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Negotiation of front ends and back ends in NATO military advisory missions

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In this paper, we explore the development of Western military missions, examining the shift from 'winding down large-scale boots-on-the-ground multinational missions' to a lighter military footprint, characterised by more distant security force assistance (SFA). Specifically, we focus on advisory and capacity-building activities in Iraq, concentrating on the day-to-day work conducted in NATO Mission Iraq (NMI). Drawing on a field study that includes interviews with mission participants, documents, and observational data, we investigate the activities of NATO personnel in NMI, illustrating how a diverse range of individuals collaborate on complex tasks within a limited timeframe, presenting various organisational and strategic challenges. Using Anselm Strauss's negotiated order perspective, we analyse how the mission's nature entails ongoing negotiations centred around mission objectives and end state (including purpose complexity and host nation development), mission progress and success measurement (including assessing 'what' and determining for 'whom'), as well as broader professional role competencies (such as military skills, subject-matter expertise, and English language proficiency). This paper contributes to current literature on military missions and civil-military relations by addressing the structural and contextual conditions that influence negotiations among participants in the NATO workforce. It represents an endeavour to comprehend the challenges faced by successful military advisory missions, considering NATO's unique character and the limits of military expertise.

What discipline or branch of humanities or social sciences do you identify yourself with?

Organization theory/Organizational sociology

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No, I am submitting a Closed Panel abstract

Are you a PhD student or early-career researcher?

No

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