



Defense Institution Building in the U.S. Context

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Abstract: This article aims to provide readers, especially those outside the U.S. Defense establishment, with an overview of U.S. Defense Institution Capacity Building (DIB), including its origins, key developments in the past decade, what it means in the U.S. context, who is responsible for its planning and implementation, why the U.S. undertakes DIB, some of the challenges U.S. DIB practitioners have faced to date, and finally a look at where DIB can be improved in the future.

Keywords: Defense Institution Building, U.S. security cooperation, U.S. security assistance, institutional capacity building, security sector reform, defense sector reform, ministerial reform.

The United States has been in the business of assisting partner nations' militaries for decades. The original security assistance framework that was first developed in the 1960s, however, has proven insufficient to keep up with the demands of the 21st century security environment. As such, the broader U.S. security cooperation framework has undergone a deliberate and significant transformation and restructuring in recent years, moving toward a system that is organized more effectively to build longer-term, sustainable partner capacity, rather than just provide short-term material assistance.

Defense Institution Building (DIB) is a cornerstone of this new approach, helping partners to lay the foundations upon which effective and legitimate democratic defense sectors can be established, and future U.S. security assistance absorbed. In 2016, DIB reached an inflection point in the United States when it was codified into law through the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), reflecting the rise of DIB in the United States in the past few years from a rela-

tively unknown, bottom-up effort to a premier discipline in the Department, particularly among those responsible for security cooperation.

This article aims to provide readers, especially those outside the U.S. Defense establishment, with an overview of U.S. DIB, including its origins, key developments in the past decade, what it means in the U.S. context, who is responsible for its planning and implementation, why the U.S. undertakes DIB, some of the challenges U.S. DIB practitioners have faced to date, and finally a look at where DIB can be improved in the future.¹

Origins of U.S. DIB

A handful of historic examples can be found across the past century or so that demonstrate U.S. contributions to building capacity in a partner's defense ministry. Yet, the current, deliberate approach to DIB—with specific programs and policies dedicated to building institutional capacity in support of effective defense sector governance—is a relatively new concept, with origins in four distinct but related developments.

First, the shifting security environment after the end of the Cold War set the backdrop for a need to revise the security assistance system. In the 40-years prior, the United States delivered weapons, equipment, and training to key partners and allies in order to forge or maintain relationships, and to strengthen their defensive postures. While U.S. security assistance aimed to strengthen its partners against Soviet-sponsored insurgencies, it did so from a strictly military standpoint, with little if any involvement in the governance aspects of the partners' security and defense sectors.

As intrastate conflict largely replaced interstate warfare, and countries became caught in cycles of violence and instability, the resulting operating environment was characterized by humanitarian interventions to end conflict, often coupled with peacekeeping operations to prevent violence from reigniting in post-conflict environments. While the existing U.S. security assistance architecture was not fundamentally realigned to match the requirements of this transformed security environment, its guiding principles shifted from containing the spread of communism, to emphasizing the promotion of democracy and civilian control of the military.² As a result, programs such as International Military Education and Training, the Center for Civil-Military Relations, the Defense Institute

¹ This article is an updated adaptation of the author's chapters in Alexandra Kerr and Michael Miklaucic, *Effective, Legitimate, Secure: Insights for Defense Institution Building* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, November 2017).

² "Appendix 2: History of Security Assistance and Security Cooperation" in *Green Book: The Management of Security Assistance*, Edition 1.0 (Washington, D.C.: Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management, March 2016), 4-13, www.discs.dsca.mil/documents/greenbook/v1_0/21_Appendix_2.pdf.

of International Legal Studies, and the Regional Centers were instituted in the nineties to further these objectives.³

Second, DIB's operating theory is a legacy of the concept of Security Sector Reform (SSR), also known as Security System Reform, which emerged during this tumultuous decade and argued that prosperity and stability cannot take hold when development is pursued without security. SSR challenged traditional notions of the link between economic development and peace, arguing instead for the importance of effective oversight, accountability, and governance of defense establishments to economic, social, and political development, as well as human security.⁴

When development was decoupled from security in the 1990s, the opportunity to help downsize or right size bloated militaries, promote civilian control, and reallocate the excess resources to civilian activities, was overlooked. Traditional security assistance paradigms focused on improving force effectiveness, while the traditional development assistance approach avoided most security aspects of the state. SSR promoted instead a holistic approach to enhancing partner capacity by improving the governance, oversight, accountability, transparency, and professionalism of security sector forces and institutions, in line with democratic principles and the rule of law, in order to provide the secure conditions necessary for societal and economic development to take place. SSR's emphasis on the governance of security institutions laid the theoretical groundwork from which DIB has grown.

