

# US and German Civilian-led Efforts in Conflict and Fragile Contexts:

Addressing Internal Challenges to Improve Impact

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## What is the policy brief about?

This brief takes a close look at the government responses of Germany and the United States to conflict and crises around the globe and examines some of the internal challenges that inhibit both countries' ability to implement conflict mitigation and prevention programs and ultimately their ability to deliver effective foreign assistance abroad. This brief makes recommendations in light of four core obstacles that must be addressed if both nations want to improve their foreign assistance delivery and help to stabilize and transform conflict in fragile contexts.

## Why is the topic relevant?

In light of today's fundamental shift in global security concerns, the world is facing new and growing threats to not only national security but to human security writ large. The persistent conflicts in the Middle East and Afghanistan, conflict in Northern Africa, and the global threat of terrorism that underpins much of these conflicts are just a few examples of distant unrest that is having impact and repercussions around the world. Globally, both the US and Germany are leading foreign assistance donors and both have become increasingly aware of how remote conflicts and crises in fragile states can, now more than ever before, pose a major threat to their regional and national security interests; in response, both the US and Germany have evolved their policies which clearly articulate conflict mitigation and prevention in fragile contexts as a top foreign

policy priority. There are, however, many challenges and obstacles that limit the ability of leading donors like the US and Germany to have an impact in such contexts. Not only are there numerous external factors (which are largely out of the donor-government's control) that influence the ability to impact a given situation, but there are also a slew of internal obstacles that prohibit action or prevent more successful interventions abroad. It's these internal challenges that both the US and Germany can influence and must tackle if they are to have more of an impact on preventing and responding to crises and, in turn, impacting and contributing to overall regional and global security. As we enter 2017, the fundamental question will be how the US and German foreign policies will unfold under new administrations. In a divided Europe and an even more divided US, the West now looks to Germany to lead the effort to preserve peace, security, and global democratic values.

## For whom is it important?

This policy brief addresses concerns relevant for both the US and German governments, development bureaus, and policy makers. In addition it can be relevant to other donor countries who struggle with similar challenges in adjusting their development programming to act and respond to new security concerns and shifting global dynamics – many of these challenges are not specific to only Germany or the US. Furthermore, the brief is pertinent to those actors – such as implementing partners, non-governmental NGOs, foundations, and INGOs – who work closely with aid donor governments, diplomatic actors, and defense ministries who are on the front lines implementing projects in fragile contexts.

## Conclusions

- ≡ **Responsiveness vs. prevention:** Investment needs to be made into better strategizing, constant information gathering and analysis.
- ≡ **Risk-taking in a risk-adverse environment:** Both nations must find ways to embrace the idea of risk taking, working with incomplete information, and daring to innovate if they are to achieve their goals in fragile environments which by nature are unpredictable, complex, and ever-changing.
- ≡ **Resources to match the policy imperative:** More people and money are needed to achieve ambitious mandates. More specifically qualified staff needs to be hired for the right positions and the transfer of knowledge and analysis must be improved. There further needs to be a shift in where resources are spent (for example, more money should go towards conflict/governance programming and creating appropriate mechanisms). On top, a heavy dose of realism is necessary on what can reasonably be achieved.
- ≡ **Working across interagency boundaries:** High level, interagency coordination is crucial. Staff must find ways of connecting with like-minded and like-mandated government counterparts across all agencies. They must also break-down decades-old agency barriers and focus on forging personal relationships both in the capital, but more importantly in the field where programming is happening and analysis is best obtained. Coordination will improve overall program effectiveness and learning.

