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NATO and EU training missions in Iraq – an opportunity to enhance cooperation

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For the past fifteen years, NATO-European Union (EU) cooperation has been expanding with mixed results. Fundamentally, the two organizations are different: NATO, as an intergovernmental military alliance, focuses on collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security. The EU, on the other hand, is a political and economic union that has developed a security agenda under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). However, there are also overlapping security activities such as the so-called “Petersberg tasks”, involving the EU in peacekeeping, and potentially even tasks of combat for EU forces in crisis management.¹

While cooperation has improved between the two institutions over the last few years, both organizations see a potential for further deepening the partnership. In 2016, EU-NATO cooperation was made a priority of both institutions by the EU-NATO Joint Declaration, adopted in the margin of the

NATO Warsaw Summit.² In 2018, NATO’s Brussels Summit Declaration emphasized the importance of the close and mutually reinforcing “strategic partnership” with the EU and enhanced cooperation between two unique and essential partners. NATO and the EU share the majority of their member states, with common values, for the pursuit of peace, security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. They also face common security challenges. Cooperation between NATO and the EU can therefore be productive and complementary, rather than competitive and contradictory.

Recent commitments to Iraq may strengthen or challenge such cooperation. In response to the request of the Iraqi government for advice and assistance, NATO and the EU have both established capacity-building missions in that country, namely the NATO Mission in Iraq (NMI) and the EU Advisory Mission in support of Security Sector Reform in Iraq (EUAM). In October 2018, heads of both missions met to introduce the nature of each operation to each other and to identify favourable circumstances for cooperation. These two training missions provide valuable opportunities to strengthen cooperation between NATO and the EU, and may even serve as a model for future operations. While these missions are more cooperative security activities than traditional crisis management operations, the lessons learned could apply under the NATO concept of “Projecting Stability”.

Even though the EUAM focuses on the “civilian-related aspects” of the NSS, the most important sector for both missions is the security and defence sector

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1 “Petersburg Declaration”, Western European Union (WEU), Council of Ministers, 19 June 1992.

2 Joint declaration by the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, and the Secretary General of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg, Warsaw, 8 July 2016.

NATO's new training mission in Iraq

At the 2018 Brussels Summit, Allied leaders announced their intent to launch a “non-combat training and capacity-building mission in Iraq, at the request of the Government of Iraq for additional support in its efforts to stabilize the country and fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations [...] to prevent the re-emergence of ISIS/Daesh”.³ The NMI focuses its training efforts on such areas as countering improvised explosive devices (C-IED), explosive ordnance disposal and demining, civil-military planning, armoured vehicle maintenance, and military medicine. NATO intends to increase capacity-building of the Iraqi defence and local security structures.⁴ At the heart of the NMI is the establishment of a professional and accountable security sector, with an inclusive approach towards integrating the Iraqi Security Forces and other domestic security institutions representing all elements of Iraqi society. By building upon NATO's recent experience, the NMI also seeks

To a degree, the NMI is reliant upon EUAM to help to prepare the strategic and political level pre-requisites for successful NMI training

to build capacity for national security structures and professional military education in collaboration with the Ministry of Defence and the Office of the National Security Advisor (ONSA) in Iraq.⁵ Topics identified for instruction include Countering Corruption, the Rule of Law, the Law of Armed Conflict and the protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts, which will be taught at the Defence University for Military Studies, the Computer Science School, Military

Medical School, the Bomb Disposal School, and other specific military schools identified as initial training locations.⁶ In addition, NATO will remain flexible to meet the changing needs of Iraqi forces with other topics for training activity becoming more important in the coming years.⁷

The EU's support to Iraqi's security sector reform

The Council of the European Union established the EUAM in October 2017. The mission deployed to Bagdad in November 2017 and has already been extended until April 2020. The EUAM aims to provide “advice and expertise to the Iraqi authorities at strategic level to identify and define the requirements for the coherent implementation of the Security Sector Reform civilian related aspects of the Iraqi National Security Programme and associated plans”.⁸ In other words, its main task is to support the implementation of civilian aspects of Security Sector Reform (SSR) as part of the implementation of Iraq's National Security Strategy.⁹ This also implies the implementation of the National Counter-Terrorism Strategy.¹⁰ Therefore, the mission provides advice to personnel of the ONSA and the Ministry of the Interior on components of reform such as policy design, organized crime or security legislation, and works closely with other international contributors. Another objective of EUAM is to “analyze, assess and identify opportunities [...] for further Union engagement in support of the needs of the civilian Security Sector Reform”.¹¹

Iraqi's National Security Strategy – a meeting point for NATO-EU cooperation

The most noticeable reference point for both missions is the improvement of Iraqi national security structures, which is an essential part of the overall Iraqi National Security Strategy (NSS). The NSS, also referred to as “the starting point for the shaping of the peace”¹², has been drafted by the ONSA, which is now responsible for its implementation.¹³ The NSS addresses Iraq's core problem, stated as “the legacy of the former regime, the rapid transition from dictatorship towards democracy, and changes in the strategic environment characterized

8 Official Journal of the European Union, Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/1869, L 266/12-13 and Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/1545, L 259/31.

