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Peace, Security, and Crisis Management

German Priorities in the UN Security Council 2011/12

Elisabeth Schöndorf / Markus Kaim

Since January 1, 2011, Germany has been a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. It was elected to the most important UN body for a two-year term, together with Portugal, India, Colombia, and South Africa. As a member of the Security Council, Germany takes on a special responsibility for international peace and security. Yet Berlin will have little leeway to set its own course: The German agenda will be determined to a large extent by the Council's objectives as defined by the UN Charter, by the flashpoints of global politics, and by whatever crises develop during this period, as we are presently witnessing in the Arab world. On this background, it is all the more important for Germany to determine its priority objectives and to sharpen their strategic focus.

The Federal Government has listed five key priorities for Germany's membership of the Security Council: peace, security, and crisis management; issues with global relevance such as consolidating peace; humanitarian concerns; UN reform; and transparency and openness. What these topics will actually mean in practice is as yet undefined; for good reasons though as Germany's scope for action within the Security Council will be limited, both in terms of issues and in terms of the time available. The Council's "ongoing business" and the reaction to developing crises will fundamentally define Germany's tenure. This will allow little opportunity for Germany to underscore its own policy priorities. In addition, Germany will be required to take on an increased level of responsibility when it comes to im-

plementing Security Council resolutions. As the present debate on Libya demonstrates, the Council tenure may at times conflict with Germany's principle of promoting a culture of military restraint—an idea that Guido Westerwelle described as Germany's guiding principle at the start of its membership in the Security Council. In this context, however, it becomes even more important that Germany sets its strategic priorities straight and identifies the areas where it can have an impact. For a medium-sized power in security terms, a major international crisis is not a suitable priority; responding to such a crisis requires the whole range of instruments available to a major power. The most important criterion for setting Germany's priorities in the Security Council should

be whether, or where within the Council, Germany will be able to combine an existing Council focus on specific countries or crisis regions with its own foreign policy priorities. On this basis, Germany could develop a strategy that is in line with its size and resources.

What Germany can expect

According to Article 24 of the United Nations Charter, the Security Council has “primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.” If the Council identifies a risk to international peace or security, it has a range of instruments at its disposal in order to restore peace and security. It can impose political and economic sanctions or issue a mandate for peacekeeping operations or for the use of military action. The Security Council also plays an important role in containing and resolving regional conflicts.

The Council’s agenda is for the most part predetermined by the support and review of ongoing resolutions; the majority of the Council’s everyday work consists mainly of dealing with resolutions put up for renewal. Currently, almost 40 countries appear on the Council’s formal agenda. They include, for instance, Iran and North Korea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and Sudan, but also Afghanistan and Iraq. An important component of the Council’s work is to prepare resolutions on peacekeeping missions: there are currently 15 UN-led missions in operation around the globe. In addition, there are a large number of missions with a UN mandate being implemented by regional organizations or ad hoc coalitions. In 2011, the mandates for many of these will expire, among them the UN-led missions to Sudan (UNMIS, April 2011), Darfur (UNAMID, July 2011), and Lebanon (UNIFIL, August 2011)—all three of which are being carried out with the involvement of German personnel. Mandates for a number of regionally led missions will also expire, including the African Union-led AMISOM to Somalia (September 2011), the

EU police mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo EUPOL (September 2011), and the NATO-ISAF mission in Afghanistan (October 2011). The Security Council will have to pass resolutions on the continuation of these missions, on any changes of mandate, on whether they should be terminated, and on any follow-up measures.

But items on the Council’s agenda also go beyond individual countries or regions to focus on broader issues or areas where reform is needed. The Council is currently dealing with almost twenty different multidisciplinary topics, mostly contributed by the Council’s subordinate bodies such as sanctions committees and working groups.

