



General Major Patrick Cammaert, Dutch Commander of the Eastern Division of the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), talks to General Agolowa of the Congolese armed forces, which receives training from MONUC.

Sven Torfinn, Panos Pictures, 2005

Promoting peace and democracy through security sector reform

Since the late 1990s, security sector reform (SSR) has emerged as a principal activity for promoting peace and stability. The SSR concept has a four-fold heritage:

- the traditional **civil-military relations approach**, developed in the 1970s, focused on the need for armed forces to be supervised by civilian authorities
- the **democratic control approach**, developed in the late 1980s, stressed the importance of going beyond civilian control to focus more broadly on democratic control, transparency and accountability mechanisms
- the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's **OSCE approach**, and the adoption of the 1994 'Code of Conduct', which expanded the democratic control approach to non-military security forces such as police and paramilitary forces, and intelligence services
- a people-centred **human security perspective**, introduced in the 1990s, which established links between the security system and society-at-large, focusing on threats to individuals' socio-economic and political conditions, and on communal and personal safety.

Experts from academic centres, think tanks, international organisations, governments, advocacy groups and non-governmental organisations have converged to consider the role of security forces in enforcing state and human security. By supporting these networks, the UK has played a leading role in formalising the SSR concept, which was officially endorsed by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) in 1997.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) has adopted guidelines and political and operational principles relating to SSR. In its approach, SSR seeks to increase security forces' abilities to meet a range of security needs, consistent with democratic norms and governance, transparency and legal principles. SSR extends beyond the narrow focus of security assistance on defence, intelligence and policing. Instead, it adopts a comprehensive and coordinated approach to reforming various sectors of the security system: defence, police, justice, parliamentary and public security oversight; transparency in defence budgets; and respect for human rights in the exercise of functions.

Accordingly, the overall purposes of the SSR concept include:

- enforcing both state and human security
- improving armed and security forces' efficiency by reinforcing their professionalism and ethics
- promoting democratic governance of the security sector, by supporting the institutions responsible for supervising security institutions (including parliaments, independent institutions such as ombudsmen, the media, auditors and civil society)
- developing a holistic, comprehensive approach to SSR by coordinating reforms – at national and international levels
- encouraging partner country ownership.

SSR is often criticised for being an ideal standard rather than an operational concept. It is also often seen to be primarily donor-driven. The most significant reason for donor agencies to engage in SSR is the prospect of reducing conflicts and its potential to reduce poverty. Consequently, donors' support to SSR processes has been focused on post-conflict environments. In recipient countries, operational challenges include the financial cost of reform, lack of donor coordination and coherence, difficulties in evaluating SSR, and lack of capacity and expertise.

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Eboe Hutchful, professor of African Studies at Wayne State University, in the USA, provided academic advice for this issue of *insights*. He is also the Executive Director of African Security Dialogue and Research in Accra, Ghana, and Chair of the African Security Sector Network.

The integration of development actors in the security debate has also led to disagreements due to conflicting agendas. **Medhane Tadesse's** article draws attention to the pivotal role played by non-African actors such as the United States African Command (AFRICOM), through which the USA is trying to push its anti-terrorism agenda. European actors, including the European Union and the UK, with less controversial agendas, are also major stakeholders of SSR processes on the African continent.

Yet, other articles in this issue of *insights* demonstrate that, far from being exclusively driven by international stakeholders, security reform processes have been initiated and framed in many Southern countries, without the SSR label and without any external intervention. The articles also show that, far from being a concept exclusively focused on post-conflict environments, SSR has also been implemented in stable environments, including non-democratic ones.

This *insights* illustrates a diversity of political terrains and unevenness in progress between and within regions, and between states and their security sectors. In this respect SSR has resulted very much in mixed approaches and outcomes.

Africa is often considered the continent where SSR is most applicable. However, experiences across the continent vary. As **Gavin Cawthra** highlights, South Africa has been a pioneer of security sector reform and is a unique example of an indigenously-driven process. In Zimbabwe, however, the police and military forces provide strong support to Robert Mugabe's regime, whilst the outcomes of the SSR process in the Democratic Republic of Congo are uncertain. The recent seizure of power by

the military – or with their complicity – in several countries (Mauritania, Guinea and Madagascar and, to a lesser extent, Niger) is dramatic evidence of the lack of improvement in security governance in Francophone Africa. Yet, as **Boubacar N'Diaye** shows, the situation is very complex and some processes do result in more professional and accountable security forces.

