghanistan-lessons-for-future-irregular-warfare-campaigns/>.

of good practice showed the ‘potential effectiveness of this local force model where there is a well-respected local commander, who has the support of the community and who consults with local leaders’, although these efforts may have been despite US efforts rather than because of them.<sup>46</sup>

Second, more granular monitoring of the legitimacy of different military groups can, if used to make decisions effectively, lead to more nuanced and localised policies. Several governments including the US, the UK, and Germany have commissioned private companies who usually employ researchers based in the region, though unfortunately sometimes only in capitals to analyse local conflict dynamics more frequently.<sup>47</sup> ‘These specialist organisations use many of the same techniques as development or humanitarian third-party monitoring services, but focus on more continuously monitoring changes in the politics of local conflict (at a village or household level)’.<sup>48</sup>

One of the first and to date the largest local political analysis system of this kind was the Helmand Monitoring and Evaluation Programme (HMEP).<sup>49</sup>

USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) has run a few similarly designed programmes, albeit on a smaller scale, in Libya, Ukraine, Honduras and elsewhere. The Stabilization Platform (SPF) of the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) has also developed tailor-made monitoring systems in Syria and the Sahel. By regularly tracking data, these systems provide information about how key local conflict trends in-

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<sup>46</sup> Erica Gaston, ‘Legal Pluralism and Militia Regulation in Afghanistan’, *The Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi)*, 29 April 2019, <https://gppi.net/2019/04/29/legal-pluralism-and-militia-regulation-in-afghanistan>.

<sup>47</sup> Elias Sagmeister and Julia Steets, ‘The Use of Third-Party Monitoring in Insecure Contexts’, *Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi)*, 9 November 2016, <https://gppi.net/2016/11/09/the-use-of-third-party-monitoring-in-insecure-contexts>.

<sup>48</sup> Philipp Rotmann and Abi Watson, ‘Close the Gap: How to Leverage Local Analysis for Stabilization and Peacebuilding’, *Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi)*, October 2023. [https://reliefweb.int/attachments/d7c30a8c-9cd0-4670-a999-cb81acc8d36c/Rotmann\\_Watson\\_2023\\_Close-the-Gap\\_final.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/attachments/d7c30a8c-9cd0-4670-a999-cb81acc8d36c/Rotmann_Watson_2023_Close-the-Gap_final.pdf).

<sup>49</sup> UK Department for International Development (2015) Dataset for the Helmand Monitoring and Evaluation Programme, (UK Government, January 1 2015), <https://www.gov.uk/research-for-development-outputs/dataset-for-the-helmand-monitoring-and-evaluation-programme-hmep>.

cluding social cohesion, faith in government, the prevalence of non-state forces and the competency of state forces are changing over time. This data, if used correctly, provides decision-makers with a powerful tool for improving strategic decision-making, mitigating risks of investment and improving diplomatic engagement in post-conflict societies.<sup>50</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

In post-conflict societies, the peace is fragile and any intervention needs to carefully consider the political consequences of its actions to avoid sowing the seeds of the next violent conflict. Training has the potential to improve the capacity of partner militaries and security forces to deal with internal threats and eventually become a legitimate, united and accountable force that can secure lasting peace. However, if done in isolation without considering the larger systematic and political issues, it won't work and may be counterproductive. This chapter has examined two continual issues facing such training in post-conflict societies: the fact that training often happens in the face of larger structural issues and that training is often delivered when there is a lack of a monopoly over the use of force. For many commentators, these two problems have been too unsurmountable for capacity building to have an effect and the risks remain too high to invest unless a state is willing to commit an 'immense' amount of money.<sup>51</sup> The current political climate has made the likelihood of such funding being invested in most post-conflict areas even smaller and funding for SFA in post-conflict societies is often insufficient to address structural or institutional issues effectively. As one soldier in Kenya described it to us in 2018, the ap-

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<sup>50</sup> Philipp Rotmann and Abi Watson, 'Close the Gap: How to Leverage Local Analysis for Stabilization and Peacebuilding', *Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi)*, 17 October 2023, <https://gppi.net/2023/10/17/how-to-leverage-local-analysis-for-stabilization-and-peacebuilding>.

<sup>51</sup> Jason Fritz et al., 'Book Review Roundtable: Building Militaries in Fragile States', *Texas National Security Review*, 27 March 2019, <https://tnsr.org/roundtable/book-review-roundtable-building-militaries-in-fragile-states/>.

proach has sometimes been one of ‘just throw[ing] some men here and some men there’.<sup>52</sup> And now as international attention shifts to Eastern Europe and great power competition, there is even less chance that funding for post-conflict stabilization and peacebuilding in places like the Horn of Africa, the Sahel or the Middle East will be transformational. Yet, it continues to be unlikely (and arguably undesirable) that countries like the US, the UK, and Germany pull out of these regions entirely.

It is, then, worth investigating what successes have existed in mitigating the risks of these two wicked problems. Small training efforts can have more of a positive impact – even when there is not a huge investment into structural reform – by creating cross-departmental teams to develop strategies (at a strategic, operational and tactical level) and planning in longer timelines (even if the amount per year is not transformational).

Intervening states can better grapple with the lack of a monopoly of force through more localised solutions (i.e. working at a village level to build and engage with security forces) and more granular monitoring (i.e. building an understanding of security forces at a much more local level). While none of these efforts provides the panacea in addressing these wicked problems, they do point to ways in which smarter investments can maximise the benefits training can do in countries emerging from violent conflict and civil war.

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<sup>52</sup> Abigail Watson and Megan Karlshøj-Pedersen, ‘Fusion Doctrine in Five Steps: Lessons Learned from Remote Warfare in Africa’ (Saferworld, November 2019), <https://www.saferworld-global.org/resources/publications/1295-fusion-doctrine-in-five-steps-lessons-learned-from-remote-warfare-in-africa>.

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