Third, U.S. DIB has its roots in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, which was established in 1994 and supported by the United States through the launch of the Warsaw Initiative Fund—later renamed the Wales Initiative Fund (WIF)—the same year. Through PfP, DOD began to tailor military engagements and target security cooperation to support former Warsaw-Pact countries as they worked to reform their Soviet-era defense sectors. Importantly, PfP did not seek to provide the new states with training and equipment alone, but rather emphasized the implementation of governance mechanisms throughout the entire security sector, including the establishment or overhaul of democratic, accountable, and professional defense institutions. Through PfP, the United States first gained experience with the value, and indeed challenges, of DIB.

³ The George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies was established in 1993; the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies was established in 1995; the William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies was established in 1997; and the Africa Center for Strategic Studies was established in 1999. The Near East-South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, however, was not established until the year 2000.

⁴ Querine Hanlon and Richard H. Shultz, Jr., eds., *Prioritizing Security Sector Reform (SSR): A New U.S. Approach* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2016), 15.

Finally, U.S. DIB has evolved in response to a shift in the security environment in the wake of 9/11.⁵ As the United States contended with the “Global War on Terrorism” after 2001, it became rapidly apparent that effective counterterrorism relied on the ability of other states to defend their own territory and secure their own populations, including sealing porous borders and shrinking ungoverned spaces. In response, U.S. security assistance and cooperation efforts were oriented toward providing tools—primarily in the form of training and equipment—to supplement the weak militaries and internal security forces of strategic partners to improve their operational and tactical proficiency.

The magnitude of U.S. security cooperation investments after 9/11 accounted for billions of defense dollars annually. Title 10 security cooperation was mainly used for putting out fires in the immediate term, but even when such assistance was successful, the outcomes were, by design, short-lived. In the years following the initial ground operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, it became increasingly evident that major investments in time, money, and personnel had not resulted in corresponding increases in institutionalized and sustainable partner capacity – the delivery of training and equipment alone, regardless of the amount, did not lead to functioning defense sectors and a concerted effort to establish governance would be necessary.

The critical flaw in the Train and Equip approach is that it misses the inextricable correlation between institutions and absorptive capacity – i.e. that foundational institutions must be in place for a partner to be able to assimilate and apply the training, knowledge, skills, and equipment that the United States provides through other forms of security assistance and cooperation.⁶ And in countries rife with internal conflict and political instability, the underlying institutions of the defense sector are often weak, and in some cases, nonexistent. As a result, around 2006, defense guidance documents increasingly emphasized that security cooperation must help partners build sustainable, long-term capacity as a necessary precursor to stability.

Evolution of DIB in the Past Decade

In the past decade, the security cooperation enterprise has undergone a series of changes, largely in response to the lack of success in high profile cases like Afghanistan and Iraq, coupled with resulting Congressional frustration over questions about the efficacy of the existing security cooperation approach. It is against this backdrop that DIB has emerged as a critical component in U.S. efforts to assist partner-nation security forces and institutions in becoming more effective and accountable.

⁵ Jeanne Giraldo, “DIB 101,” Presentation (Washington, D.C., March 2017).

⁶ Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, Stephanie Young, Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Joe Hogler, and Christine Leah, *What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity and Under What Circumstances?* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013), 87-93, <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1253z1.html>.

Until 2008, U.S. DIB had evolved in a decentralized and ad hoc manner, with no clear, top-down direction for DIB organization, process, and personnel development. That year, however, the Guidance for Employment of the Force (GEF)—a document that provides comprehensive strategic guidance to the Regional Combatant Commanders and their staffs—indicated a shift in how security cooperation was perceived at the strategic level by the DOD. The GEF gave prominence to the role that security cooperation plays in achieving national security goals, making security cooperation operations a primary focus of theater planning, where contingency planning had previously been central. For DIB, the GEF was particularly important as it listed institutional capacity—i.e. activities that “Strengthen [a] Partner nation’s security sector [by building] long-term institutional capacity and capability”—as one of the main focus areas for security cooperation operations.⁷