Some articles illustrate the ambiguity of security reforms undertaken by some elected governments, which are less democratic. In Latin America, which, arguably, has made the most progress in placing security reforms on the agenda, a kind of 'social authoritarianism' is emerging. This could endanger the democratisation of the security apparatus, as **Lucia Dammert** shows.

Herman Kraft demonstrates the dangers associated with the possible fraying of still-fragile democratic cultures in South-East Asia, and increasing political apathy in countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines. His examples suggest that SSR is still primarily associated with the traditional approach of civil-military relations, which values civilian control but does not consider security governance.

Most of the regimes in South Asia (including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) are largely resistant to reform, and are not particularly accountable, as shown by **Mallika Joseph**.

Salam Kawakibi describes how, in the Middle East, dialogue, coalition-building and mapping of the security sector are good starting points, but real questions remain as to how far these can push the region onto a path of reform, particularly given the countervailing forces in the region (oil and

embedded authoritarianism, fundamentalism, terrorism, Palestine, Iranian nuclearisation and so on).

Other actors play an important role in SSR processes. **Herman Kraft** and **Mallika Joseph** mention regional organisations, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Elsewhere, regional organisations such as the African Union, and sub-regional organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), have been increasingly involved in the formalisation of normative SSR doctrines at the regional level. However, although these organisations have had strong norm-setting roles in some instances, they have not always succeeded in influencing the actions of individual members. The United Nations is also becoming increasingly involved in SSR-related issues and civil society organisations in some countries also play a central role.

In spite of repeated calls for a comprehensive approach to foster democratic governance, SSR processes have, on the whole, tended to focus exclusively on technical aspects of reform. Today, new concepts are emerging, such as security sector governance (SSG) and security sector development (SSD), which are increasingly considered more politically and normatively informative than the SSR concept.

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Cleen Foundation: Justice Sector Reform
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The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces
www.dcaf.ch

The Global Facilitation Network for Security Sector Reform (GFN-SSR)
www.ssrmnetwork.net

Global Consortium on Security Transformation
www.securitytransformation.org

OECD Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD-DAC)
<http://tinyurl.com/oecd-dcd-dac>

Open Society Justice Initiative
www.soros.org/initiatives/justice

Understanding international influences on security reform in Africa

Non-African nations have played a pivotal role in defining the relationship between security and development in Africa. There has been a huge growth in international efforts in security sector reform. But Africans are finding external influences can have unpleasant side effects.

Research from the Ethiopian Centre for Policy Research and Dialogue draws attention to external involvement in setting the security sector reform (SSR) agenda in Africa, particularly in post-conflict states. African policymakers and scholars need to understand the significance of recent geopolitical developments if they are to maximise the potential gains of external involvement in SSR.

The era since the end of the Cold War seemed to be defined, at least initially, by liberal, multilateral global governance. International commitment to engage with sources of insecurity and promote peace-related activities increased. In Africa, development agencies' increased focus on security and governance led to an emphasis on the concept of SSR.

Donor interventions, however, have been characterised by a lack of coordination, understanding and long-term commitment, leading to uneven performance. African states often associate SSR with cuts in security expenditures, efforts to weaken national security forces, and external meddling in political matters. Nevertheless, the primary focus of donor policy efforts to date has been on defining the broad goals of SSR and policy prescriptions.

Traditionally, the main external actors in African SSR have been the European Union countries, particularly the UK. However, the international standing of SSR is now being threatened by new developments in global power relations:

- China is increasingly engaged in Africa, particularly in nations (including dictatorships) rich in energy resources, bringing both the promise of growth and threat of dependency; a major consideration is Beijing's growing involvement in the security domain, particularly military assistance and peacekeeping.
- The US-led 'war on terror' identifies Africa as a key area for counterterrorism operations, involving trade-offs with democratisation, conflict resolution, peace and security, and human rights.
- The new US Africa Command (AFRICOM) will officially provide military aid and training for African states but is in reality more concerned with oil, China and terrorism.
- NATO's gradual involvement in Africa, starting with peacekeeping in Darfur, is limited and directionless so far but duplicates existing support provided to African institutions.
- Private security actors have been operating in Africa, sometimes under the label of SSR, and are potentially dangerous, given the weakness of many African states.

