

## From Behind the Scenes to Center Stage: Enhancing Germany's Role in International Peace Mediation

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Germany has long recognized the importance of civilian crisis management and has supported the enhancement of relevant instruments. Thus far, Germany's engagement in mediation has focused primarily on support functions, such as capacity development of and financial support for international organizations' mediation efforts, as well as political support. However, in its new foreign policy guidelines released last year, Germany committed to further expanding its mediation capabilities, including through increasing its direct participation in mediation processes. With high expectations on the part of the international community on Germany taking a more prominent role on the global stage, Germany is right to take a measured approach to its ambitions. This Policy Briefing outlines some fields in which Germany is already active, as well as five key areas where Germany should focus its efforts in order to prepare itself for a more visible role in international peace mediation.

### Mediation in the German Foreign Policy Context from 2004 to Now

With the adoption of the 2004 government Action Plan "Civilian Crisis Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Post-Conflict Peace-Building", Germany placed civilian crisis management tools, including mediation and mediation support, in a wider frame of foreign and development policy. The plan acknowledged the important role of non-governmental actors in conflict transformation, both in Germany and internationally. Accordingly, the plan primarily focused on supporting mediation and mediation support efforts of civil society actors on track 2 and 3 through institution and capacity development, financial assistance and logistical support.

Following the 2014 foreign policy review process, the government took another step to strengthen

its civilian crisis prevention and response capacities. As part of this effort, the Federal Foreign Office (FFO) set up the new Directorate-General "S" for Humanitarian Assistance, Crisis Prevention, Stabilization and Post-Conflict Reconstruction, which consolidated existing capacities in these areas under one roof.

In June 2017, the German government released its new "Guidelines on Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace". In the new guidelines, civilian conflict management efforts, including peace mediation and mediation support activities, are seen as a priority for Germany's foreign policy. Specifically, the government declares its commitment to "further expanding its mediation capabilities and to intensifying its involvement in mediation processes in the future," including through:



- Financial and conceptual support of mediation processes, as well as the long-term development of the UN's and other partners' mediation capacities;
- Possible direct participation in mediation processes;
- Support for inclusive dialogue processes and the equal participation of women – both as mediators and as part of negotiation parties;
- Appointment of Special Representatives and Special Envoys to strengthen high-level diplomatic crisis engagement.<sup>1</sup>

## Different Forms of German Mediation Activities<sup>2</sup>

### Financial and Logistical Support

Germany provides financial support to international organizations' mediation efforts. For example, in 2017 Germany was the single largest donor to the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) which leads the UN's mediation efforts around the world. Germany also provided substantial funds to DPA in support of the Office of the UN Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, the disarmament process in Colombia and the constitution-making process in Yemen.<sup>3</sup> Germany is also one of three main funders of the OSCE Mediation Support Team within its Crisis Prevention Centre (CPC).

Germany has also provided logistical and technical support to the African Union's (AU) mediation efforts in Sudan. Here, the German government also cooperated closely with civil society organizations and think tanks in a multi-track approach. In addition to this collaborative effort, Germany also funds a number of mediation projects by non-governmental organizations on track 2 and 3 for example in the Balkans, Nepal, Ukraine, and Yemen.<sup>4</sup>

### Capacity Development and Institution Building

Through the Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF), the Federal Government, supports the work of Mediation Support Teams and respective staff in peace operations of the OSCE and EU by

seconding German mediation experts to these teams from ZIF's expert roster.

In addition, Germany's development cooperation agency, the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), has been supporting the African Union towards the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), including in the establishment of mediation support structures.<sup>5</sup> Through different formats and activities, GIZ and partners help strengthening respective mechanisms for civilian conflict resolution, among them the so-called AU Panel of the Wise or the FemWise network of women mediators.

### Political and Conceptual Support

Germany provides political backing in support of peace processes and their implementation. With the 2015 appointment of Tom Königs as Special Envoy for the Columbian peace process, Germany sent such a political signal to the conflicting parties, while at the same time giving assurance that Germany was a reliable partner. During the deployment in 2008 of German Minister of State Gernot Erler as expert adviser to the mediation team of the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation under the leadership of Kofi Annan, Mr Erler provided technical expertise on forming grand government coalitions to Kenya's conflicting parties – a model which the parties adopted for the first time on the African continent later that year.

### Direct Participation

Thus far, examples of German direct participation on the highest political level in international mediation processes are few and far between. The first time Germany took the lead in resolving a major international crisis was in 2014, when Chancellor Angela Merkel led the EU diplomatic efforts in resolving the Ukraine crisis as part of the so-called Normandy format. A less prominent example is the engagement of the German diplomat Bernd Mützelburg who was appointed in 2009 as Special Envoy to Afghanistan. In this capacity Mr Mützelburg supported the efforts to

<sup>1</sup> Federal Government's Guidelines on Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace, pp. 77 and 116.

<sup>2</sup> The mentioned activities constitute selected examples and do not provide a complete picture or list of all areas and activities Germany contributes to.

<sup>3</sup> UN DPA Multi-Year Appeal 2018-19, p. 36. Available at [www.un.org/undpa/resources](http://www.un.org/undpa/resources).

<sup>4</sup> [www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/themen/krisenpraevention/6-projektbeispiele/-/229930](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/themen/krisenpraevention/6-projektbeispiele/-/229930).

<sup>5</sup> [www.giz.de/en/worldwide/15657.html](http://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/15657.html).



establish direct talks between the Taliban and the US government, including through mediation efforts with representatives of the Taliban leadership.

## Towards a More Active Role in Mediation Processes

Germany's economic strength, long-term engagement in international development, its own national experience and post-war history, as well as its limited colonial history is seen by many international partners as the right mix for a role as honest broker.