The following year, DOD, the State Department, and the U.S. Agency for International Development released a report arguing for a more holistic, inter-agency, “3D” (defense, diplomacy, and development) approach to security sector reform, in which one of the document’s guiding principles calls for U.S. practitioners and policymakers to balance operational support with institutional reform.⁸ The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review further stressed the need for security cooperation to go beyond training and equipping partner forces, focusing instead on the institutional and human dimensions required to develop partner defense capacity and to sustain U.S. security investments: “the Department recognizes that in order to ensure that enhancements developed among security forces are sustained, the supporting institutions in partner nations must also function effectively.”⁹ The Defense Institution Reform Initiative and the Ministry of Defense Advisors Program were thus both established during this time to spearhead U.S. efforts to help partner nations build defense capacity at the institutional and ministerial level.¹⁰

At this stage, because DIB efforts were piecemeal at best—with no overarching Department strategy to guide a long-term, systematic approach to the discipline or define coherent goals—DIB was frequently approached as an add-on to existing Train and Equip programs, or as a gap-filling mechanism to plug holes in capacity. In October 2015, however, the Defense Governance Management

⁷ Patrick C. Sweeney, *A Primer for: Guidance for Employment of the Force (GEF), Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP), the Adaptive Planning and Execution (APEX) System, and Global Force Management (GFM)* (Newport, RI: United States Naval War College, 2015), 11.

⁸ U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of Defense, and Department of State, *Security Sector Reform* (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, February 2009), 4-5, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/115810.pdf>.

⁹ Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, February 2010), 30, https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/defenseReviews/QDR/QDR_as_of_29JAN10_1600.pdf.

¹⁰ The Ministry of Defense Advisors program was initially only implemented in Afghanistan, but it was expanded to other countries in 2013.

Team (DGMT) was established as “an elite, leading defense governance and management organization providing the ideas, approaches, resources and capabilities necessary for DOD/USG [U.S. Government] to plan, implement, and manage DIB projects, develop methodology and doctrine, and train and educate DIB and security cooperation personnel.”¹¹ This provided a hub from which further time and effort could be dedicated to thinking through how to do defense institutional capacity building in a more coordinated and targeted manner, and to begin to gather and disseminate lessons and knowledge to improve DIB outcomes.

In the past two years, the DOD has made significant progress in reforming and enhancing the broader security cooperation system to better address 21st century security challenges, including providing top-level guidance on DIB. The first major step was the 2016 *DOD Directive 5205.82 Defense Institution Building*, which defines DIB efforts as “activities that empower partner-nation defense institutions to establish or re-orient their policies and structures to make their defense sector more transparent, accountable, effective, affordable, and responsive to civilian control.”¹² This Directive provided the department with a formal definition of the discipline and delineated the roles, aims, and responsibilities within the DOD.¹³

As noted above, DIB was then codified in law in the 2017 NDAA, which involved sweeping reforms to make the broader security cooperation framework clearer, more effective, and better integrated. This included simplifying security cooperation legal authorities, improving prioritization of security cooperation activities, adding flexibility to funding for longer-term planning, enhancing the security cooperation workforce, and expanding security cooperation beyond the traditional operational and tactical level to include strategic institution building. Specifically, in section 332 the NDAA codified a stand-alone authority for DoD to conduct defense institution capacity building, and in section 333 it requires that institutional capacity building be an element of all foreign capacity building, including Train and Equip.¹⁴

Finally, in line with the requirements mandated in the 2017 NDAA, the Office of the Secretary of Defense has made significant strides in overhauling the planning system for security cooperation, particularly regarding assessment, meas-

¹¹ Defense Governance and Management Team, “DGMT Mission,” Presentation (Washington, D.C., March 2017).

¹² Department of Defense, *Defense Institution Building*, DOD Directive 5205.82 (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2016), <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/520582p.pdf>.

¹³ Department of Defense, *Defense Institution Building*, DOD Directive 5205.82.