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# 1 Introduction

Stabilization and conflict mitigation efforts on behalf of governments, NGOs, foundations, and other small community-based organizations are in high demand due to the prevalence of conflicts and state fragility around the globe. The sheer scale of such fragility worldwide is troublesome and varies in degree of severity. Based on indices for risk of instability, the Fragile States Index lists every nation against a number of indices and then ranks the states according to alert level.<sup>1</sup> For 2015, the index ranked 38 countries under the “alert”, “high alert”, and “very high alert” categories.<sup>2</sup> If one adds the “high warning” and “warning” nations, the list of countries that exhibit some level of fragility or proneness to conflict jumps to over 100.<sup>3</sup> *This means that 60% of the world’s countries exhibit at least some type of conflict to warrant minimal to grave concern.* If we turn to other such rankings like the International Institute for Strategic Studies which monitors active conflicts around the world, then we see there are currently 40 states experiencing ongoing active/violent conflict.<sup>4</sup> Although these numbers are eye-opening, we do not need statistics to tell us this; the impact of violent conflict and the devastation that is portrayed in the news media has sadly become something that we see, read, or hear about on a daily basis.

Leading donor nations such as the US and Germany have been playing an increasing role in helping nations alleviate the consequences of conflict and crises and in helping to prevent further conflict or backsliding; however challenges to these efforts abound. While this policy paper concentrates on Germany and the US as cases, it can be argued that the challenges discussed in this brief may also be applied to other leading Western donors. The hard fact is that many from the UN to the US struggle with stabilization and conflict mitigation and prevention due to an abundance of not only external factors – such as complexity of the environment and operational constraints – but also due to their own bureaucratic, internal challenges – on which this paper focuses.

The US foreign policy approach is often criticized – its civilian aid is viewed as having too many strings attached, its development assistance as being too political, and its civilian Defense Department efforts as being uncoordinated and not thought through. The new administration is unlikely to create a sea-change in this respect. In contrast to the US, Germany, for many years, has shied away from being in the limelight and plays its hand in conflict and crises much more subtly and carefully and for good reasons. However, Germany too has faced criticism – both internal and external – about its undefined foreign policies and lack of political leadership in taking more of a role in conflict prevention and stabilization (and in turn global security more broadly). This is changing, however. Often labeled a reluctant leader, Germany finds itself more and more wedged between its past and embracing a more dominant leadership role for the first time since the Second World War.

Despite major historical differences which have impacted policies for decades since WWII, both the US and German conflict and crisis intervention policies are now converging more than ever; and even though there are differences in approach and organizational structure and culture, ultimately both nations’ foreign policy priorities revolve around improved global security. Interestingly, both Germany and the US are encountering similar challenges when it comes to actually implementing their policies, which, this brief argues, prevents better programming and foreign assistance efforts. This policy brief focuses on four key internal challenges confronting both the German and US governments (but which are within their control to influence) and lays out recommendations on how to change their foreign assistance efforts for the better.

<sup>1</sup> Fragile States Index is produced annually by Fund for Peace. Some of the indices used by the FSI include: ongoing conflict, proximity to neighboring conflict, levels of poverty, and other socio-economic factors to name a few.

<sup>2</sup> 2015 Fragile States Index – Fund for Peace. <http://fsi.fundforpeace.org/rankings-2015> [accessed on 14 May 2016].

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies. Armed Conflict Database. <https://acd.iiss.org/> [accessed 14 May 2016].

## 2 Responsiveness vs. prevention

One of the major internal challenges the US and German governments are facing concerns the struggle between reactively responding to conflict and stabilization needs and the desire to work proactively to prevent crises and conflicts. This struggle, in turn, affects what kinds of, and how much, development assistance follows. Leading Western donors like the US and now – to an even greater extent – Germany, are under regional and global pressure (and to a degree internal pressure) to act not just when there is a major crisis like Syria, but to also analyze and think more critically about how they can help *prevent* further crises and backsliding of nations coming out of conflict. The challenge with this, however, is that justification of spending is easier when there is a crisis at hand compared to the justification of spending on a problem that *may* become a future conflict or crisis. There are nuances to this, but this is a harsh fact of government foreign policy priority setting and spending.