Such developments could worsen an already difficult security environment. They could also divert attention from necessary reforms for sustainable peace and development. Key recommendations include:

- a forum for discussion between donors and the African Union (AU) in developing

- an SSR strategy, with the latter supporting their models with empirical research
- collaboration among Southern researchers, policymakers and civil society organisations, including on private security groups and SSR monitoring mechanisms
- a mechanism for African states to coordinate with the United Nations on SSR
- significant local control and prioritisation of SSR programmes for a holistic and people-centred approach
- integrated development and security assistance, based on comprehensive assessments, that helps national strategic reform efforts
- agreements between AFRICOM and the AU rather than with individual African countries
- African consensus on what is expected from China, particularly on its ever-increasing military assistance.

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A US Army Africa exhibit. This is the army component of the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM).

US Army Africa, flickr, 2009

What is security sector reform?

The concept of security sector reform (SSR) refers to the set of policies, programmes and activities undertaken by a government, supported by international partners and civil society constituencies, to improve the way in which security and justice are delivered, in accordance with human rights, democracy and transparency.

Who is involved?

Understanding who provides security and justice is central to SSR. Although the SSR concept recognises that state security actors have a central role in justice and security provision, it states that effective security reform across the system requires working with a broad range of stakeholders including:

- **Professional security providers:** armed forces; police forces (including *gendarmeries*); paramilitary forces; national guards; presidential guards; intelligence services (both military and

civilian); coast and border guards; customs services; and local security units (such as civil defence forces and vigilante groups).

- **Management and oversight bodies:** the executive; national security advisory bodies; legislative and select committees; ministries of defence, internal affairs and foreign affairs; financial management bodies (finance ministries, budget officers, financial audit and planning units); civil society organisations (civilian review boards, associations and NGOs); and public complaints commissions involved in security-related matters.
- **Justice and rule of law actors:** judiciary and justice ministries; prisons; criminal investigation and prosecution services; human rights commissions and ombudsmen; and customary and traditional justice systems.
- **Non-statutory security forces:** liberation armies; guerrilla armies; private security companies; and political party militias.

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Making progress in Francophone Africa

Francophone Africa appears to have performed poorly compared to Anglophone Africa, in terms of progress in security sector reform (SSR). However, given that the continent as a whole has a poor record in the sector, this generalisation can be criticised. Further, it is only one aspect of the debate on the state of SSR in Francophone Africa.

Another aspect strongly influencing the (mis)fortunes of SSR in the former French colonies is the argument that the concept is an invention of the English-speaking world and largely inapplicable to the Francophone context. At worst, SSR is portrayed as an outright assault on the independence and national sovereignty of Francophone countries.

This argument, however, conveniently ignores that fact that Francophone African countries (such as Benin and Mali) first articulated what is today theorised as SSR during the pioneering *Conférences Nationales* in the early 1990s.

Since then, a number of countries, including Mali, Senegal and, to a lesser extent, Cameroon, have launched SSR processes, largely independent of major international pressures, and within stable (if not necessarily democratic) contexts. Other initiatives contributing to SSR discussions include the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa's Security Sector Reform Programme, which has helped promote awareness of SSR in countries like Togo.

The debate moved on further in 2008, thanks to a range of mutually reinforcing pronouncements and events in the French-speaking world. In rapid succession, France and the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF), comprising 56 member countries, embraced SSR:

- France, the agenda setter for its former colonies, embraced the basic principles and objectives of the concept, and issued a policy paper titled, 'Security System Reform: France's Approach', which highlighted a commitment to making SSR a "key component of France's strategic action".
- The OIF, in its declaration issued at the end of the Quebec summit in October 2008, also explicitly embraced the concept: it reiterated the direct links between stability, democracy and peace, already



highlighted in its 2000 Bamako Declaration. This commits its members to basic democratic and human rights principles, and the 2006 Saint Boniface Declaration on conflict prevention and peace consolidation.

- OIF members have committed themselves to involvement in the ongoing debates on SSR.