¹⁴ S. 2943, 114th Congress of the United States of America, *National Defense Authorization Act*, “§ 332. Friendly foreign countries; international and regional organizations: defense institution capacity building” and “§ 333. Foreign security forces: authority to build capacity,” <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-114s2943enr/pdf/BILLS-114s2943enr.pdf>.

uring, and evaluation (AM&E).¹⁵ In January 2017, the DOD released an instruction on AM&E for the security cooperation enterprise writ large, which aims to establish policy and assign responsibilities for conducting AM&E for security cooperation activities.¹⁶ It calls for the DOD to ensure sufficient funding to carry out AM&E policy implementation, disseminate lessons learned from AM&E analysis, and train the appropriate workforce to conduct and support the technical AM&E functions. The following month, the Deputy Secretary of Defense authorized the development of new planning and AM&E processes for security cooperation, which were in the final stages of design and development at the time this article was written.

For DIB, AM&E is critical for accountability and learning, and improving the process has been a priority in recent years. AM&E helps to determine relevance, value, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact of a DIB process. For the Congress, it helps to indicate return on investments and AM&E outcomes help policymakers make effective resourcing and policy decisions. The assessment (or “scoping”) phase allows practitioners to determine strategic alignment, levels of partner support and will, the partner’s absorptive capacity, and potential risks to the DIB process. Monitoring tends to focus on the shorter-term results of specific activities and achievements of milestones along the way. And evaluations assess the longer-term impact and outcomes of the DIB engagement as a whole. Because these processes for DIB are not linear or fixed, happening throughout the engagement and changing in line with evolving contexts, devising a consistent AM&E system for DIB remains a challenge.

DIB in the United States

Terminology

Before turning to DIB in the U.S. context, it is worth briefly clarifying a few terms. Defense institutions are often equated with defense ministries, but in the institutional capacity building discipline “institutions” refer to broader constructs comprised of people, organizations, rules, norms, values, processes, and behaviors that enable oversight, governance, management, and functionality of the given enterprise.¹⁷ At a fundamental level, democratic defense institutions play an essential role in fulfilling the social contract: defending sovereign borders and territories of the state, ensuring the security and prosperity of the citizens therein, protecting the interests and values of the state abroad, and maintaining

¹⁵ S. 2943, 114th Congress of the United States of America, *National Defense Authorization Act*, “§ 383. Assessment, monitoring, and evaluation of programs and activities,” <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-114s2943enr/pdf/BILLS-114s2943enr.pdf>.

¹⁶ Department of Defense, *Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation Policy for the Security Cooperation Enterprise*, DOD Instruction 5132.14 (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, January 2017), http://open.defense.gov/portals/23/Documents/foreign_asst/DoDI_513214_on_AM&E.pdf.

¹⁷ Department of Defense, *Defense Institution Building*, DOD Directive 5205.82.

national and regional stability. They also safeguard civilian control of the military and are themselves accountable to the government, to legislation, and ultimately to the electorate.

The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), which bears responsibility for the majority of DIB efforts in the United States, defines “Defense Institution Building” as security cooperation activities that empower partner nation defense institutions to establish or re-orient their policies and structures to make their defense sectors more transparent, accountable, effective, affordable, and responsive to civilian control.¹⁸ The term itself was adopted from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)’s 2014 Partnership Action Plan on Defense Institution Building (PAP-DIB), which laid out ten objectives for NATO to assist Partnership for Peace (PFP) countries in developing democratic defense institutions.¹⁹

It should be noted, however, that the term “Defense Institution Building” has proven somewhat problematic for the U.S. DIB enterprise in that it evokes a sense of erecting institutions from scratch—which is not the case in the vast majority of countries in which DIB efforts are implemented—rather than helping partners to strengthen and reform the governance and management of particular elements of their existing institutional systems. This has sewn some confusion about DIB among policymakers, who are often skeptical of anything that resembles state-building, and among partners, who argue that they do not need DIB because they already have existing ministries. As a result, the term has evolved lately in the United States and DIB is now frequently referred to as “defense institution/al capacity building”; this terminology, for instance, is favored in the U.S. National Defense Authorization Act.²⁰

Finally, in the U.S. government, “security cooperation” and “security assistance”—which are the chief lines of effort in the U.S. toolkit to help partners bolster their security and work with the United States to support common security objectives—are overlapping but not necessarily interchangeable. The distinction between “security cooperation” and “security assistance” activities has to do with the agency administering the program: in simplest terms, it is either an activity of the Department of Defense (security cooperation) or the Department of State (security assistance).