With the goals laid out in the mentioned government guidelines, Germany has set itself ambitious but not unrealistic goals to increase its role in international peace mediation. But Germany is right to take its time before bursting on the international mediation scene, where expectations as to its performance are immense. There are five key areas that Germany needs to pursue simultaneously in order to position itself as a mediator in its own right on the international stage.

### 1 Professionalization of Mediation Support Structures

The FFO has been undertaking significant steps to further professionalize its staff in the field of mediation and mediation support. This includes the internal restructuring and creation of the Directorate-General "S", training activities for staff starting with modules within its preparatory service for the higher diplomatic service, a joint Swiss-German course for mid-career diplomats and a peer coaching series on mediation and diplomacy for senior diplomats.<sup>6</sup> The German government has also been open to drawing on the extensive experience of German non-governmental mediation and mediation support actors with a view to increase access to practitioners' knowledge for representatives of the FFO.<sup>7</sup> These activities do not only foster a better understanding of the instrument of mediation and its comparative advantage, but also impart relevant tools and skills such as mediation-oriented conflict analysis,

communication micro-skills and process design approaches. In order to enhance strategic entry points for German mediation engagement, these activities should be targeted specifically towards embassy staff in conflict countries in which Germany has an interest to get engaged.

Following the example of international organizations and partner states, the FFO strives to build mediation support structures to create an internal resource that is able to assist German mediation efforts, either through its embassies or other government or non-governmental actors. These resources should be properly institutionalized in order to increase their acceptance within the wider system.

Effective mediation requires continued engagement of key interlocutors to inspire confidence and trust. A temporary suspension or exemption of the rotation system for diplomats actively engaged in mediation processes should be considered. Alternatively, Germany could continue working with external actors as proxies in mediation processes but not without sacrificing the benefits of a direct participation, including the opportunity to increase experience-based learning for its diplomats.

### 2 Fostering Strategic Engagement

All capacity building activities should be embedded in a strategic framework that clearly and consistently defines areas, countries or subject matters in which Germany would like to increase its engagement. This would also include a selection of mediation projects that reinforce Germany's strategic interests and to free up resources of respective internal structures to take over more targeted mediation support activities. Furthermore, German foreign policy would benefit from a clearer definition of its strategic niche in the crowded mediation field. Rather than conducting this assessment from Berlin, the government should be making use of German diplomatic missions as well as NGOs or other German representatives active in the field (such as staff of multilateral peace operations and/or organi-

<sup>6</sup> For more information on these initiatives: [www.zif-berlin.org/en/focus-areas/peace-mediation-mediation-support.html](http://www.zif-berlin.org/en/focus-areas/peace-mediation-mediation-support.html).

<sup>7</sup> To further enhance this exchange and with the aim to contribute to strengthening peace mediation as a German foreign policy tool, five German mediation and mediation support organizations formed the Initiative Mediation Support Deutschland (IMSD) in 2013: [www.peace-mediation-germany.de/imsd.html](http://www.peace-mediation-germany.de/imsd.html).

zations) for identifying mediation entry points and options for early diplomatic engagement. A subsequent step would include defining Germany's comparative advantages and specific capacities, like economic power and long-term engagement through development activities, in order to avoid duplication or hampering existing activities of other actors already engaged.

The appropriate reference document would be a mediation and mediation support strategy paper that could build on the commitments of the 2017 guidelines and combine them with specific activities, tangible priorities and a longer-term operational perspective. Given the importance of non-state actors, including jihadist and terrorist groups, in today's conflicts and their resolution, the strategy paper could also provide guidance on how – if at all – Germany would be engaging with these hard-to-reach actors as part of a mediation process.

### 3 Enhancing Long-Term Funding Structures

Recognizing the long-term nature of mediation engagements, Germany has to devise effective funding policies that allow financing respective activities over medium and long-term time horizons. Already the 2004 government plan recognized the importance of placing mediation and mediation support in a wider frame of cross-ministerial foreign and development policy. Following up by closer linking the financial resources of German foreign policy and development cooperation with mediation engagements to ensure the continued support of long-term mediation efforts and/or their implementation would be an important step in the effective use of available financing mechanisms over a longer period of time.

### 4 Building a Personnel Resource of Mediation Experts for a Multi-Track Approach

Effective mediation interventions are often characterized by their multi-track nature, addressing conflict causes and manifestations as well as conflict mitigation and management approaches at all levels of the respective society in conflict. Thus, in order to provide an effective and sustainable contribution, Germany should continue pursuing a multi-track approach in all its peace mediation activities.

A multi-track approach requires a readily available, pre-selected and trained personnel resource of mediation and mediation support experts that can be deployed to any mediation assignment, whenever and wherever required. This resource should comprise diplomats of the FFO and other ministries or members of the German Bundestag with suitable profiles mainly for activities on track 1. In addition, the personnel resource should also comprise of representatives of NGOs and think tanks to cover other tracks.

The commitment in the new government guidelines to enhance the participation of women, both as mediators and as part of negotiation parties, can further help to close any existing gaps. Germany can usefully build on other governments' initiatives here, such as the Nordic Women Mediators group and the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network.

### 5 Developing a Communication Strategy

Mediation engagements particularly in the early stages often take place under the radar, away from the spotlight. Confidentiality and the building of trust in the mediators and between the conflicting parties are key aspects of a successful mediation and are best fostered away from public scrutiny. However, Germany should use the explicit public support for civilian crisis management to ensure broad political support for its mediation undertakings. Creating a communication strategy explaining to the German public where the government is engaging, as well as how and why, would not only help foster the continued support of the population in the time of political division, but also build the necessary public understanding as to the importance of supporting civilian efforts to achieve lasting peace and prevent future conflicts.

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