The focus is now where it needs to be – on how Francophone countries will align the governance of their security sectors with their democratising political systems. In just a few months, thanks to the actions of the African Security Sector Network (ASSN), among others, much has already been accomplished in starting serious reflection and initiating promising agendas for parliamentary oversight, for example. Much remains to be done but it is encouraging that Francophone Africa appears to be overcoming its initial (misguided) reservations about the concept. Unfortunately, however, recent military coups in Mauritania, Madagascar and Guinea have raised the possibility of a return to the type of politics that once defined Francophone Africa.

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A participant speaks during a four-day security sector reform seminar in Bangui, Central African Republic, in April 2008. The security sector's major actors discussed the country's situation and suggested a series of reforms to improve security. The President concluded the seminar by committing the Government to following the seminar's recommendations. *Brice Blondel, HDPTCAR, 2008*

The African Security Sector Network

The African Security Sector Network (ASSN) is a multidisciplinary network spanning academics, think tanks, civil society organisations, security practitioners, members of parliament, and so on. It was created to harmonise the activities of the various African organisations working in the area of security sector reform (SSR) and governance.

The ASSN is founded on the perception that:

- Management and governance of security in Africa have been and continue to be deeply flawed.
- Poor governance and lack of accountability of the security sector have driven many of the conflicts and human rights abuses that afflict the continent, and constitute a profound challenge to peacebuilding and the consolidation of Africa's fragile democracies.
- Reform is essential if objectives of conflict prevention and management, peacebuilding, and democratic governance and development are to be achieved on the continent.
- Local ownership of SSR has been problematic, as most programmes have been designed outside the continent.

ASSN seeks the transformation of security governance and the promotion of peace and justice in Africa through:

- convening both formal and informal stakeholders
- producing and disseminating new knowledge
- enhancing capacity
- developing policy and undertaking advocacy
- expanding security literacy.

www.africansecuritynetwork.org

Mixed outcomes in southern Africa

South Africa is often regarded as a pioneer of security sector reform (SSR). Its SSR was comprehensive and involved the systematic reform of policing, defence and intelligence, while integrating seven different armed formations. There was no real disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), however, and the security forces achieved an appropriate size mostly through natural attrition. But SSR was largely indigenously driven and grounded in the political process – and it preceded the international debate on SSR.

For the southern African region as a whole, the picture is more complex. In the early 1980s, after gaining independence, Zimbabwe was the first country in the region to undergo what would today be called SSR. Namibia also underwent SSR after independence in 1990. In both Zimbabwe and Namibia, SSR took place in the context of the DDR of former combatants and the integration of formerly adversarial armed formations. A British military advisory team played a prominent role in both countries and their ministries of defence were set up according to British models.

Partly as a result of mismanaged SSR, DDR and integration processes, the Zimbabwean military and police currently play a negative role in the country's economic and political crisis. Both institutions are widely considered as instruments of repression deployed on

behalf of President Mugabe and his party, ZANU-PF. The picture is not entirely bleak, however. Both services retain elements of professionalism and despite the disruptions of recent years have remained functional. A 'second round' of SSR (and DDR) will be needed if Zimbabwe's unity government is to move towards free and fair elections.

In Namibia, the picture is brighter. A functional Ministry of Defence operates in the context of reasonably well-established civil-military relations and effective security governance, although there are some problems related to executive control and the lack of civil society or parliamentary engagement. Elsewhere in the region, SSR has been sporadic, superficial or incomplete, although it has been considered an essential element of democratic transitions. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), integration and DDR remain key challenges to peace, while a contested SSR process was partly to blame for the March 2009 coup in Madagascar.

Some of the lessons learnt and recommendations arising from the varied and complex southern African experience include:

- Successful SSR cannot be separated from DDR and security integration in post-conflict situations. The success of one element depends on the others, and SSR needs to be built into peace settlements.
- Failure to carry out reforms during transition periods will leave a negative

- legacy for post-transition governments.
- Indigenous knowledge and local ownership are important elements of success. While the South African experience is often held up as a positive example, it might not work in other situations.
- Reform of policing and intelligence is as important as that of the armed forces, but the institutions do not all need to be reformed at the same time.
- SSR needs to be grounded in political processes.
- Considerable care needs to be taken to ensure that SSR does not destabilise political transitions to democracy.

