Security Sector Governance and Reform

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What is meant by security sector governance and security sector reform?

Security Sector Governance (SSG) refers to the structures, processes, values and attitudes that shape decisions about security and their implementation.

Security Sector Reform (SSR) aims to enhance SSG through the effective and efficient delivery of security under conditions of democratic oversight and control. SSR offers a framework for conceptualising which actors and factors are relevant to security in a given environment as well as a methodology for optimising the use of available security resources. By emphasising the need to take a comprehensive approach to the security sector, SSR can also help integrate a broad variety of actors and processes.

The diversity of involvement in SSR has led to many different, and sometimes conflicting, approaches. However, there is an emerging consensus that governance is an essential component of SSR programmes and that, to be effective, sub-sector programmes need to take into account linkages among different actors within the security sector and integrate them into programming. For example, police reform can have significant implications for the operation of courts and prisons. And, in conflict settings, in particular, police and military need to work closely and effectively together if stabilisation and reconstruction programmes are to have a chance of succeeding.

SSR is most often used as a platform for reform in fragile and post-conflict states, and in countries transitioning from communism or authoritarian rule. This Backgrounder takes a more generic approach by including the efforts of developed democracies to optimise the management, efficiency and accountability of their security sectors.

Different actors involved in SSR often use different terms. Some prefer the term "security system reform." Others juxtapose SSR and justice reform, or consider SSR and rule of law as interdependent variables. This Backgrounder will use SSR as short-hand to capture all these different approaches.

What groups and institutions play a role in the security sector?

For the purpose of this Backgrounder, the security sector consists of all organised groups in society that are capable of using force, as well as the institutions and actors that manage, direct, oversee and monitor them, and otherwise play a role in the development of a country's security policy and the provision of its security. This includes a wide range of actors, including:

- **statutory security services**: those that provide security and have a mandate to do so from a state authority;

- **executive and civil management jurisdictions**, the head of state and/or government and the ministries that manage and give direction to the security services. This category includes the so-called "power" ministries (such as defence, interior and foreign affairs) as well as ministries that play an important supporting role in a country's security. These include those responsible for areas such as planning or finance, as well as government departments responsible for areas such as transport, health and immigration that do not traditionally or primarily have a security function, but which may sometimes need to assume certain responsibilities in this area;

- **the legislature** and the legislative committees that develop security sector legislation, authorise related expenditure and oversee the statutory security services, as well as the executive and civil management bodies that supervise them;

- **the justice institutions** that defend and interpret the laws under which the security services operate. In many states, traditional justice systems exist alongside state judicial institutions and may enjoy more credibility;

- **civil society organisations**, including such actors as the media and non-governmental political, religious and social organisations that can have a role in monitoring security sector performance, informing and educating the public about security developments and providing policy advice to the government. In some countries, the business community also plays an important role in developing security policy (under conditions that are often less than transparent) protecting vital infrastructure, carrying out humanitarian actions in troubled or post-conflict societies and supplying materiel;

- **non-statutory armed formations**, i.e., private military and private security companies (see the DCAF Backgrounder on PMSCs) and community self-defence groups that operate in traditional societies, as well as actors such as organised criminal and terrorist groups that seek to undermine or destroy the state;

- **independent oversight agencies**, financed by government but usually only reporting to parliament, such as ombudspersons, human rights commissions and anti-corruption agencies.

- **external actors**, such as national donors, international and intergovernmental organisations supporting SSR or otherwise involved in security affairs, criminal and terrorist groups, and the security forces of foreign countries.

For more detail, see the generic security sector map on page 3.

Executive bodies

- the president and/or prime minister
- national security advisory bodies
- the "power ministries" (defence, internal affairs, foreign affairs)
- the justice ministry
- other ministries with a supporting role in security matters, e.g., transport, immigration, agriculture
- financial management bodies (finance ministries, budget offices, financial audit and planning units)
- other civilian executive authorities that direct, manage and oversee the security forces

Legislative bodies

- parliament and select committees of parliament overseeing the security forces and security policy

Justice institutions

- the courts
- criminal investigation and prosecution services
- customary and traditional justice systems
- other legal institutions that work to ensure that the constitution is respected, the rule of law supported and human rights safeguarded

Statutory security services

- the military
- police
- gendarmerie
- presidential guards
- intelligence and security services, both military and civilian
- prison guards
- coast guards, border guards, customs authorities
- reserves and local security units
- civil defence forces, national guards, militias
- other security services with a state mandate to use force

What groups & institutions play a role in the security sector?