Both nations have stated that prevention and better anticipation of conflicts is at the center of their foreign policy.<sup>5</sup> However, this is much easier said than done. The challenge here reveals itself in the decisions on where development assistance dollars are spent. For good reason, the US and Germany fund programs and spend money where the need is greatest. To put it bluntly, the most pressing crisis or conflict will get the most attention and usually the most resources. Smaller conflicts and crises that are not as dire – and are not as significant geopolitically – simply do not have the political imperative to pull in major donor funding or attention from busy bureaucrats dealing with an array of foreign security issues.<sup>6</sup>

There are a number of factors at play here. It's a question of resources (both human and financial), an information gap problem, a lack of capacity to tackle the overwhelming number of crises, and it's an operational issue – working in conflict and crisis environments is logistically and operationally taxing on staff and organizations. It's also an issue of geopolitics; how relevant the conflict or situation is to regional and national security plays a role in what crisis takes priority, and it is also a question of how the nature of bilateral relationships affects donor involvement. The outcome of all of these interrelated factors is thus complex, and countries have to assess all of these factors before engaging. So how can both nations better address crisis prevention and help stem the tide of possible conflicts?

As major Western donors, the US and Germany must learn to balance the imperative to respond to the next “crisis du jour” (with consideration to all the issues above) with the need to use foresight, analysis, and strategy to discern which regions and countries to engage with on more preventative action. If both nations want to do more on the preventive side, rhetoric must match action, and we are not quite there yet. This means having not only a national strategy, but visions and strategies at the ministerial and departmental levels that help the designated decision-makers make their decisions, which is ultimately attached to allocating funding. However, beyond the development and – importantly – the implementation of such strategies is the need for trusted information and analysis that can help inform strategy and planning, and ultimately decision-making. Departments in charge of stabilization and crisis-spending in both the US and German governments need access to this trusted analysis (or need to do their own analysis) in

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<sup>5</sup> The US Bureau for Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) mission is to “advance the Department of State’s understanding of violent conflict through analysis and planning; monitoring, evaluation, and learning; and targeted, in-country efforts that help the U.S. government anticipate, prevent, and respond to conflict and promote long-term stability”. Source: US Department of State (CSO homepage) <http://www.state.gov/j/csos/> [accessed 31 August 2016]. The recent Review 2014 process within the German Federal Foreign Office, placed prevention even more squarely within its new mandate and vision. “We want to act earlier, more decisively and more tangibly – not only during acute crises, but also increasingly in the prevention and after treatment of conflicts.” Source: *Review: Crisis, Order, Europe* (Germany 2015, p. 9) <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/cae/servlet/contentblob/699442/publicationFile/202977/Schlussbericht.pdf> [Accessed 31 August 2016].

<sup>6</sup> As the stats in the introduction show, there are simply too many conflicts and not enough resources on the part of any one government to tackle alone. Emergencies, major conflicts like Syria and Afghanistan, and crises in counties most geopolitically relevant to the US and Germany will garner the most assistance.

order to make better informed decisions. This is especially true when it comes to assistance and program development that is more preventive in “less geopolitically important” countries – where buy-in by interagency stakeholders and those who hold purse strings (like the US Congress) is harder to achieve. In order to have access to better information and analysis, decision-makers and program managers need to first and foremost get on the ground and find ways to triangulate information from multiple sources or work through trusted partners. Governments need to reach out to other departments internally and put aside internal politics to plan strategies more openly. More importantly, resources need to be dedicated to following the current trends and analysis, as program managers are too busy managing current programs to spend their days assessing potential new crises.

Unfortunately, the reality is that convincing decision-makers to devote spending to countries that are not high on the list of political priorities is a difficult task. But the US and Germany must devote time and resources to assess and learn in order to have the foresight into how smaller crises can manifest into bigger regional issues if they are not addressed. For the US this has become a leading factor for justifying preventative programming – to prevent the spread of conflict and insecurity. Moreover, these departments must then use this analysis to convince policy makers and those holding the purse strings to take a risk and spend funds on smaller, less dire crises that could ultimately become the major conflicts that donors will then be scrambling to fix.

