Helpdesk Research Report

Capacity building in the Ministry of Interior in fragile and post-conflict countries

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Question

Research and evidence on institutional capacity building in the Ministry of Interior in fragile and post-conflict countries

Contents

1. Overview

Capacity building in the Ministry of Interior (MoI) in fragile and post-conflict countries is a key aspect of Security Sector Reform (SSR) with surprisingly **little written on the topic** (Perito 2009; expert comment). While MoI reform is crucial to the success of SSR, as it enables management and oversight of the internal security forces, it has often been neglected by international actors and by the SSR literature.

International actors usually focus on training the police, particularly in unstable environments where the priority is to manage the security situation. As a consequence, in most cases international actors have left aside MoI reform. Regarding the literature, MoI reform is located at the intersection of the SSR literature and the Civil Sector Reform (CSR) literature.[1] However, neither of these two has specifically engaged with

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[1] For an overview of the literature on SSR refer to the GSDRC Topic Guide on 'Safety, Security and Justice' (Bakrania 2014a) and to the GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report on 'The role of security organisations in security

MoI reform. On the one hand, the SSR literature reflects practitioners' lack of engagement with MoI reform. The most widely accepted guidelines on SSR, the OECD-DAC handbook on Security Sector Reform (2007), barely mentions the MoI. On the other hand, the CSR literature does not engage with the specific conditions of civil service reform in security institutions. Evidence and research on MoI reform is thus best found in case studies addressing international SSR programmes. Case study countries include Afghanistan, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs).

The case studies highlight a **range of challenges** that have hindered reform, and common factors that have allegedly led to the failure of the core objective of the reform process – making the MoI more capable, accountable and responsive. Authors usually point to organisational and political resistance as the main challenge to reform. They also criticise international donors and agencies for their lack of adaptation to local circumstances, their inability to learn from experience and their lack of coordination. One of the key problems cited is also the lack of engagement of international actors with the reform of the administrative and managerial capacities of the MoI.

An argument shared by the literature engaging with MoI reform points to the fact that this reform is a particularly slow and difficult process due to the deeply political nature of the institution. The literature reviewed emphasises how the MoI is located at the heart of conflicts and power relations between political factions within the host state.

For this reason, **authors strongly recommend to work politically** through every step of the reform. The process should be comprehensive, and local circumstances and opportunities for local ownership should be consistently and constantly reflected upon. International actors should engage with social sciences studies and make their programme coherent with political economy analyses that should provide the foundation for assessment and strategic planning.

Finally, Perito (2009) proposes guidelines to reform the MoI that overlap with most recommendations from other articles and reports reviewed. He highlights four necessary steps in the reform process:

- Assessment
- Strategic planning
- Technical Assistance and training for Ministry functions
- Evaluating progress and incorporating lessons learned

2. Ministry of Interior reform

Ministry of Interior role

Ministries of Interior have a **broad role** which includes policy guidance, setting budget and allocating resources, coordination among agencies, holding personnel accountable, performing administrative functions, shielding forces from political interference, public outreach, and enabling civilian oversight over the police (Perito 2009; Berg 2011).

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sector reforms: key themes' (Bakrania 2014b). For an overview of the CSR literature see: GSDRC Topic Guide on 'Civil Service Reform' (Rao 2013).

Scope of the reform

The range of possible reform fits within this broadly defined role for the MoI. Perito (2009) provides in his report a comprehensive list of the major areas for administrative reforms:

- Command and control: leadership, senior management, policy and procedures, etc.
- Strategic planning and operations
- Intelligence
- Budget and programming
- Logistics
- Procurement
- Human resources
- Public affairs: public information, citizen education and outreach, media
- Communications and information services
- Inspector General: prevention of abuse and corruption
- Internal audit
- Internal affairs

These areas vary according to the MoI's history, culture, bureaucracy and depending on the role of the Ministry in the conflict. However, the general objective is to have a Ministry based on appropriate legal foundations, which has a clearly articulated mission, functions according to established administrative and operational policies, includes competent and properly supervised personnel (Perito 2009, p. 7). In other words, the reform seeks to make the MoI more capable, more accountable and more responsive.

Specificity of the reform

MoI reform is seen as **particularly complex** compared to the reform of the armed forces in an SSR context. The reason for this complexity lies in the political and social embeddedness of the MoI (Rathmell 2007; Perito & Kristoff 2009; Friesendorf & Krempel 2011). Rathmell (2007; ODI 2014) argues that it is indeed more achievable to reform institutions that perform a narrow technical function or that are relatively insulated from society such as central banks or the armed forces. Conversely, institutions such as the MoI that are deeply socially embedded and involved in political conflicts are much harder to reform. For this reason, MoI reform cannot be approached as a purely technical and bureaucratic issue.