Non-statutory armed formations

- liberation and guerrilla armies
- private bodyguard units, political party militias
- private security companies and private military companies (in most countries)
- criminal groups
- terrorist organisations
- other non-state groups with a capacity to use force but without a state mandate

Civil society organisations

- media
- think tanks
- political parties in their capacity as generators of security policy
- the business community
- other non-governmental organisations involved in monitoring the security sector as well as developing policy advice, disseminating information and conducting educational activities of relevance to the security sector

External actors

actors from the seven other categories, based abroad and often represented in the country, such as:

- intergovernmental organisations
- national donors
- international non-governmental organisations
- private military and security companies
- foreign security forces with/ without a legitimate stationing mandate
- criminal groups
- terrorist groups

Independent oversight agencies

structures financed by government but usually only reporting to parliament, such as:

- ombudspersons
- human rights commissions
- auditing boards
- anti-corruption agencies
- procurement agencies

SSR in South Africa

In the process of democratisation that began after Apartheid, the key security sector challenge was to ensure that the country's security formations would come to be seen as institutions serving the entire population rather than only a minority, as had previously been the case. To this end, an inclusive and participatory SSR process was launched that was nationally led and implemented. The principles that guided the process included: respect for national and international law, transparency, subordination of security actors to parliament and the executive, political neutrality and non-discrimination, promotion of regional and international security, and respect for the human rights of armed forces personnel.

Dialogue and consultation across a wide range of actors, in government, civil society and with international experts, provided the basis for a generally successful process. Thus, despite some shortcomings in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programming (which saw, for instance, former personnel of the South African National Defence Force take lucrative jobs with PMSCs in violation of South African law), the case of South Africa is widely considered to have been a success, one which serves today as a leading example throughout the region of local ownership "done right." The reality of present-day South Africa underscores, however, that effective SSR is a lengthy process that needs to be complemented by a variety of reform measures in other sectors of state activity and, in particular, the economy.

What factors have driven the emergence and evolution of SSR?

SSR is a relatively new term, having only been coined in 1998. However, some of the considerations giving rise to the SSR concept date back to the beginning of the post-Cold War period, and elements of SSR can be found in the approach of the World War II Allies to Germany and Japan.

Essentially, five factors have spurred the development of SSR.

1. **Changed understanding of security** after the end of the Cold War. In particular,

   - security policy went from having an almost exclusive focus on state and regime security to embracing the well-being and protection of the population as a central concern, thus giving rise to the concept of human security;

   - internal and external security risks and threats increasingly came to be seen as part of a single continuum.

2. **Emergence of security – development nexus**. Traditionally, development actors had tended to ignore the role of the security sector in a country's development or to concentrate on the issue of how spending on security reduced the resources available for development. Through experiences, such as in Somalia in the early 1990s, development donors understood that their efforts on behalf of development required a secure environment. The notion that development and security are interdependent factors thus emerged.

3. **Enlargement of Euro-Atlantic institutions**. Organisations such as the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), involved in supporting the transition from authoritarian rule in communist Europe realised that, to be successful, this process required security sector reform. In 1994, this led to the OSCE developing a Code of Conduct on Political-Military Relations, which mainstreamed the idea in Europe and the US (and later further afield) that all security services, not just the military, had to be under democratic control.

4. **Co-location of security and development actors**. In the second half of the 1990s, development and security actors worked shoulder to shoulder in places as diverse as Sierra Leone and Bosnia-Herzegovina. This gave a further push to the notion of a security-development nexus. It also gave birth to the idea that, in order to stabilise a conflict, and prevent a return to large-scale violence, donors had to help enhance not only the capacity of the security forces but also their accountability to the population and its representatives.

5. **Transnational terrorism**. In what is still a highly tentative development, mature democracies have begun to realise that counter-terrorism efforts mean SSR is no longer only relevant for developing and transition countries, but also needs to be a policy priority at home.

Why does a country need a well-governed and efficient security sector?

There are several reasons why a country needs a well-governed and efficient security sector.