### 3 Risk-taking in a risk adverse environment

A second major challenge facing both the US and Germany’s abilities to act more proactively and successfully in fragile environments is the extent to which both countries are prepared to take on risk. These risks could be political in nature (taking on programs in a politically sensitive environment like Libya or Yemen for example), financial (funding projects which will be programmed in highly corrupt and operationally expensive environments), or programmatic (taking on sensitive programming which may work with nascent actors in some of the most dangerous regions). Risk-taking is vital in politically instable and challenging operational environments like the ones found in many countries in which both Germany and the US provide assistance, and daring to do projects in sensitive geographic zones, or taking on security risks or some combination of these is a part of this work. Conflict-prone or politically-fragile contexts are in themselves fluid environments that are often rapidly changing or appear deceptively stable on the surface but could become volatile overnight. Operating in such environments requires certain types of programs that are designed to be flexible and that should also be prepared to take on a certain level of risk. The core challenge here is for Germany and the US to be able to embrace this culture of risk in order to deliver the kind of assistance that will stand up to complex and unpredictable conflict environments while at the same time trying to minimize fraud, waste, and abuse.

Taking on a more risk-taking mindset can manifest itself in several ways, but fundamentally, it means that the program or assistance and those managing these programs need to embrace new ways of doing things. For example, they should take on a culture of innovation, and not be afraid to experiment with projects in order to test and learn about what types of interventions and assistance will work best in such rapidly changing contexts. Unfortunately, this way of doing business runs antithetical to bureaucratic systems that often face slow internal procedures, complex contracting rules and regulations, restrictions on who can and cannot receive government assistance, and decision-makers who do not understand the

conflict environments that demand out-of-the-box thinking. Moreover, it's understandable why the US and Germany would want to be risk adverse. For one, both nations must be responsible stewards of their tax-payer's money; but second, good development practice also stresses the need for carefully thought out, locally-driven, and respectful interventions that are well managed. But risk-taking does not have to mean carelessness or running programs that are not responsible to the communities in which they are implemented.

Both Germany and the US have developed special units<sup>7</sup> within their foreign offices which are mandated to help tackle crisis challenges around the world, but more could be done to develop a culture of innovation and risk within these organizations. Interestingly, these special units were designed outside of the mandate of each government's development ministry (the BMZ, or Bundesministerium für Entwicklungszusammenarbeit, and the United States Agency for International Development). The idea behind this is that assistance that is inherently political is in essence under the mandate of those within the government who set policy, namely the diplomatic arm of the government and not the development agencies. The BMZ and USAID also have dedicated sections which focus on peace, security, and conflict programming (and in the case of the US these programs often bump into one another in the field).<sup>8</sup> There are also other bodies within the government that are heavily involved in peacebuilding and conflict mitigation such as the defense ministries and other smaller State Department offices which specialize in counter terrorism.

Broadly speaking, these aforementioned offices should find means to develop their own culture of risk-taking. This could mean cultivating unique partnerships on the ground that allow for further reach into communities, forward-deploying and dedicating staff to the field to closely manage programs, applying an in-kind assistance mechanism that could cut down on potential for fraud, or investing in smaller projects that build upon one another so as not to put too much "risk" into any one project. These smaller projects can also allow for piloting and testing to see what works in such turbulent and unstable environments. Mechanisms which allow for smaller-scale projects that do not require fixed work plans and activity schedules can allow for testing projects at lower risk – from both the financial and programmatic perspectives. This means decision-making powers must be relegated to the field, and not dictated or designed back in Berlin or Washington. It also means that the US and Germany need partners on the ground who are also willing to take on such risks and challenges and who have a similar mindset.

In my observations, departments that take on this type of work need to be created with a fundamental culture and risk-taking mindset from the very beginning – it must be a part of the identity of the organization, and it's important to find supporters internally who back this mission. This type of work is not traditional development work, which is one argument for creating units within foreign ministries. Nevertheless, the work is development work at heart but with a need to be faster, more flexible, more nimble and more experimental than the usual tried and tested education or health programs. But there is no tried and tested stabilization program. Therefore, the risk-taking mindset must be rooted in the belief system of the organization, and this culture must be nurtured by leadership over time.

All of this is easier said than done. But the US State Department and German Federal Foreign Office must at least begin to adopt these good practices if their efforts are to generate impact and success.