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See also

Governing Insecurity: Democratic Control of Military and Security Establishments in Transitional Democracies, Zed: London, edited by Gavin Cawthra and Robin Luckham, 2003

Security and Democracy in Southern Africa, Wits University Press: Johannesburg, edited by Gavin Cawthra, Andre Du Pisani and Abdillah Omari, 2007

SSR is central to political reform in Arab countries

The idea of security sector reform (SSR) in the Arab region seems highly unrealistic, given the sensitivity of the issues involved. Local initiatives from within the Arab world, however, mean that the topic is gaining prominence.

The security sector in many Arab countries suffers from several structural, functional and technical problems. These include insufficient training for relevant actors; the lack of legal frameworks that would promote transparency, for instance in finance; a lack of respect for human rights; and ethnic and sectarian divisions.

International scrutiny and support is mostly focused on technical aspects. For instance, in Palestine, the bulk of international interventions aim at improving safety from a technical perspective, without subscribing to more holistic reform. In Lebanon, donors' logistical assistance to the security sector does not contribute to the development of public safety or national security, and sidesteps debate on the real problems the

sector faces. Both European and US programmes tend to work within such limited spheres, but a broader understanding of SSR is crucial.

In addition, it has been difficult for Arab civil society representatives to engage with those in charge of the security sector in their countries. Despite measures taken to facilitate this process, the sector, like the political regimes that control it, remains resistant to change.

The Arab Reform Initiative (ARI), a network of independent Arab research and policy institutes, aims to promote democratic reform from within the region. Through its Security Sector Reform Project, ARI aims to relocate the debate within general political reform, rather than confining it to the security sector. The project undertook empirical research in Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen, focusing on the following:

- the role of security services, their structure and their reform needs
- the privatisation of the sector in a number of countries (such as Lebanon and Jordan) and the creation of private security firms
- fragmentation in other countries, in relation to tribalism or sectarian conflicts (in Yemen and Iraq for example)
- the rule of law and the role of justice in

the management of security issues, as well as control over security services

- the impact of foreign interventions, often presented as reform and modernisation
- how local and regional conflicts influence security
- gender issues.

Discussions and open debates on the findings were subsequently held, involving a range of stakeholders. This included civil society groups, the media, academics and, most importantly, representatives from the security services. These meetings illustrated the possibility of a constructive approach towards, and proper debate around SSR, rather than discussions limited to denunciation and protest.

Arab countries are now engaging with the debate on SSR. Although it remains limited, given the political environment in which it is occurring, the very existence of debate deserves some merit.

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Partial reforms and new challenges in Latin America

Security is an urgent problem in Latin America and the Caribbean. The topic varies in magnitude and characteristics in each country but is of central concern to citizens. Whether it is organised crime in Colombia and Mexico, youth gangs in Central America, or property crime in Chile, security issues affect the daily lives of individuals, and are at the top of the political and public agenda.

In many countries, the institutions affiliated with the security sector have taken on roles beyond those originally assigned to them. In the past, security sector institutions directly intervened in national political life. With the installation of democratic regimes, however, these institutions have been required to make an effort to 'adjust' to new political systems. Reform efforts have arisen in this context but, in many instances, they do not align with the goals of strengthening the rule of law, democracy and the professionalisation of the sector.

The development of a systematic vision of multiple institutions linked to the security sector is one of the remaining critical tasks for consolidating democracy in the region. Advances in this area have been uneven on both a thematic and territorial level. For example, in the 1990s, the armed forces were heavily scrutinised in Central America and the Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile,

Paraguay and Uruguay), where they were playing active roles during the civil wars and dictatorships. However, throughout the region, reform and research initiatives relating to the armed forces, police and intelligence services are still very limited. This is particularly true of the intelligence sector—progress is not very evident and, in many instances, reform processes have not yet begun.

The consolidation of democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean requires security services that function within a constitutional framework, and which respect human rights and the decisions of the ruling government. Within a context of high levels of social insecurity, it is necessary to professionalise the institutions affiliated with the security sector.

Comparative studies would highlight political and institutional processes currently underway. They would also identify weaknesses and the necessary conditions for an agenda to strengthen civilian and democratic management of the sector.

There are seven central key elements of this agenda:

- the limited autonomy of the armed and security forces
- strengthened civilian capacities to work in the security sector
- the creation of policies to regulate the

- intelligence sector
- a better definition of the institutional mandates of the security sector
- the coordination of sectoral policies
- clear boundaries to avoid the political use of the armed forces and the police
- a stronger parliamentary role in security issues.