- **Human Security and Human Rights.** From an SSG perspective, security is first and foremost about protecting society and, only as a function of that, the state. A state will not be able to deliver acceptable levels of security to its population and safeguard human rights unless its security forces can operate effectively and under democratic control.

- **Rule of Law.** To ensure that society's rules are observed, it must have an enforcement capability that is – and is perceived to be – both efficient and fair.

- **Development.** SSR aims to ensure that the appropriate level of resources is attributed to the security services. Too many resources might mean too little goes towards economic development; too few probably means that the security services will not be able to provide the protection and stability necessary for development.

- **Democratisation/democracy.** A functional security sector is a precondition for democratisation. If a country's security forces are dysfunctional, democratisation can be postponed, derailed or reversed. A developed democracy whose security forces are dysfunctional runs the risk of "de-democratisation."

- **Regional stability.** A country with a dysfunctional security sector can have a destabilising impact within its region. In contrast, SSR carried out with a regional perspective can help support national reform efforts as well as inspire confidence among neighbours.

- **Integration.** In the EU and NATO processes of enlargement, a key consideration in decisions about membership has been the state of an applicant's security sector. Explicit or implicit conditionality pertaining to the security sector has been an ever constant factor, from the general provisions

about the democratic governance of institutions formulated in the EU's 1993 "Copenhagen Criteria", through to the more specific criteria formulated in NATO's Membership Action Plan of 1999. Such considerations tend to be much weaker in the approaches of other regional organisations.

- **Contributing to international stability through participation in peace support operations (PSOs).** In today's globalised security environment, countries are called upon to contribute to regional and global efforts to prevent conflict, and to restore and protect the peace. This requires a cooperative and mutually reinforcing response by states, which in turn has major implications for how their security forces are managed, equipped, trained and governed.

SSR in Northern Ireland

SSR in Northern Ireland focused primarily on the issue of representation in, and accountability of, the security services. Much of the attention in this regard was directed at reform of the police, who were perceived to be biased and representative of only one community. Following the Belfast Agreement of 1998, an independent commission was tasked with providing "a new beginning to policing." The Commission made 175 recommendations about policing in Northern Ireland, which included proposals on the composition, size and structure of the Police Service. Following the report, a new uniform, badge and name was given to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), providing a clear break from the past. New accountability structures were also developed, including a Policing Board, a Police Ombudsman's Office and the twenty-nine District Policing Partnerships, thus creating for the first time an open dialogue on security issues. The result of these radical measures was the creation of highly transparent and accountable police structures. While policing remains a contentious issue in Northern Ireland, the representative nature of the new service heralded a breakthrough in relations between the security services and the public.

What are the main features of the SSR approach?

- **Holistic.** SSR assumes that security has to be understood and addressed holistically, taking into account all the institutions and actors that play a role in a country's security.

SSR in Ukraine

There has been a great deal of SSR activity in Ukraine since the country became independent in 1991, when it found itself with no army and no central organs of command. This is due in large part to NATO-Ukraine partnership programmes such as the NATO-Ukraine Joint Working Group on Defence Reform and the NATO-Ukraine Intensified Dialogue. These frameworks have provided permanent consultation mechanisms for Ukraine's defence and security sector reform process and, in particular, for efforts to develop parliamentary oversight and democratic control of the security forces. Considerable progress has been made in enhancing transparency in the activities of Ukraine's security forces and the efficient use of resources allocated to the security sector. The last few years have witnessed the adoption of the country's first ever National Security Strategy, the 2006-2011 State Programme for the development of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, two editions of the Defence White Book, the White Book on the Security Services and Intelligence Agencies in Ukraine and, in 2007, a comprehensive security sector review. Some progress has also been made in broadening the role of national media and NGOs in SSR, but there is a lack of the necessary expertise within civil society for it to be able to play a meaningful role in the reform process. At the same time, some major non-military structures, such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs, remain virtually unchanged since the early 1990s.

- **Integrated**. SSR brings together a diverse range of, often otherwise unlinked, interests, concerns and activities that need to be considered within an overarching policy framework.

- **Focused**. SSR programmes do not have to encompass all actors and dimensions of the security sector. They do, however, need to be designed and implemented in full awareness of the complex inter-dependencies that characterise it. Having the correct focus usually presupposes a rigorous assessment process prior to programme development and implementa-tion.

- **Tailored**. In SSR, context is everything. Programmes need to suit the country's situation and local conditions.