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<sup>7</sup> The German unit on "Krisenprävention, Stabilisierung und Konfliktnachsorge", otherwise known as Abteilung S, is still a fledgling organization in its second year, and the Bureau on Conflict and Stabilization Operations in the State Department, started in 2004, still struggles to fulfill its mandate as coordinator of stabilization operations across the US government and has since lost significant funding and much of its programmatic ability due to poor management of program funds. The US Agency for International Development's Office of Transition Initiatives has managed to find a good balance of tackling new and creative ways of doing programs, while at the same time minimizing the risks that such environments create. Yet since its inception in 1994 a growing sense of risk aversion within the government writ large and amongst implementing partners has grown as conflicts and interventions have become more complex, remotely managed, and dangerous.

<sup>8</sup> Both the US and German development ministries have been programming in such contexts for decades, and the development practitioners within these bureaus (and within the German-owned implementing partners GIZ and KfW) have decades of conflict experience. GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH) is a German-government owned development company that is 20,000+ strong worldwide. KfW (Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau) is a German-owned development bank which functions as a lending bank and implements infrastructure projects on behalf of BMZ. In the case of Germany, humanitarian assistance is run out of the Foreign Office while in the US it is mandated under USAID.

Otherwise efforts will be limited and linked to global mechanisms that are too large, too cumbersome, and have minimal effects on the ground.

## 4 Resources do not match the policy imperative

One of the biggest challenges in this line of work is in essence a two-fold problem: 1) there remains a mismatch in what is desired, by foreign policy makers and pressure from the global community, and what can actually be achieved and accomplished, due to unrealistic expectations, and 2) a lack of resources available to deliver upon these policy imperatives. Both the US and Germany have explicitly stated their focus on amplifying civilian efforts in order to promote peace and security abroad, but they have, in turn, placed an enormous amount of expectations on their civilian institutions to act and achieve results. The available resources do not allow for delivering the ambitious mandates of national strategies and policy imperatives. Furthermore, there are simply too many crises in the world and too many places that need assistance. So how can there be a better and more realistic balance?

The most obvious solution here would be to demand more resources – both people and funds – in order to deliver on the policy demands around the world. Both Germany and the US fall below the 0.7% target the UN sets for Official Development Assistance spending as a percent of Gross National Income – with Germany ranked higher in spending than the US (0.52% vs. 0.17% respectively).<sup>9</sup> While foreign assistance spending can indeed go up for both nations, conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, have shown – to the US in particular – that more money and people thrown at a problem is not necessarily the solution to better programming and response.

While there should be more funding directed at foreign assistance for conflict mitigation and crisis prevention, it would be even more advantageous for governments to be smarter and more strategic about the types of programs funded and the types of mechanisms utilized to get these programs off the ground. As an example, the US spends roughly a quarter of its foreign assistance budget on “Peace and Security” programs; however, only a fraction of this is allocated to “Conflict Mitigation and Reconciliation” work. The bulk of funds earmarked for peace and security goes to “Stabilization Operations” which are categorized as bigger conflict operations such as Syria or Afghanistan, and are not necessarily geared towards smaller crises.<sup>10</sup> The notable outlier in foreign assistance spending is how little the US spends on “Democracy and Governance” programs – on average only 7% of the total foreign assistance budget (which again is only less than 1% of the national budget).<sup>11</sup> There are of course many reasons for conflicts and fragility within nations, but much instability can be traced back to governance issues, and ironically, the US only spends a fraction of foreign assistance dollars towards helping what can be deemed as a major factor in political instability.

Besides better allocated funding, staffing is another resource equally as important. Staffing offices with qualified and experienced people who are trained in development program management is vital. Managing conflict sensitive programs requires staff with certain skill sets and mindsets. It should not be underestimated that managing and designing development programs is equally as challenging as the

<sup>9</sup> Official Development Assistance <http://www2.compareyourcountry.org/oda?cr=oced&lg=en> [accessed 1 September 2016]

<sup>10</sup> Map of Foreign Assistance Worldwide <http://beta.foreignassistance.gov/explore> [accessed 1 September 2016]

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

diplomatic savvy that State and Foreign Office officials must possess, therefore one cannot expect diplomats to become development experts overnight and certainly many development practitioners cannot develop the ability to negotiate with host nations without training and practice. But if the US and Germany want to place what are inherently development functions within their diplomatic mandates, then they need to gain or borrow the resources that will help them manage stabilization and conflict programming. This is done to some extent through secondments of GIZ or USAID staff to BMZ or State Department respectively; however, such secondments are the exception and not the rule. To the detriment of programs, there is precious little transfer of knowledge between the seasoned development ministries and the newly created departments.