3. Evidence from case studies

Only a small part of the literature addressing MoI reform provides general insights. Most reports and articles tend to analyse case studies with Iraq and Afghanistan as the most studied cases in post-conflict countries. Intervention in these two countries has been followed by the most extensive attempt at, and investment for SSR reform. However, these attempts are usually assessed as failures. Other articles and reports reviewed here also analyse the DRC, and draw on the EU's experience in supporting MoI reform in CEECs which is the only evident case of success.

The literature reviewed brings attention to a series of challenges that have hindered reform and to factors that have led to the failure of the process. The most cited factors are the following:

Organisational and political resistance

One of the key challenges on the ground is the organisational and political resistance of local political actors to the reforms driven by international actors. In his analysis of MoI reform in Iraq, based on interviews with international advisers, police and military officers Perito (2009) shows that powerful interests quickly moved to seize control of the institution. The MoI was thus dysfunctional, corrupt and controlled by leaders with their own political agendas. Drawing on analyses of the EU experience in supporting CEECs' reform, Berg (2011) emphasises the difficulties posed by the competition between different factions struggling for control of security forces to maintain power and security. He argues that it largely undermined international actors' efforts to reform and diminished the responsiveness of the MoI to citizens. Both Friesendorf & Krempel (2011) and Rathmell (ODI 2014) also demonstrate that political actors within the Afghan MoI lacked political will to reform and further a democratically controlled police.

More generally, a strategic consultancy group Atkis (2013, p. 1) drafted a conceptual note on the basis of its experience in institutional development. The note addresses the issue of building security institutions in contexts challenged by terrorism and extremism. It concludes that in countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan the lack of effectiveness of reform is often attributable to the 'political and network-based incentives and dynamics that act in and on the organisation, rather than to the poor technical capacity'. Hence, organisation and political resistance tends to hinder reform aimed at furthering the capacity, responsiveness and accountability of the MoI.

Lack of adaptation to local circumstances

The lack of adaptation to local circumstances is, according to the literature, one of the main challenges and causes of failure to reform. In a peer-review article analysing the reform of police institutions across the world, Bayley (2005) asserts that there is a tendency for foreign advisers to recommend what they are familiar with at home rather than what fits with local practices which would be more efficient. Rathmell (2007; ODI 2014) stresses that international actors and agencies are still trying to import already-made models that ignore contextual conditions and do not draw on in-depth political economy analyses. This issue undermines not only capacity-building but also the accountability of the MoI. More specifically, the Atkis (2013) note argues that attempts to transplant alien Western concepts of accountability and oversight in incipient democracies such as Iraq and Afghanistan is likely to fail. Rathmell (ODI 2014) concludes that this kind of 'template' approach often leads to 'Isomorphic Mimicry' where the local institution reproduces the template but in a slightly less functional version of the original.

This problem is also linked to the issue of **local ownership**. According to Bayley (2005) and Rathmell (2007), even though local ownership has become a mantra in SSR guidelines, in practice there is still an under-appreciation of the importance of consulting and collaborating with local stakeholders.

Inability to learn from experience

Bayley (2005) argues that international actors and agencies have not developed the capacity to learn from experience. While the quality of evaluation is low and descriptive, agencies neither systematically debrief returning personnel nor share their experience with other agencies doing similar work. This was confirmed by an expert explaining that internal reports in international organisations and donors agencies in Afghanistan were not systematically recorded or consolidated which undermined the possibility to draw lessons from them (expert comment).

Donor coordination

Donor coordination is a common problem in development and SSR efforts. According to the literature reviewed, a lack of coordination among donors is especially damaging in the security sector. For example, Berg (2011) shows that in the case of CEECs this lack of coordination complicated the attempt made by the MoI to establish linkages between actors working on different reform areas. Thus, the problem does not only concern coordination among donors which often do not consult or inform each other, but also coordination between them and the MoI. Indeed, the MoI is supposed to be driving the reform process according to the principle of local ownership. However, it is not consistently involved or consulted in donors programs. Illustratively, in the Afghan case Friesendorf & Krempel (2011) assert that while Germany, the US and other donors supported the Afghan National Police (ANP), the support was often not coordinated with the MoI and with other international partners.