New crises: In addition to ongoing business, the Security Council and thus Germany, too, will inevitably be confronted with upcoming crises. If there is a threat to, or a breach of, peace, or if acts of aggression take place, new resolutions on action to be taken will result. Apart from the upheavals in the Arab world that is on the front pages of newspapers all over the world right now, new escalations of violence continue to loom further south. Falling back on established indices and analyses by conflict research institutes, the likelihood of escalation in a number of conflicts is seriously increasing.

Over the course of 2011, high levels of tension can be expected in some of the African states in particular. In northern Nigeria, for example, ethnic and religious tensions persist between Muslims and Christians. Conflicts over the distribution of resources also persist, and these claimed a large number of victims in 2010. Elections are due to be held in April 2011; during the run-up, Nigeria may destabilize further. Unfortunately, this has already happened in Côte d’Ivoire; despite the presence of UN peacekeeping forces, tensions between rival presidential candidates led to instability in late 2010. As of February 2011, the situation has now become slightly more stable but remains precarious: Nigeria, as a member of the Security Council, has recently re-

quested the other members to authorize the use of force against the incumbent president Laurent Gbagbo. However, this has been controversial not only within the UN and the Security Council but also within the African Union (AU). In particular, South Africa, which is also a member of the Council for 2011/2012, has to date opposed such action. In the meantime, refugees have begun to flee the area. The situation in Guinea is similar: following presidential elections in November 2010, the question of who holds power has ostensibly been settled, but the relationship between the government and the opposition remains tense. Over the next few months the military, in particular, may act in a way that would escalate the situation. Finally, when southern Sudan separates from Sudan in July 2011 the violence between northern and southern Sudanese may escalate. In fact, it has already started.

Failing states: The expectation that over the next two years the Security Council will be confronted with security issues involving African states is reinforced if we turn to the phenomenon of failed and failing states. Such states can generate new crises or cause cross-border deterioration of existing conflicts in a variety of ways. States such as Somalia, Zimbabwe, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic are either no longer able to fulfill the central functions of a state or can do so only in certain limited spheres. In many cases, large areas of the state's territory are no longer under its control. Often, there are no peacekeeping operations present, or any that were in operation have ceased. If conflicts within such a state or states escalated, Germany would have to share in the decision about whether, to what extent, and by what means the UN should step in. Questions should always be asked about the appropriateness of the measures applied: depending on the characteristics of each crisis and on the context in which it is taking place, political action, mediation,

peace-building missions, or conflict-sensitive development aid may be more (or less) effective than sanctions, peace-keeping, or even peace enforcement. The permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council will be in charge of making the decisions on such questions.

Conflicts between and within states are taking place all over the world. The Security Council's ability to intervene is limited in many regions by the fact that one of the Council's permanent members prevents it, for differing reasons, from acting in a particular way. One example can be seen in US attempts to stop the Security Council from becoming involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Russia has sought a similar influence regarding the territorial conflicts in the post-Soviet region, which still have not been adequately regulated. As such, it is unlikely that the Security Council will play a significant role in helping to resolve these conflicts over the next two years. Thus, it would be foolhardy to expect that during the two years of Germany's membership, the Security Council might be able to untangle the Gordian knot of a number of conflicts that are a focus of German public interest because of geographical proximity or historical connections. In this sense, the German federal government was certainly well advised in publicly emphasizing the Security Council's fundamental role in securing peace without raising overly high expectations of possibilities for regulating individual conflicts.

Priorities:

What Germany should tackle

In general, elected members of the Council influence its work mainly by bringing forward cross-cutting thematic issues during the period of their presidency. Germany can expand its leverage within the Council by sharpening its profile in the course of the Council's daily work, for example, when the texts of resolutions are being drafted, and by forming coalitions for this purpose with other countries. Germany's

policy focus during its Council membership should be on two crisis regions: Africa and Afghanistan. In both cases, Germany's representatives will be able to exert some influence and should do so, especially when it comes to topics that are traditional German turf, such as the consolidation of peace. In addition, Germany should focus on helping to develop the UN's strategic and operative partnerships with the EU, NATO, and also with the G8 and G20.

