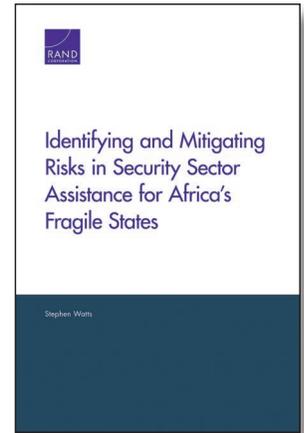




Identifying and Mitigating Risks in Security Sector Assistance for Africa's Fragile States

Stephen Watts

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The author explores the risks inherent in U.S. security sector assistance to the fragile states of Africa and how the United States might better anticipate and mitigate them. Often the countries most in need of assistance are those least able to make positive use of it, and such assistance can have negative second- and third-order effects. Recommendations are made for improving security sector assistance processes in Africa and elsewhere.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What risks does the United States face when providing security sector assistance to the fragile states of Africa?
- How can such assistance have adverse second- and third-order effects?
- How can these assistance risks be anticipated?
- How can these risks be mitigated?



KEY FINDINGS

Although the effects of U.S. SSA are generally positive in most partner nations, weak and autocratic states have trouble making positive use of assistance, which can even be destabilizing to them.

- The effects, however, are highly dependent on types of assistance offered and characteristics of the partner nation.
- Material assistance is more problematic than education or training.

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The literature describes a number of ways SSA can be destabilizing to fragile states.

- Undermining legitimate governance.
- Exacerbating inter-communal tensions.
- Diffusion of assistance to nonstate actors.
- Abetting abuses.
- Moral hazard.

Failure of SSA efforts can be harmful and costly to the United States.

- The United States can undermine its goals in the partner nation of interest.
- Domestic support of assistance policies may be undermined.
- The United States' ability to execute similar assistance policies elsewhere may be jeopardized.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop common “theories” of security sector assistance. It’s important to be clear on what changes the United States expects to see as a result of its assistance.
- Improve risk identification. Systematic identification and monitoring of risks is almost completely absent from current SSA processes.
- Improve planning to enable risk mitigation.
- Improve execution in ways that mitigate risks, including through improved regional awareness, the use of embedded advisers, and improved processes relating to the use of contractors.