Lack of engagement with the Ministry of Interior

A more specific cause of failure is often indicated in the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan: the lack of engagement of international actors with the institutional reform of the MoI. Most authors show that when international actors arrived, particularly the US, they went directly to the task of training the police. Doing so, they did not give due attention to administrative and managerial reforms needed at the MoI level (Rathmell 2007; Perito 2009). Friesendorf & Krempel (2011, p. 2) argue that this neglect contributed to the deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan: 'Technical capacity building can only be sustainable if it is linked to long-term reforms of police administrative structures and supervisory authorities'. In a recent analysis of the Afghan case, Hughes (2014) confirms that, as a consequence of this strategy, the MoI is now mainly staffed with uniformed police officers who rotate between operational and administrative assignments. This goes against continuity and efficiency in implementing reforms and against the concept of a democratically controlled civilian police. Boshoff, Hendrikson, More & Vircoulon (2010) also criticise this focus on training as one of the main sources of failure in the DRC case.

More generally, for Bayley (2005) and Perito (2009) this overreliance on training not embedded in programmes of institutional change reflects a failure to understand the MoI's role. It goes directly against the objective to build self-sustaining organisational capability (Aktis 2013).

4. Guidelines and recommendations from the literature

Guidelines

The articles and reports reviewed here provide specific guidelines to drive the reform process and to deal with the challenges and failures listed above. Perito's (2009) categories are used as points of reference as they comprehensively reflect the list of guidelines put forward by other authors. These categories are the following:

Assessment

The first step in the reform of the MoI is, according to Perito (2009), to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the Ministry, of its role in the justice sector and its role in the conflict. The assessment includes an analysis of the general environment in which the MoI is functioning, its legally assigned functions and a detailed evaluation of its performance. The analysis should be done by a multidisciplinary

team of international experts assisted by carefully selected local nationals. Rathmell (2007) also insists that this part of the reform process should focus on the development of an in-depth understanding of the politics of the Ministry and answer questions such as: how has the MoI evolved? Who has power in the Ministry? What would be the impact of politics on Ministry reform?

Strategic planning

The aim of strategic planning is to develop the Ministry's mission statement, goals, and objectives and identify the means to attain them in order to ensure a common vision of the reform (Perito 2009). Drawing on the success of the EU with CEECs, Berg (2011) confirms the importance of strategic planning and argues that the structure, mandate and role of the MoI and the security forces should be defined from the outset. Friesendorf & Krempel (2011) stress in particular that the areas of responsibility should be rapidly defined between the different actors. Bayley (2005) adds that this step is crucial to make sure that police assistance programmes reflect what is actually needed and not the capacities that donors can make available.

Technical Assistance and training for Ministry functions

This step depends on the role and objectives defined for the MoI in each particular case through assessment and strategic planning.

However, contradictory guidelines also emerge in the literature that relate to the focus of technical assistance and training. For example, Berg (2011, p. 12) argues that assistance should prioritise building the leadership's capacity within the MoI: 'backing the leaders who must make risky decisions through sustained political engagement'; whereas the Atkis (2014) note argues that well-intentioned and competent leaders can only improve their organisations' outputs if the management systems exist to translate these intentions into actions. Thus more attention should be directed toward the managerial capacities of the MoI that are often neglected by international actors.

Evaluating progress and incorporating lessons learned

For Perito (2009) the progress should be evaluated in light of the original assessment and against the goals and objectives outlined in the strategic plan. Rathmell (2007) also emphasises the need of ongoing, embedded and shared analysis and monitoring.

General recommendations

Some more general recommendations are consistently present throughout the literature reviewed. These recommendations cut across the different steps of the reform process. The most cited ones are the following:

Working politically

Most articles and reports strongly emphasise that international actors should work more politically. Both Friesendorf & Krempel (2011) and Rathmell (ODI 2014) stress that MoI reform is political, and involves a transformation of deeply embedded power relations. Political thinking and analysis should thus be mainstreamed throughout the reform process to make it sustainable (expert comment). One of the consequences of this mainstreaming is to acknowledge that transforming security institutions can take generations instead of the short timeframes of donors.

Illustratively, the Aktis (2013, p. 2) note aptly explains that 'programmes in complex environments need to be designed and implemented through a political lens, continually aware of the network dynamics (the "hidden wiring") in the organisation, and geared to shift incentives to enable better performance. Better policy, procedures and training have very little effect if the organisation and its key actors have weak incentives to fulfil their public mandate, and very strong incentives to use the organisation for other purposes, including exerting political pressure, resource-bargaining and personal gain. A political approach (…) is required.'

Rathmell (ODI 2014) recommends using more **social science research to inform the assessment and planning** of the reform. International actors should use and/or carry out more robust political economy and conflict analyses that provide a nuanced understanding of the local context. In particular, more attention should be paid to: local networks and how they deliver benefits to citizens; what the public expects; and what incentives for change exist at the political level. Overall, the reform should be understood as a fundamental shift in power structures.