Perhaps the German government is less challenged by this than the US, but both nations can make bigger impacts when they capitalize on particular moments or windows of opportunity in the political/security context.<sup>12</sup> Intervening in conflict or crises at the wrong time will only waste time and resources. Taking advantage of windows can help capitalize on moments of change. Furthermore, the US, more so than Germany, needs to manage expectations and set more realistic objectives in the countries in which they operate. It is a heavy responsibility that both nations take on in any given context. There needs to be a humble assessment of the context and what limits outsiders have in making impact and influencing outcomes. Being realistic in objectives and goals can help create better, more targeted programming and resources.

## 5 Working across interagency boundaries

Conflict mitigation, stabilization, and crisis prevention programming are mandated in all three of the main US and German government pillars which are dedicated to foreign affairs: democracy, development and defense. Since crisis prevention and stabilization are such important cross-cutting issues across all ministries,<sup>13</sup> coordination and comprehensive approaches are necessary, but different organizational mandates and missions make this task complicated and sometimes downright frustrating.

While it is clear that both governments are making great strides in diversifying their crisis prevention and stabilization operations across ministries (for better or for worse), the challenge is now coordination and coming up with a more comprehensive approach. It's important to coordinate for several reasons. For one, better coordination at headquarters leads to better planning and strategizing, and on the ground coordination can ensure better programming. Embassies are full of many government agencies and actors, and without some semblance of coordination, departments would be stumbling over one another and potentially doing more harm than good. These actors also have their own comparative advantages, and building strong personal relationships across agencies helps with the sharing of information and analysis and capitalizing on strengths, which will lead to better decision-making and ultimately better action on the ground.

Both the US and German governments can do better at this. Organizationally, the German Government in some ways faces bigger challenges with regards to interagency planning and coordination. In Germany both the BMZ and the Foreign Ministry largely operate in silos, according to the "Ressortprinzip" (departmental principle) which enshrines departmental independence in the constitution.<sup>14</sup> In the US, USAID formally sits under the management of the State Department and must operate under the broad policy guidance that it

<sup>12</sup> For example, the Arab Spring offered a window of opportunity for widespread change that had not been there before. These are opportunities in the political space that allow for the most potential for change and influence.

<sup>13</sup> See footnotes 7 and 8 which detail the various departments working on this cross-cutting theme.

<sup>14</sup> Patrick, Stewart and Kaysie Brown 2007. *Greater Than the Sum of its Parts? Assessing "Whole of Government" Approaches to Fragile States*. New York: International Peace Academy, p. 110.

sets. Departmentally the ties are much closer in the US, making it harder for USAID to act independently from State. Either way, interagency coordination and designing a comprehensive approach is difficult.

Better approaches can be achieved if organizations can look past and understand differing cultures and rivalries. This can be achieved to the greatest extent in the field, where programs are implemented and coordination is easiest. To a large extent, better approaches boil down to personal relationship building. Staff on the ground need to be open to sharing information and working together – a trait that is not necessarily imbedded into government culture. This means adopting a team approach based on the need to achieve a common mission rather than interagency competition. Good leadership should help set this example. Cross-organizational secondments can help bridge interagency understanding and cooperation. While comprehensive approaches and coordination have their limits (especially in Berlin or Washington), the field can hold the key to fostering this relationship building if staff are willing to devote the time and if leadership sets the tone of a common mission and shared learning.