DOD and the Department of State (DOS) have shared responsibility for engaging with foreign partner militaries since the mid-twentieth century, with the bulk of congressional security assistance funding allocated to DOS. Any security assistance *administered* by DOD—whether funded under Title 10 (Armed Services) or Title 22 (Foreign Affairs) of the U.S. Code—is a “security cooperation”

¹⁸ Department of Defense, *Defense Institution Building*, DOD Directive 5205.82.

¹⁹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Partnership Action Plan for Defence Institution Building,” June 2010, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50083.htm.

²⁰ National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017, Chapter 16 Security Cooperation, Section 332, November 2016, <http://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20161128/CRPT-114HRPT-S2943.pdf>.

activity.²¹ After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the legal framework for the funding and administration of such activities evolved in response to emerging threats. Congress increasingly granted funding and authorities directly to DOD under Title 10 for security cooperation.²² Therefore, while DOS security assistance programs can include DIB components, the majority of DIB-specific programming is currently funded under and implemented by the Department of Defense and is thus considered security cooperation.

What U.S. DIB Entails

For the United States, DIB is based on the recognition that in order to be effective defense partners, countries need professional defense sectors, which in turn require functioning defense institutions. If a country's defense sector is unaccountable, poorly managed, and not subject to civilian control, it will be difficult for the rest of the government to govern effectively or to promote social wellbeing and economic prosperity – never mind for democracy to take hold.

DIB programs help partner nations establish or reorient their personnel, organizations, rules, norms, values, processes, and behaviors to develop a functioning and professional defense sector in order to develop and manage security forces, subject to civilian control, that can defend and secure the state.²³ By improving organizations and processes, DIB helps to ensure effective oversight, management, and execution of human, materiel, and financial resources, and provides partners with the capacity to develop appropriate policies, strategies, operational concepts, and doctrine, which are vital for the partner to meet their own national security goals.

U.S. DIB is primarily a process of facilitation, not imposition; through its partner-centric approach, DIB ensures that the process of building institutional capacity stems from and remains rooted in the partner. In so doing, DIB increases the partner's ability to achieve its security priorities, maintain national and regional stability, and address shared security challenges with the United States and its allies.

DIB includes missions that “improve the civilian control of armed forces; transmit values of respect for the rule of law and human rights; improve the management methods of defense institutions, as well as their support elements (most prominently: logistics, human resources, and financial management); [and] professionalize defense personnel.”²⁴ DIB activities generally address core functions, often referred to as the “pillars” of DIB, including Strategy, Policy, and

²¹ Nina M. Serafino, *Security Assistance and Cooperation: Shared Responsibility of the Departments of State and Defense*, CRS Report 44444 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, May 26, 2016), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R44444.pdf>.

²² Serafino, *Security Assistance and Cooperation*.

²³ Department of Defense, *Defense Institution Building*, DOD Directive 5205.82.

²⁴ Department of Defense, *Defense Institution Building*, DOD Directive 5205.82.

Planning; Human Resource Management; Resource Management; Logistics; and Defense Legal Systems.

DIB activities target defense institutions responsible for oversight, management, and governance of a partner's defense sector at the national level. While the preferred entry-point is the Ministry of Defense, DIB requires working across multiple levels of the defense sector (e.g., general command, joint staff, and service headquarters) and with multiple stakeholders; defense institutions are a system of systems and all must be involved in the process for the changes to truly take hold.

The length of DIB engagements varies between programs and activities; DGMT projects, for example, tend to last multiple years, and engagements between the U.S. practitioners and the partner-nation counterparts are carried out on the ground, lasting generally one to two weeks at a time, at least every quarter. The main phases of a DIB effort—which are not necessarily linear in practice, but rather necessarily blend and overlap—include scoping and assessment; capability-based planning and program design; implementation; and continuous monitoring and evaluations.

Who Does U.S. DIB

Within the U.S. government, DIB is undertaken by a mosaic of programs and actors, but as noted above, it is primarily implemented through the Department of Defense. The Global Combatant Commands (GCCs) are responsible for leading security cooperation activities within their Area of Responsibility, including integrating DIB into their plans. To ensure that the GCCs have the planning and functional expertise necessary to coordinate DIB activities in their regions, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency and the programs and centers below provide support.

The main programs and centers that support DIB activities are the Defense Governance and Management Team; the Ministry of Defense Advisors Program; the Defense Institute of International Legal Studies; the five Regional Centers for Strategic Studies; and the State Partnership Program, implemented by the National Guard Bureau. Below is a brief description of each of them.