Africa: The Council's Africa agenda for crisis management and securing peace, as outlined above, fits very well with German foreign policy and offers opportunities to build on existing achievements. There are two reasons for this.

First, Africa is a "regional focus" of German foreign policy, a region to which Berlin has paid considerable attention in the past, not just in terms of development policy and humanitarian issues, but also in terms of crisis prevention, crisis management and peace building. Initiatives such as "Peace and Security in Africa," launched by the federal government in 2007 following Germany's presidency of the G8, aim to improve Africa's own capacity to create and maintain peace and security. The aim is to help African states and organizations become capable of either preventing crises or dealing with them—where necessary with the help of peacekeeping troops from the UN or the AU.

Second, the Security Council's agenda in regard to Africa offers an excellent opportunity to bring the European Union's experiences and interests in security policy to the table, and to strengthen the EU's profile in this policy area. In December 2005, the EU adopted its first strategy document on Africa. Then in December 2007, at the Lisbon summit, it also adopted a Common Strategy jointly developed by representatives of the EU and the African states. Besides, Africa is a central concern in the Common European Security and Defense Policy, under which four civil and military

missions are currently in operation on the continent.

However, the fact that the UN and the German/EU agendas complement each other is not enough on its own. Potential synergies must be translated into coherent strategies and measures. This is particularly important in the case of **Sudan**. A southern Sudanese state is to be created in July in one of the biggest flashpoints in the region. In the course of this process, members of the Security Council will have to deal with a number of intricacies. These include the closely linked questions of defining the actual route of the border and determining how it will be monitored; political developments in northern Sudan; and issues related to oil supply, both nationally (as an area of potential conflict and of potential cooperation between the two states) and regionally (the role of the African Union), as well as internationally (the role of investors such as China and India, and the important role the north Sudanese regime plays in the US fight against terror).

Germany will be taking over the presidency of the Security Council in the same month that the new Republic of Southern Sudan is being formed. As such, it should work intensively to ensure that agreed positions are reached on all of these issues. It will be important, for example, that Germany, possibly together with other European states, initiates talks with India and China, both of which have major economic stakes in Sudan, on how to balance the different interests in the region. The G20 may also be utilized as a forum for finding a bargaining solution. Currently, nine of the G20 countries are members of the Security Council, including China and India. In the G20, in contrast to the Council, it may be easier to agree on packages to address economic problems at the level of the heads of state or government and to achieve accord among all those involved. Any political strategy of peace consolidation will be effective only if the members of the Security Council do not allow themselves to be played off against one another by the

northern and southern Sudanese governments. Germany has an interest in this strategy succeeding both for humanitarian and security policy reasons, but also because it has already invested considerable amounts in the Sudanese peace process in recent years.

What is certain is that the region will remain fragile and dependent on international help for many years. It is highly probable that the foundation of the new state will give lead to the deployment of a new UN mission. The Council should ensure that the mandate for such a mission defines both the more short-term peace-building activities needed and a realistic longer-term strategy for consolidating peace in southern Sudan. By contributing both personnel and equipment, Germany could underscore its readiness to shoulder responsibility in international security policy.

In the long term, Sudan and many other African countries will continue to need considerable financial support. Apart from the scope of the resources available, it is essential that they are reliable and accessible over the long term. In this regard, close cooperation with the G20 may be a useful approach. Sarkozy, currently acting as president of the forum, has recently announced that he wants to create “innovative financing” possibilities for long-term development-related tasks. Such mechanisms may be put to good use for peace building in war-torn societies in particular. Germany and France should work together and use their role as mediators—provided by their central role in the EU, the G20, the G8, and the UN—and attempt to ensure that these organizations coordinate their efforts in crisis management much more closely.