9 “Introduction to EUAM”, EUAM Factsheet, 16 October 2018.

10 “Civilian EU Advisory Mission starts work in Bagdad”, EUAM Press Release, 22 November 2017.

11 Official Journal of the European Union, Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/1545, L 259/31.

12 W. Dechow, “Thoughts on the practicalities of implementing the Iraqi national security strategy”, *The Strategy Bridge*, 1 June 2017.

13 H. Shareef, “Briefing on the Republic of Iraq's National Security Strategy”, 21 March 2016.

3 “Brussels Summit Declaration”, NATO, 11-12 July 2018, para. 54.

4 J. Stoltenberg, Press Conference, 8 June 2018.

5 “NATO Mission Iraq (NMI)”, NATO, Factsheet, July 2018.

6 “NATO Mission Iraq (NMI)”, NATO, Factsheet, March 2019.

7 J. Garamone, “NATO Stepping Forward on Training Mission to Iraq”, US Department of Defense News, Interview with Adm. James Foggo, Commander NATO's Allied Joint Force Command Naples, 30 July 2018.

by violent political conflict, corruption, the outbreak of sectarian violence, terrorism and crime, collectively served to weaken Iraq's social structure, which accelerated insecurity and instability".¹⁴ Based on this assessment and key national imperatives for security, stability and prosperity, the NSS subdivides its strategic objectives into different sectors: security and defence, internal stability, foreign policy, socio-cultural, economic and public administration, cultural communication and information (cyber security) and energy and natural resources (NSS, pp.5-7).¹⁵ The NSS defines the most pressing threats to national security as those deriving from terrorism, corruption, political instability, ethno-sectarian polarization and the rentier economy; whereas a military conventional attack is considered to be a third level threat (NSS, p.7). Not all of the to-be-improved sectors mentioned in the NSS are relevant to the NMI and the EUAM missions. Furthermore, even though the EUAM focuses on the "civilian-related aspects" of the NSS, the most important sector for both missions is the security and defence sector. Therefore, it will be essential to coordinate NMI-EUAM activities whenever possible.

Designing the cooperation

The answer to the question of "who is doing what?" in Iraqi security reform lies in an examination of specific NSS topics. The key NSS security and defence sector objectives that interest both the NMI and the EUAM are the fight against terrorism, the professionalism of Iraqi security and intelligence agencies, and the establishment of appropriate and sustainable defence capabilities. Both missions are mandated to improve the Iraqi's ability to fight against terrorism. NATO focuses on "training for trainers" to help the Iraqi forces "to fight terrorism, [...] and prevent the re-emergence of ISIS/Daesh".¹⁶

The EUAM simultaneously gives advice and contributes to the implementation of the National Counter-Terrorism Strategy, thereby laying down the theoretical and doctrinal foundation for training respective forces dealing with terrorism in Iraq. As EUAM focuses on strategic guidance and NMI will cover the "doing", these two complementary

parts must be coordinated. If conflicting activities are avoided and cooperation is achieved it will be beneficial not just for Iraq, but for both missions. Cooperation should be facilitated through routine exchanges of papers and ideas (in relation to lessons learned from past missions and ongoing trainings), and coordination should be ensured even outside official channels.

The professionalization of security and intelligence agencies including their commitment to the rule of law, human rights, anticorruption and their ability to combat terrorism and organized crime is also, in part, a goal of the NMI and the EUAM. In previous missions (i.e. NTM-I), NATO conducted training and capacity-building to reform Iraqi security institutions, especially in terms of the development of a sustainable military force structure.¹⁷ As the NMI intends to build upon past and ongoing training activities, this focus provides a reference point for its efforts. The EUAM, on its part, can address civilian issues, such as the legal implementation of human rights and the rule of law or the prevention of corruption in security legislation and provisions not only for civilian agencies, but for all security agencies, including those that will be part of the Iraqi military force structure.