Defense Governance Management Team (DGMT) was formed in 2015 and develops, implements, and manages DIB programs, as well as providing training and education for the security cooperation workforce. DGMT provides support across the five functional areas listed above, to “support partners in the development of defense and security governance and management institutions that are accountable to citizens, enable partner forces to perform desired roles, and strengthen US security cooperation investments.”²⁵ DGMT implements DIB efforts primarily through the Defense Institution Reform Initiative and the DOD elements of the Wales Initiative Fund. It also provides the institutional capacity

²⁵ “About Us,” Defense Governance Management Team, accessed September 10, 2018, <https://my.nps.edu/web/ccmr/dgmt/whatwedo>.

building portions of the White House Security Governance Initiative, Maritime Security Initiative, and NATO Building Integrity Program.

Wales Initiative Fund (WIF) supports DIB for countries in the State Department-led Partnership for Peace Program. WIF was formerly called the Warsaw Initiative Fund, but was renamed after the Wales NATO summit in September 2014.²⁶

Defense Institutional Reform Initiative (DIRI) supports foreign defense institutions by determining institutional needs and developing projects to meet them. DIRI “develops effective, accountable, professional and transparent partner defense establishments in partner countries that can manage, sustain and employ national forces engagements.”²⁷ DIRI DIB programs have grown exponentially in the past few year, and can now be found in over 50 countries.

Ministry of Defense Advisors Program (MODA) contributes to DIB by providing civilian DOD employees as advisors to their counterparts in foreign ministries of defense, or equivalent defense or security institutions, for up to two years. Advisors “provide advice and other training and ... assist in building core institutional capacity, competencies, and capabilities.”²⁸ While there are around eighty MODAs in Afghanistan, there is generally only one in each other country in which the program operates.

Defense Institute of International Legal Studies (DIILS) contributes to DIB by promoting equitable and accountable defense and military justice sectors, civilian control of the military, and enhanced compliance with the rule of law and the Law of Armed Conflict, primarily through legal training and education workshops for U.S. defense partners.²⁹

Regional Centers for Strategic Studies (RCs): The five RCs include the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, the Near-East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, and the William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies. The RCs contribute to DIB efforts by conducting seminars through which military and civilian defense representatives from partner nations can discuss governance approaches to shared security concerns. The centers play a unique role for DIB, as their mandate allows them to convene not

²⁶ Activities funded by WIF are conducted using the authority of three statutes (10 U.S.C. 168, 10 U.S.C. 1051, and 10 U.S.C. 2010), of which Section 1253(a) of the FY2017 NDAA repealed 10 U.S.C. and 168. Section 1243(a) repealed 10 U.S.C. 1050.

²⁷ Defense Security Cooperation Agency, “Defense Institution Reform Initiative,” accessed September 10, 2018, <http://www.dsca.mil/programs/defense-institution-reform-initiative>.

²⁸ S. 2943, 114th Congress of the United States of America, *National Defense Authorization Act*, “§ 332. Friendly foreign countries; international and regional organizations: defense institution capacity building.”

²⁹ Defense Institute of International Legal Studies, “DIILS Charter,” accessed September 10, 2018, <https://globalnetplatform.org/diils/>.

only partner' defense ministry actors, but also actors involved in other aspects of the defense and security enterprise.

State Partnership Program (SPP) "links the National Guard of a State or territory with the military, security forces, and disaster response organizations of a partner nation in a cooperative, mutually beneficial relationship."³⁰ For the purposes of DIB, the SPP plays a role in addressing National Guard related strategic issues at the service and joint and general staff levels.

Why the U.S. Does DIB

At a time when tangential conflicts and threats originating far from the U.S. homeland frequently have direct consequences for the United States, its security, and its allies, the ability of countries to maintain their own security and stability is critical. Therefore, while the benefits of DIB to recipient countries is obvious, DIB also contributes directly to the national security of the United States in three major ways: sustaining security investments, increasing regional and global stability, and creating partners capable of sharing security burdens.