Afghanistan: Germany has been involved in Afghanistan on an ongoing basis since late 2001, investing huge resources both in military engagement (within the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force) and in economic cooperation, as well as in supporting effective governance. In this con-

text, it is both sensible and appropriate that Germany has taken on the role of the lead country for Afghanistan within the Security Council. This entails leading negotiations on all related resolutions and coordinating the Council’s meetings on Afghanistan. Germany also chairs the Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee, which can, for example, impose travel restrictions on extremists.

In March and October 2011, the mandates for ISAF and UNAMA, respectively, are due for renewal. The Council is expected to renew both. Germany has a particular interest in strengthening the UNAMA mission. According to its current mandate, ISAF is set to become less and less important moving towards 2014, when it is due to hand over control of security issues to the Afghan authorities. In tandem with this, the UN mission is to take on increasing importance. Under its two-pillar mandate, UNAMA is to support state institutions and constitutional government on the one hand, and economic reconstruction on the other. While the scandal around fraud in last year’s parliamentary elections has left its marks on the mission’s credibility, there is still no alternative to UNAMA. It plays an indispensable role in coordinating the reconstruction process and as an impartial negotiating partner; it is vital for all those involved in the political process of reconciliation among the Karzai government, the former warlords, and the rebels. For this reason, it is essential that UNAMA will play a major role in the strategy for the withdrawal of the multinational forces and that the Security Council will equip it adequately in terms of mandate and resources.

With the Afghan parliamentary elections having been held in September 2010, there is currently a hiatus in the election cycle at the central level. This means that UNAMA’s previous priority of assisting with elections is currently not required and that it may be ready to tackle further tasks. One area that is already included in the mandate but which should be worked out further in political and operational terms is the issue

of cross-sectoral regional cooperation. The current UNAMA mandate is still rather cautious on the task of promoting Afghanistan's cooperation with its neighboring countries. The Security Council should decisively strengthen this aspect. That said, the limits to the mission in this respect remain clear. First, UNAMA can only take a supporting role and must rely on the Afghans' willingness to engage in political dialog to end the domestic conflict. Second, neighboring states are unlikely to agree to the mandate being extended to cover their sovereign territory, even to a limited extent and even though this seems advisable given the regional dimensions of the Afghan conflict. Like the success of the ISAF, the effectiveness of the UNAMA mission will be determined by conditions that it cannot establish itself.

Allies on the Security Council: With regard to Afghanistan, the question arises of what potential allies Germany may have on the Security Council. In regional terms, India is heavily involved, but the focus of its policy on Afghanistan makes cooperation with Germany less likely. India sees Kabul in strategic terms as a lever to be employed in the India-Pakistan conflict, while Germany is attempting to ensure that any settlement of the internal Afghan conflict is securely embedded in the region—which would require a sustainable level of cooperation between India and Pakistan.

Over the next two years, Germany will also have to focus on ensuring that German and international policies on Afghanistan are placed on a stable and sustainable political foundation. If Karzai's government does take full responsibility for Afghan national security in 2014, the international assistance for the Afghan peace process needs to be restructured. For this purpose, Germany may choose to support the formation of a country group within the UN Security Council that may be assigned the task of coordinating the Afghanistan policies of the most important players after 2014. This should as well include some

countries that are not members of the Council, such as regional powers or major donor countries. Another forum where Germany will have the opportunity to put forward such ideas is the Afghanistan Conference in Bonn slated for November 2011. The goal of this summit, announced at the NATO conference in November 2010, is for participants to review the mission ten years after it was launched and to discuss issues arising in the near future: political reconciliation, promotion of inner-Afghan dialog, and the phase from 2014 onwards, in which responsibility will be passed to the Afghan authorities.