A comparative South-South agenda also needs to be developed. This will enable learning from experiences from other parts of the world that face the same constraints as many countries in Latin America. The Global Consortium on Security Transformation was created for that reason, to allow greater exchange of experiences and the development of useful tools to enhance the security sector reform agenda.

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See also

Report on Security Sector Reform in Latin America and the Caribbean, FLACSO, 2008
http://issuu.com/flacso.chile/docs/ssr_lac

The Global Consortium on Security Transformation

The Global Consortium on Security Transformation (GCST) encourages South-South and South-North security and development debates in order to promote a change in the existing understanding of security. It also opens spaces for new voices to be heard in the debate.

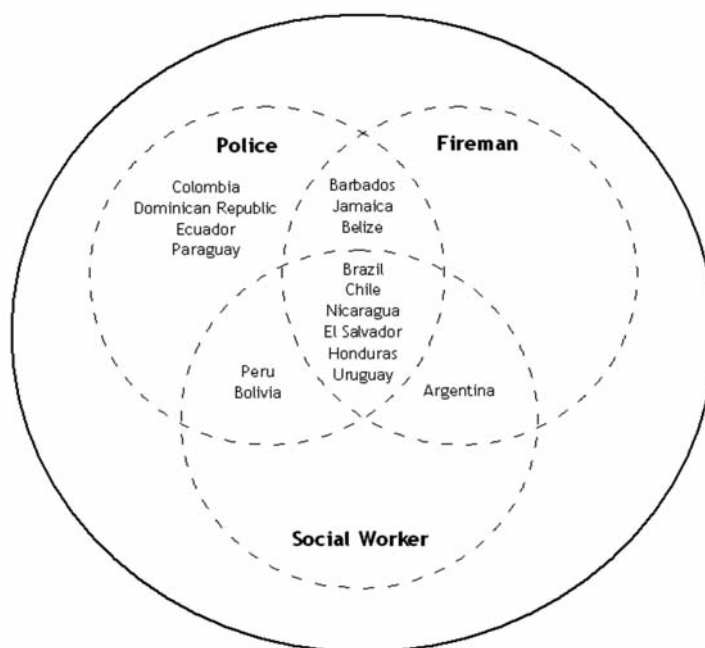
GCST builds upon and forges relationships between regional networks, linking researchers and practitioners from the developing world by:

- sharing research findings and policy lessons among regional networks
- promoting cross-regional research
- fostering evidence-based policy dialogue
- reaching out to a broad range of policy constituencies not normally considered in security analysis and policymaking.

The dialogue network takes the form of a partnership between eight institutions located in different regions of the world.

www.securitytransformation.org

Figure 1 Functions of the Armed Forces in Latin America and the Caribbean



Apart from protecting national territory, roles for the military include: 'police' functions (participating in routine public security checks and safeguarding order in specific situations, such as elections); 'fireman' functions during emergencies and disasters; and 'social worker' functions, relating to human development needs.

Source: *Report on the Security Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean*, Chile: FLACSO, pages 39-40, 2007



Itee, a female peacekeeping soldier belonging to the all-female unit of Indian UN peacekeepers in Liberia, supervises Winnefred, a Liberian National Police (LNP) officer, while out on a Joint Task Force (JTF) patrol in the Duport Road area. 'On the Job' training forms a vital aspect of the unit's role in helping to build capacity in the Liberian National Police.

Aubrey Wade, Panos, 2007

Agenda reforms needed in South Asia

South Asia is probably the most 'illiterate' region with regard to security sector reform (SSR). The countries in the region (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) have some standard guidelines for governing their security sectors but these are largely ineffective. As a result, most of the security sectors in the region are characterised by excessive state control, lack of accountability and transparency, and the absence of civil society participation.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is the only relevant regional forum but it is ineffective in influencing, much less introducing, policy relating to national or regional security architecture. In spite of the apparent lack of understanding of the policy framework SSR provides, security sectors in the region need to be studied because their agenda, both in substance and style, is clearly distinct from those in other regions of the world.

In South Asia, the emphasis is more on governance, accountability and transparency, rather than creating

security sectors or building capacity within them. The only exception is Afghanistan, where decades of conflict and civil strife have destroyed all national security sector elements.

