

PRESS RELEASE  
21 November 2018

## International Conference \ “Stabilization—For Whom and to What Ends?”

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“Stabilization” is becoming increasingly important as a guiding principle in international security and development policy. Different controversial approaches to stabilization are discussed in academia, policy and practice. Often, it is about the tension between safety and security, order, peace and human rights. This controversy was also the topic of the international scientific conference that the peace and conflict research institute BICC organized on 20 November 2018 in Bonn.

In three parallel topical groups, the participants exchanged views on “Peacekeeping and Military Intervention”, “Train and Equip Programmes and Security Sector Reform” and on “Migration Management and Humanitarian and Development Aid”. The leading questions of the conference formed the basis for discussion:

- \ What is our understanding of stabilization? Who or what is meant to be stabilized, and to what ends?
- \ How does stabilization work in practice? What are the concrete means and practices of stabilization?
- \ Does the growing significance of stabilization imply abandoning support for democracy and human rights, instead focusing on the establishment and maintenance of order?

Three parallel discussion groups on Iraq, Syria and Mali also followed these questions.

Esther Meininghaus, Katja Mielke and Max Mutschler who had the leading role in organizing this conference pointed out as one important insight gained during the conference that a clear definition of the term “stabilization” was missing. The attitude of actors depends on their very interests, such as the interest of strategic intervention. **“As long as the term stabilization can be understood in such broad and unclear terms, it is difficult to assess ‘success’. To be able to do this, there needs to be more empirical research”**, the BICC researchers underlined. Another deficit of stabilization is the fact that local concepts and theories are not sufficiently included but that the perspective of the donor prevails. **“The question of local legitimacy of stabilization offers a mixed picture. While the training of security actors may well be a positive, the fact that these actors are not trusted by the local population and even perceived as a security threat represents a huge problem”**, the researchers stress.

**“Stabilization is faced with a dilemma: One has to cooperate with local actors; these actors, however, often profit from the fact that structures are maintained that foster conflicts in the first place”**, Esther Meininghaus, Katja Mielke and Max Mutschler sum up.

Among the around 80 participants of the BICC conference were peace and conflict researchers and representatives of think tanks but also experts from international non-governmental organizations as well as representatives from federal ministries and the German Foreign Office. Participants from Belgium, France, Great Britain, Lebanon, Mali, The Netherlands, Canada, Turkey, the United States and Germany took part in the discussion at the interactive conference, which was funded by the Foundation for International Dialogue of the Savings Bank in Bonn and the Deutsche Stiftung Friedensforschung (DSF, german foundation for peace research).