The lessons that NATO members will draw from the ISAF mission will have consequences that extend far beyond Afghanistan to influence the entire international crisis management system. If ISAF has to leave the country without having achieved lasting success, the North Atlantic alliance will, for a variety of domestic and alliance-policy reasons, be very reluctant to take on similar UN Security Council mandates in the future. Given that the number of crises requiring military action on behalf of the Security Council is unlikely to fall, this will put additional pressure on other players to realize such mandates. This will apply, in particular, to regional organizations such as the AU. To date, the AU has only been able to implement UN mandates in Africa at a rudimentary level (AMISOM in Somalia and UNAMID in Darfur). There is thus a danger that the activities of the international community to secure peace will be permanently weakened.

UN-NATO: Given this background, it is even more important that the relationship between the UN and NATO should be strengthened, independently of any particular mission. Since the Bosnian war of the early 1990s and negative experiences with unclear or weak UN mandates, NATO keeps a close eye on any mandate debates within the Security Council. But neither is there any kind of "NATO caucus" in New York, nor any kind of coordination process

remotely similar to the intensive consultation that takes place among EU member states. That said, the creation of such a process is highly unlikely anyway. The NATO states are anxious to avoid the impression that they are acting as a bloc within the UN; there is a justifiable fear that this would have a polarizing effect. From a German point of view though, it is unsatisfactory that the three NATO states that are permanent members of the Security Council—the US, the UK, and France—regard themselves as the natural intermediaries between the two organizations. As such, they are not strongly inclined to involve other NATO states in negotiation processes within the Security Council.

Conclusions

It is hard to predict what events or developments will shape the next two years of activity in the Security Council. When Germany last entered the Council, 2003/2004, the situation was different. At that point it was evident that the conflict between Iraq on the one hand, and the US and a number of supporters on the other, would escalate into violence. The Schröder administration joined the Security Council at a time when its work was dominated by an agenda focused on conflict: alongside complex political issues around the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (or the limitation of these), it was concerned with questions of the legitimacy of military action. Whatever one may think of German policy during the 2003 Iraq conflict, it is clear in retrospect that the stance taken by Germany within the Security Council had an influence on many different areas of policy and bilateral relationships (in particular with the US administration of the time).

There are currently no signs on the horizon of any similar development. It is possible that in retrospect, those observers who believe that the influence that any one state can exert is limited will have been proven right. Care should be taken, they

argue, not to raise expectations, either within Germany or abroad, about the extent to which German policymakers will be able to shape the agenda of the Security Council during Germany's membership; many decisions taken by the Council are simply a continuation of ongoing processes. There is only very limited scope for action by individual countries—especially by the non-permanent members.

On the other hand, it is certainly correct to assume that German hopes of having an increased say in the UN's main decision-making body ("more German foreign and security policy") will imply higher expectations and also greater responsibilities. If German policy is to develop a clear profile, it will be vital that when dealing with the crises that are brought to the Security Council, Germany asserts those goals and values that it feels define its own foreign and security policy: a commitment to multilateral action and to enforcing constitutionality and human rights; a focus on consolidating peace, preventing crises, and protecting civilians in armed conflicts; and the primacy of diplomacy.

In addition, Germany now has an excellent opportunity to make use of its membership in the Security Council to achieve its own security policy objectives and priorities. The current Council is probably the "strongest" that has ever convened: for the first time, all of the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) and the IBSA countries (India, Brazil, and South Africa) and thus important regional powers are members, as are major troop contributors to UN missions, major donor states, and almost all of the members of the G8. In addition, nine of the fifteen members of the Security Council for 2011/2012 are also members of the G20.

Germany should help to ensure that this Security Council seizes the opportunity to prove its capacity to act decisively and effectively by setting the course of debate on conflicts and on reforms. This also means continuing to develop partnerships with regional organizations, as well as creating

synergies with the G8 and the G20—with the G8 mainly in the area of international security, with the G20 on economic and development questions affecting the reconstruction of fragile states. This would both render the UN's crisis management more effective and it would establish the UN and the Security Council as still the most important multilateral institution for the twenty-first century. At the end of the day, if visible progress is made towards these goals, this will be the best argument for the expansion of the Security Council, for which Germany continues to campaign.

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