First, by increasing the partner's absorptive capacity, DIB increases the sustainability of U.S. security investments as well as the effectiveness of tactical and operational assistance. Without institution building, the following scenario frequently plays out:

... look to the example of security cooperation in the form of large-scale military equipment. Through FMF or FMS, the United States may, for instance, provide a partner with helicopters in order to assist U.S. forces in a specific mission to fend off an insurgent group. And indeed these helicopters may serve that short-term purpose. But if the country's military does not have functioning institutional logistics, resource management, and human resources systems, then that partner will not have access to the fuel to power the helicopters or the funds to buy fuel to power them, personnel with the knowledge to fix and maintain the helicopters, access to the unique parts necessary to fix them, or the funds to buy the necessary parts. And so those helicopters will most likely be rusting on the tarmac within a year.³¹

While training and equipping partners often serves U.S. interests in the short term, the partner's long-term capacity to counter threats and secure its population is not correlatively strengthened; equipment and training that fill short-term gaps do not result in the capacity to deliver and maintain security in the longer term. DIB thus complements the gains made by other capacity-building programs by increasing the partner's capacity to absorb and sustain assistance.

³⁰ National Guard, "State Partnership Program," accessed September 10, 2018, <http://www.nationalguard.mil/Leadership/Joint-Staff/J-5/International-Affairs-Division/State-Partnership-Program/>.

³¹ Alexandra Kerr, "Introduction. Defense Institution Building: A New Paradigm for the 21st Century," in *Effective, Legitimate, Secure: Insights for Defense Institution Building*, ed. Alexandra Kerr and Michael Miklaucic (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, November 2017), ix-xxvii, quote on pp. xiii-xiv.

What's more, DIB is a low-cost, small footprint, high gain undertaking; for example, the entire DIB program in Guatemala is estimated to have only cost around \$ 500,000 over 5 years, and depending on which activities are counted, DIB only makes up \$ 50-70 million of the DOD's approximately \$ 700 billion budget.

Second, DIB reduces state instability and fragility, which can lead to regional instability, internal conflicts (which can spread beyond state borders), terrorist safe havens, and ungoverned spaces that transnational criminal organizations can utilize – all of which threaten U.S. national interests and security. The establishment of functioning defense institutions increases stability by enhancing the partner nation's capacity to address its own security needs, protect its population, maintain governance, and ensure border security. DIB facilitates the pre-conditions for defense sectors to function as they should, and the resulting security allows governments and populations to focus resources on strengthening governance, civil society, rule of law, and economic prosperity – all of which are vital to long-term stability.

Third, by building long-term partner defensive capacity, DIB helps to create partners with the ability to contribute meaningfully to shared security interests with the United States and its allies. As the United States faces the increasingly complex security challenges of the 21st century, it must be able to rely on its partners and allies to share the burden of preventing conflict, ensuring lasting peace, and maintaining long-term stability. Assisting partners in their efforts to develop sustainable defense capacity is therefore vital to shaping the future security environment in the interest of U.S. national security.

Lessons

The United States has tested and developed approaches through the trial and error of mid-conflict, comprehensive rebuilding experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the implementation of less wholesale efforts in countries with higher baseline capacity, such as Guatemala or Colombia. Many of the lessons that have emerged from these experiences will echo those of our European counterparts: DIB is political, it needs people who will shepherd in the changes and push the reforms at the high-levels; Isomorphic mimicry often leads to “paper-tiger” institutions that appear effective in theory but are nothing of the sort in reality; Where DIB is needed most and the environments in which it is most likely to be implemented in the future, will be those in which it is most difficult to achieve success; In many defense sectors, corruption will present a major roadblock to change because it is an institution in and of itself because DIB works with imperfect actors in imperfect systems.

In a 2017 National Defense University book, *Effective, Legitimate, Secure: Insights for Defense Institution Building*, I identified three major lessons that are consistently raised by DIB practitioners when considering their experiences on the ground: First, the length of engagement and pace of change required to catalyze institutional change present an array of challenges for DIB activities. Every element of a DIB process—from the commitment of staff and funding, to long-

term planning and adaptation amidst changing political contexts, to determining effective parameters for assessments and evaluations—is set within a much longer time frame than other security cooperation activities. Second, DIB planners must find the best fit for the partner nation’s context, rather than finding the gaps in a preconceived template of best practice. It is critical to focus on customized plans for each country, informed by applicable lessons drawn from related experiences from a variety of sectors, and based on what is realistically possible in that socio-political and economic context. Finally, partner ownership is the most important element for the success of DIB. Institutions can only be built by those who use them; without ownership, reforms will not be absorbed or sustained.³²