The countries in the region that were under British colonial rule exhibit, to a large extent, professional and effective security sectors. Together, they contribute the largest number of peacekeepers to United Nations peacekeeping. However, just as during the colonial period, the Executive is too powerful. Partly due to this common colonial history, and to unfinished processes of nation-building, governments in the region continue to oppose transparency and accountability in the security sector:

- The security discourse has largely been confined to government circles, with little room for civil society voices. Defence expenditures, in particular, are hardly debated, even within parliaments.
- In 2005, the Right to Information legislation was passed in India, signalling the beginning of increased accountability in the government's functioning and decision-making. Such positive developments need to spread to all

agencies of the government, as well as to governments in the region as a whole.

- Various reforms are underway in individual countries' security sectors. However, these have missed out on the larger benefits of a comprehensive all-of-government reform agenda and framework. In some countries, this has resulted in uneven growth within the security sector.
- The pre-eminence of one component of the security sector, to the detriment of others, poses serious problems to the very nature and type of governance. For instance, Pakistan and Bangladesh are fortunate to have strong militaries but the disadvantages of this have been frequent military coups and underdeveloped democratic governance.

South Asia comprises about a fifth of humankind with the largest numbers of the poorest and most deprived people in the world. It is of utmost importance that issues of security sector reform and governance are addressed quickly and with greater cooperation.

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Governments in the region continue to oppose transparency and accountability in the security sector

Democratisation and reform in South-East Asia

The diversity of political systems in South-East Asia and the subsequent relationship between political power and the security sector make security sector reform (SSR) – and its implications for democratic transformation – problematic.

The 2007 Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Charter mandated democracy as one of the principal political developments in the region. The subsequent interest democratisation has generated in SSR has important policy implications. This emerging democratic impulse in the region, however, has taken very diverse paths.

- Reducing the military's involvement in political mechanisms of formal national power has been central to both democratisation and peacebuilding in Indonesia and Thailand. In the Philippines, it is a key part of sustaining the legitimacy of its democratic institutions.
- In the Philippines and Thailand, frustration over scandal-torn governments has led to extra-constitutional means of replacing or attempting to replace incumbent authority figures, usually with the explicit involvement of the country's security forces.
- In the Philippines, opinion polls show that citizens see no contradiction between these extra-constitutional means and democracy. Furthermore, poor management of peace by civilian authorities has made the military restive.

Democratisation and peacebuilding require active participation from citizens. Civil society groups have been pivotal in reducing conflict in local areas in Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia, and helped strengthen democratic institutions. At the same time, however, the support militant and

other groups give to segments of the military to overthrow the government presents the dark side of civil society participation. Accordingly, in addition to military reform, SSR also requires reform of the civilian institutions with oversight functions over the military.

- In Indonesia, the lack of experience with democratic governance provides a rich ground for socialisation in democratic culture. This same lack of experience, however, opens the process of democratisation (and socialisation) up to the possibility of subversion by particular political interests.
- This is also relevant to Thailand, where money politics has made it very difficult for democratic institutions to take root, creating openings for military intervention in politics.
- While SSR is largely being undertaken in democratic and democratising countries, it has little resonance in the one dominant-party systems of Malaysia and Singapore. In these countries, security sector governance remains strong, with civilian institutions being able to maintain their oversight functions over the military.
- In non-democratic regimes, civilian control over the military has also largely been maintained. In Laos and Viet Nam, the Communist Party controls the army. Such regimes emphasise national security. Their policies subordinate human security concerns (believed to be best addressed in a democracy) to national security imperatives.

- The situation is similar in 'democratising' Cambodia and with the absolute monarchy of Brunei, where, while the military is technically accountable to civilian authorities, accountability is more personal than institutional. Thus, human security imperatives are again given less importance than regime security.

In a region where a commitment to democracy and human rights has become a regional aspiration, democratisation will be a key element of security sector governance. In Myanmar, where the military regime in power is the main source of insecurity for citizens, SSR must be part of an extensive process of political reform and democratic transformation. South-East Asia illustrates how issues of effective security sector governance originate either from weak or absent democratic institutions. The main question, therefore, is how states within the region will address the need to align domestic political conditions with the commitments to democratisation made at the regional level.

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See also

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