## 6 Conclusion

Conflict mitigation and prevention assistance in fragile states has become a cornerstone to US and German foreign policy – especially as it relates directly to national and regional security interests. The crisis in Syria has brought this policy to bear as the ripple effects of war are now being felt in Germany and throughout the wider European Union. The US has perhaps felt the urgency to act for longer as direct attacks like 9/11 have now given way to remote conflicts whose spillover effects are no longer regionally contained and manifest themselves through other means. Globalization, the internet, and new forms of communication have allowed for more connectivity, which fosters the spread of terrorism, conflict, and un-democratic ideals, and renders borders more porous than ever.

Both Germany and the US – and other like-minded allies – are strikingly aware of how conflict and crises around the world pose a major threat to national and regional security. Yet they are grappling with how to intervene effectively in such complex contexts. A focus on reforming and tackling key internal constraints within the bureaucratic system, however, can help both nations to more effectively engage with countries experiencing ongoing conflict, crises, and fragility – notwithstanding the array of external factors that can contribute to ineffective interventions.

Again, these challenges are not easy to tackle. First, both nations struggle to find a balance between responding to the “crisis du jour” and finding the time and money to develop ways to engage in prevention and deterrence of conflict elsewhere. Second, the need to engage in complex and fragile environments calls for a certain degree of risk-taking, and developing and nurturing this mindset is antithetical to government ways of doing business. Third, the need and policy imperative is greater than the resources allocated to act. At the same time, however, resources allocated are often not intelligently utilized, managed, or put into the right mechanisms. Finally, coordination and comprehensive approaches across agencies also remain elusive due to competing interests and internal rivalries.

The US and Germany have their work cut out for them. The external and internal hurdles are numerous, but both countries have made strides in changing policy; they have endeavored to coordinate despite the cultural and bureaucratic stumbling blocks, and Germany and the US have both been calibrating their policies and actions in ways that are heading in the right path. It will be key, however, to hone in on core internal challenges if either nation endeavors to seriously tackle and make progress in safeguarding human security and peace globally.

As we enter 2017, however, the fundamental question now will be how the US and German foreign policies unfold under new political administrations. For Germany the verdict is still out, but what is certain,

is that the early signs from the Trump Administration do not bode well for improved transatlantic relations nor toward devoting billions to conflict prevention and stabilization efforts – except when it appears to benefit US interests only. With the rise of right wing populism in the US and in Europe, there is much at stake in the upcoming German election. In a divided Europe and in an even more divided US, the West now looks to Germany to pick up the baton – and lead the effort to preserve peace, security, and global democratic values.

## 7 Recommendations

- ≡ **Responsiveness vs. prevention:** Dealing with the root causes of conflict requires better strategizing and utilization of analysis based upon triangulation of information from multiple sources if both countries want to reach success in crisis prevention. In the end, constant analysis and information begets strategy, focus, and better planning and engagement overseas. More money and people are needed. Still more importantly, the right people placed in the right departments and appropriately directed funds into better mechanisms will produce better design and programming in the long run.
- ≡ **Risk-taking in a risk-adverse environment:** Both nations have prioritized engaging in crisis and fragile contexts, therefore, they must find ways to embrace the idea of risk taking, working with incomplete information, and daring to innovate if they are to achieve their goals in fragile/precarious environments which by nature are unpredictable, complex, and ever-changing.
- ≡ **Resources to match the policy imperative:** Pressure from policy makers to act and achieve results does not match the resources allotted to these fragile contexts. Not only are more people and money needed to achieve ambitious mandates, but there needs to be a shift in where resources are spent – for example more money towards conflict/governance programming. There also needs to be more staff in general as well as specifically qualified staff in the right positions, and an improvement in the transfer of knowledge and analysis. The right type of mechanisms put in place are just as crucial along with a heavy dose of realism on what can reasonably be achieved.
- ≡ **Working across interagency boundaries:** High level, interagency coordination is needed beyond only when the “crisis du jour” calls for it. Staff must find ways of connecting with like-minded and like-mandated government counterparts across all agencies, break-down decades-old agency barriers, and focus on forging personal relationships both in the capital but more importantly in the field where programming is happening and analysis is best obtained. Coordination will improve overall program effectiveness and learning.