- **Prioritised**. SSR programmes cannot tackle all the problems that a security sector faces in one go. Priorities need to be set in line with available entry points, political circumstances, resource envelopes, etc.

- **Sequenced**. Priorities need to be sequenced. Decisions have to be taken about which actions need to be undertaken first and which can be relegated to the medium or longer-term.

- **Locally Owned**. SSR programmes need to be designed, delivered, evaluated and monitored by local actors. There are situations, however, where local actors are too weak or discredited to play this role. In such cases, external actors may have to assume temporary control over the security sector and reform programmes. In any event, the conditions under which resources are dispensed for SSR need to be subject to a transparent accord between those providing external support and local actors.

- **Monitored**. SSR programmes need to be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that objectives are being met and to carry out, as necessary, corrective measures to address changing circumstances.

- **Sustainable**. SSR programmes need to be cost-effective and commensurate with the implementing country's resources.

- **Evaluated**. SSR programmes should be subject to a thorough review once programme implementation has ended, with lessons learned being effectively fed into other SSR processes.

Who implements and supports the implementation of SSR?

The main players include:

- **national governments:** SSR is a key tool of development policy in a growing number of mature democracies such as the UK, Netherlands, Canada, Sweden, Switzerland and Norway. In addition, there are transitional and developing democracies that have taken the lead in a national process of SSR, e.g., South Africa in the 1990s and Indonesia more recently;

- **non-governmental and civil society organisations:** these cover a broad range of actors. For example, some of the most important NGOs and CSOs involved in SSR education and training are gathered together in ASSET, the Association for Security Sector Reform Education and Training (see: www.asset-ssr.org) an open and voluntary association of organisations and institutions worldwide. By encouraging the delivery of high quality SSR education and training, ASSET supports the development of SSR capacity within governments, donors, security sector institutions, parliaments, non-governmental bodies and international and regional organisations;

- **private military and private security companies**, PMSCs have also been involved in delivering programmes designed to build capacity for the security sector where democratic control and oversight tends to be the exception, not the rule; in Afghanistan and Iraq, they constitute the second largest contingents of foreign personnel;

- **traditional security services and elites** such groups can play an important role in the security sector of developing countries. Often, however, they are not taken adequately into account by SSR programmes;

- **intergovernmental organisations (IGOs)**, including such regional and sub-regional organisations as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the EU, NATO, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe, the Stability Pact, the African Union and the Economic Organisation of the West African States (ECOWAS), as well as the United Nations and its affiliated bodies. IGOs are often involved in national reform programmes and tend to play a leading role in conceptualising and implementing the SSR agenda. For example, the agreement reached at the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 2004 on key principles of SSR set the stage for a rapid increase in interest in this approach on the part of other IGOs. (See the Backgrounder on SSR and Intergovernmental Organisations.)

SSR in Indonesia

Efforts to reform the security sector in Indonesia began after the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998 and the subsequent withdrawal of the Indonesian armed forces from politics. Ten years later, however, much remains to be done. In 2007, the Indonesia Institute for Defence and Strategic Studies Almanac on Indonesian Security Sector Reform called for SSR efforts to prioritise the professionalisation of security institutions, especially the Indonesian Military (TNI), the National Police (POLRI) and the Intelligence Services (BIN), and their subordination to civilian authority. This will involve modernising the state's security governance structure and assuring the security forces' withdrawal from the commercial activities in which they became involved during the Suharto era. There is also a need for an expansion and consolidation of democratic oversight of the security sector, an increase in accountability and transparency across institutions, and an enhanced role for civil society in reform efforts.

ISSAT: a new addition to the SSR community

The International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT) is a multi-donor initiative developed at DCAF that brings together policy and operational SSR expertise from the developmental, security, defence and diplomatic domains. It aims to provide the international community with comprehensive advice on supporting SSR and assisting bilateral and multilateral actors in developing, designing and implementing SSR strategies, practices and programmes in line with international good practice. Working through ISSAT, members strive to enhance coordination and harmonisation across the international community (see: **www.dcaf.ch/issat**)

Further information

This Backgrounder is based primarily on the research and writings of members of the DCAF Research Division, and particularly material from the DCAF Yearly Book series which can be consulted at www.dcaf.ch/publications

Acknowledgements

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