Conversely, security legislation is essential for NMI activities occurring at the training level. Through common values, NATO and the EU can work closely on the professionalization aspect of the NSS. Crucial to the success of NMI in security sector governance is the management of political control. Under the current complex circumstances, this is a matter that has to be addressed at the political level above the NMI mandate.¹⁸ Obviously, it would be senseless to address these issues within the military force structure at the training level only. Hence, to a degree, the NMI is reliant upon EUAM to help to prepare the strategic and political level pre-requisites for successful NMI training. Conflicting or uncoordinated activities would impair success, especially in this field of cooperation.

The establishment of defence capabilities for the protection of the Iraqi people and state sovereignty and territory is by definition not within the civilian domain, and therefore not a primary goal for EUAM. On its part however, the NMI will explicitly provide training to develop capability in counter-IED, demining, civil-military planning, armoured vehicle maintenance and military med-

14 *Ibid.* p.1; W. Dechow, "Iraqi national security strategy", p.2.

15 H. Shareef, "Briefing on the Republic of Iraq's National Security Strategy", 21 March 2016.

16 "NATO Mission Iraq", NATO, Factsheet.

17 *Ibid.*

18 K. Koehler, "Projecting stability in practice? NATO's new training mission in Iraq", *NDC Policy Brief*, No.2, October 2018, pp.3-4.

icine. These are specialized military-technical *métiers* with the exception of civil-military planning, which affects both civil and military domains. The NMI's focus concerning civil-military planning will probably be on establishing, streamlining and strengthening the coordination and interoperability between military and civil agencies in security operations. This is where the advice the EUAM provides to personnel of the Ministry of the Interior and its subordinated agencies can contribute to the establishment of combat-ready defence forces and their inclusivity into Iraqi security structures. It is again a field of action where close cooperation, especially in terms of exchange of ideas and experience, can be beneficial for the NMI as well as the EUAM.

Besides these specific security and defence sector topics, the EUAM has another objective of finding additional fields for further engagement in support of the implementation of the SSR programme. This also provides an opportunity for cooperation with NMI. Both NATO and the EU are aware that other topics and requirements will probably arise that may become more important than those already identified. The 2018 EU Council Decision set guidelines for EUAM to establish an effective link concerning future projects with NATO: "Planning will be coordinated with NATO in Iraq, with a view to strengthening coherence between their respective activities in a mutually reinforcing way with the objective of building synergies".¹⁹ The NMI has an open door through which it can enter into new dimensions of cooperation.

Capitalizing on synergies

Comparing the respective objectives of NMI and EUAM for the improvement of the Iraqi security and defence sector already reveals possible synergy of the missions. It starts with the focus on the same point of contact, the ONSA, which provides both missions with the opportunity to coordinate their ap-

proach at an early stage even before ONSA is fully involved.

The three immediate topics identified for cooperative activity are counter-terrorism, the professionalism of Iraqi security agencies, and the establishment of defence capabilities. They provide opportunities to establish and enhance NMI-EUAM cooperation. It is possible to work complementarily on the topics, with each mission providing distinct but coordinated civilian and military perspectives at different levels for the best comprehensive advice. These opportunities must be seized, since good cooperation is an important ingredient for the credibility and success of both missions.

The coordination of planning for future projects provides another opportunity for NMI to enhance its cooperation with EUAM. Combined planning is a starting point for closer cooperation, allowing for precise de-confliction and the avoidance of redundancies. The conduct of coordinated planning would be considered as a significant improvement in the NATO-EU relationship. The obvious opportunities for enhanced cooperation between NMI and EUAM will, however, not dissolve the formalized deadlock on NATO-EU cooperation at the highest level. Therefore, cooperation at the lower levels should be done in such a way as to avoid exacerbating formalization issues at the political level in Brussels.

These conclusions apply to NMI and EUAM, but they are transferable to other crisis management operations where NATO and the EU are engaged. Given the different focus of both institutions, the opportunity for cooperation will most probably arise in future operations within NATO's Projecting Stability agenda. Conflicts, and threats to peace, security and stability in the 21st century require a comprehensive approach combining both civil and military capabilities and expertise; this both the EU and NATO can offer. Iraq provides the opportunity for both institutions to cooperate. While such cooperation cannot be formal due to obstacles at the political level, every single mission can still provide a practical opportunity to enhance NATO-EU cooperation at the level where both institutions must work with a host-nation to achieve the synergy of combined effects.

¹⁹ Council of the European Union, Decision 2018/1545, 15 October 2018, Art. 1.



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