▪ The OECD-DAC Handbook on Security System Reform comments on this topic:

'Security system reform and international assistance to support it are inherently political processes. The ways in which justice and security are provided and governed by state and non-state institutions underpin a country's balance of power. (…) Security system reform has an explicitly political objective — to ensure that security and justice are provided in a manner consistent with democratic norms, human rights principles and the rule of law. Reform processes inevitably create winners and losers as they challenge vested interests and existing power relationships. Justice and security reform is therefore best approached as a governance issue and not simply as a technical activity' (OECD-DAC 2007, p. 28).

Taking into account local ownership and circumstances

Rathmell (2007) stresses the need to reflect on local ownership as, according to his analysis, a large amount of training courses, plans, policies and procedures that originate from international actors are wasted. He argues that the aim of the advisory process should be to support and inform an existing reform process or, when this process does not exist, help officials to understand how their problems can be addressed in new ways. Local actors should be given a real opportunity to take leadership on the reform (Hughes 2014).

Reflection on local circumstances would also enable advisers to be more careful **not to overload the MoI** with new tasks before it has the capacity to take them on. Rathmell (2007) argues that the MoI's capability evolves slowly and that improvement in capacity building is not helped by overloading it.

More specifically, the Aktis (2013) note engages with **the issue of accountability** and recommends to further take into account the local context. It points to the limits of trying to institutionalise 'democratic' accountability systems such as parliamentary oversight in still un-democratised sectors and societies. It claims that instead, the focus should be on more practical type of accountability such as improving data, information flow, etc.

▪ The OECD-DAC Handbook on Security System Reform suggests that:

 'Programmes need to help identify local drivers of reform and be flexible in supporting local ownership as it emerges. The process of identifying and fostering ownership requires continuous attention, and it cannot be assumed that ownership will be easily identifiable or coherent at the point at which international actors begin to engage' (OECD-DAC 2007, p. 16).

International advisers

A consistent recommendation put forward by the literature is to be **more careful with the choice of advisers** sent to support the MoI reform. Friesendorf & Krempel (2011) and Rathmell (2007) argue that civilian policy experts should dominate the strategic approach to police reform instead of soldiers, which was one of the pitfalls in Iraq and Afghanistan. Berg (2011), Hughes (2014) and Rathmell (2007) emphasise the need to send advisers with seniority experience and appropriate technical expertise. Berg (2011) argues that it is important to deploy personnel with experience applying administrative and managerial skills to law enforcement issues, preferably in similar political and security contexts, in order to ensure their familiarity with the relevant issues and enhance confidence among officials in the host country. Rathmell (2007) warns that international actors should prepare their advisers more thoroughly.

Perito (2009) adds a list of **tasks** that international advisers should accomplish to work more effectively:

- Establish a close personal relationship with locals

- Understand the workings of the Ministry and the host government

- Translate their technical expertise into policy advice and adapt their knowledge to local circumstances

- Connect the advisee with essential services and information

- Coordinate with the intervention force

Working comprehensively

Working comprehensively is a general recommendation present in most of the literature reviewed. It concerns both donor coordination and the integration of all areas and actors of security institutions reform within an integrated strategy driving the process.

Berg (2011) and Hughes (2014) underline the need for enhanced donor coordination. Hughes (2014) analyses the case of Afghanistan and shows how crucial it is to manage **an expanding donor map**. She explains that in the past 12 years more than 27 different international donors have been involved in police reform and that this number is increasing with new partnerships established by the Afghan government with police institutions of other Islamic countries. Eventually, the MoI will need to have the executive capacity to manage relationships and contributions to support its own planning; but in the meantime in should be supported in this endeavour by international actors.

Perito (2009) speaks about the need to have a **comprehensive, whole-of-government approach** by the host government and the countries participating. Both Hughes (2014) and Rathmell (2007) call for integrated action by addressing the political environment, the legal framework, interactions with other government structures and organisational development. Rathmell (ODI 2014) finishes by reminding international actors that they should always treat programmatic interventions as a step towards a broader goal.

- The OECD-DAC Handbook on Security System Reform recommends that:

 'The international community needs to move from ad hoc, often short-term, projects to more strategic engagement. The governance approach to SSR provides the necessary strategic framework to coordinate technical inputs from across donor governments. To be effective and strategic, whole-of-government approaches should be built on shared understanding of and respect for the different mandates, skills and

competencies of security, development and diplomatic communities. Transparency about objectives, allocations and operations promotes coherent strategies' (OECD-DAC 2007, p. 11).

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Key websites

- OECD-DAC:
  http://www.oecd.org/dac/
- United States Institute of Peace (USIP)
  http://www.usip.org/

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