

TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN? ACHIEVING PEACE AND STABILITY THROUGH BETTER COLLABORATION BETWEEN MILITARY AND SECURITY ACTORS AND PEACEBUILDERS

INSTITUTIONAL LEAD

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OVERVIEW

The world is at its most violent level in 30 years. Political upheaval, the emergence of new powers and the instability from increased violence have provided incentives for serious reflection and a search for new ways of working, especially in terms of how to prevent conflicts from erupting or reoccurring. One of the main challenges is the deep division at the operational level within and between the security, military and peacebuilding fields. This is in spite of the fact that the disparate sectors share similar goals and often work in close proximity to each other. The recently released report of the United States Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) is a vivid demonstration of the need to better exchange learning experiences between stabilization efforts and peacebuilding practices. Starting with the case study of Afghanistan, the session explored how similar mistakes can be avoided in the Sahel region, a space crowded by military, security and peacebuilding actors.

FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES

This session kick-started a unique dialogue between military, security and peacebuilding actors. It aimed to identify entry points for collaboration and opportunities for joint learning and to identify limitations of current approaches aimed at violence reduction, conflict prevention and sustainable peace.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Synergy between armed forces, security forces and local populations is key. Peace cannot be restored if there is no cooperation between civil society and security forces.

Experiences from Mali show that it is necessary to get closer to peacebuilders on the ground. In the case of Mali there is a problem of mistrust from civil society toward the security forces. Because of recurring attacks, civil society has started to distrust all kinds of armed forces. The people of Mali have understood that they play an important role in conflict resolution. But because of the weak presence of the security forces, they do not have the guarantee of being protected—they therefore remain silent. One reason for this is that they believe that, when the security forces leave, there will be retaliation.

It is important to deeply understand the needs and desires of the population in Afghanistan and the context before committing significant resources. Without doing so, the likelihood of development and stabilization initiatives causing harm and deepening local grievances will be increased. Top-down approaches do not work, hence the need for bottom-up and tailored approaches developed with local populations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In Mali, continue support from the international community and accompany it with action to reinforce capacities and harmonize actions, in order to get closer to the civil population.
- In Afghanistan, take a long-term approach: time frames should be 10 years, not 1–3 years.
- Work with women's engagement in peacebuilding: better collaboration is needed.
- Take a bottom-up approach for sustainable peace.
- Make sure that the security-, humanitarian- and diplomatic tracks are on the same side.

RESOURCE LINKS AND DOCUMENTS

Interpeace, Oct. 2018, 'Women's participation in the defense and security forces in Mali: A vehicle for trust', <<https://www.interpeace.org/2018/10/womens-participation-in-the-defense-and-security-forces-in-mali/>>.

US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), Quarterly Report to the United States Congress (SIGAR: Arlington, VA, 30 Apr. 2019), <<https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2019-04-30qr.pdf>>.



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