What’s Next for U.S. DIB

The sections above give a waveltop view of the DIB enterprise within the United States, from its origins and evolution in the past ten years, to how DIB is defined, what it entails, who is responsible for its implementation, and why the U.S. undertakes DIB in the first place. Notwithstanding this progress, U.S. DIB is far from a perfected art and one that practitioners and policymakers are continuing to refine as more lessons are learned from implementing DIB on the ground. DIB efforts can be crippled by overambitious goals, inadequate budgets, unrealistic timeframes, lack of cultural appropriateness, competing goals and priorities, the wrong workforce, focusing too acutely on one institution instead of the broader system, and lack of coordination. These latter three are among the major outstanding challenges that U.S. DIB practitioners and policymakers are currently working to improve.

Training the DIB Workforce: Institutional capacity building is a complex undertaking that requires personnel with a specific skillset and knowledge base. Due to the bottom up nature of DIB, however, activities have primarily been implemented by technical practitioners, often contractors, with one functional area of expertise, such as Human Resource Management or Logistics. However, these experts rarely have the training to connect that technical area to the broader defense system, knowledge of change management, or the ability to create a version of that technical system that works for the context of the partner country (rather than mirroring a U.S. system or approach). For DIB to be successful, the DIB workforce must have the planning functions and capabilities necessary to ensure that both horizontal and vertical connections are made and reflected in DIB planning: “Tomorrow’s security cooperation workforce should have enhanced skills to engage partners on a broader range of training and equipping issues, and have significantly greater capability to diagnose institu-

³² Kerr and Miklaucic, *Effective, Legitimate, Secure*, xxiv-xxv, 364-367.

tional and other non-material gaps to support nuanced and thoughtful design of security cooperation programs.”³³

The Department is currently working to develop a cadre of key personnel in the DOD workforce who have the requisite breadth of experience and training to understand DIB both at the conceptual and technical level, and who can help the Global Combatant Commands fulfill their DIB directives. For example, training—including on the basics of institutional capacity building, how to conduct life-cycle costing exercises, and a focus on capabilities over individual platforms—must be updated for Security Cooperation Officers who are often the front line on the ground with the partner but who’s training currently focuses primarily on the material side of security assistance.

Creating a Holistic Approach: To date, DIB has focused on the strategic institutions of the defense sector, namely the ministry of defense, joint staff, or general command. However, the defense sector does not and should not operate in vacuum. The MOD interacts with the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Finance, and the Executive. Further, in many countries the lines between defense and security institutions is blurred or overlapping; for example, the French Gendarmerie. As the DIB discipline is improved and refined, it must consider the other institutions of governance that have a direct impact on the defense sector and determine how to build institutional capacity in a more holistic, perhaps even whole-of-government, manner. In the United States, one program that has piloted this approach is the State Department’s Security Governance Initiative (SGI).³⁴ Established in 2014, SGI aims to build security capacity in six countries in Africa by addressing the strategic and institutional reforms required for governments to tackle key security challenges, with an emphasis on enhancing the accountability, oversight, and transparency of both their internal security and external defense sectors simultaneously. Importantly and uniquely, SCG takes an interagency approach in how the U.S. delivers the assistance and a whole-of-government coordination approach in the partner country receiving the assistance.³⁵

Improving Coordination: On the ground, bilateral and multilateral coordination is a major problem for U.S. and non-U.S. actors. Coordination mechanisms and clearing houses have been tried, but thus far these have not worked or have fallen by the wayside. Coordination needs to be improved at every level: within

³³ David Cate, Alexandra Kerr, and Renanah Miles, “Way Ahead for Defense Institution Building,” in *Effective, Legitimate, Secure*, 382.

³⁴ Department of State, “Security Governance Initiative: Enhancing the transparent, accountable, and legitimate management and oversight of security policy and practice,” accessed September 10, 2018, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/254115.pdf>.

³⁵ U.S. White House Office of the Press Secretary, “FACT SHEET: U.S. Support for Peace, Security, and Countering Violent Extremism in Africa,” July 27, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/07/27/fact-sheet-us-support-peace-security-and-countering-violent-extremism>.

the DOD security cooperation community, across U.S. government agencies, among the international community (countries and international organizations), and even regionally. While the diversity of DIB stakeholders, competing priorities, and general difficulty of the undertaking militate against coordination, the stakes require the effort.

Disclaimer

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