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Introduction:

Dilemmas of Security Sector Reform in the Context of Conflict Transformation

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Violent crises and internal wars are often consequences of the failure of states to provide stability and security for their citizens. International organisations and development agencies became aware that development and peace processes can not be effective or take place in situations of threat, social disorder and violence. In order to overcome cultures of violence and to support nation building processes they have focused on security sector reform as an integral part of third party intervention in recent years. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) was the first to argue that "Human Security" is one of the essentials and thus has widened the concepts of security. The European Union decided to shift this issue to the centre of its efforts for civil crisis prevention by emphasizing support for "the rule of law" and police reforms in conflict regions. And even civil society actors such as NGOs dedicated to disarmament, development and peace building have had the experience that initiatives for building civil society can only be successful if state structures exist which can assure security for international and local groups working in and on the conflict.

The conflict transformation community - to whom the Berghof Handbook is primarily targeted - does not have a particularly positive attitude towards the security sector. At least in the past, members of this community have seen the military as part of the problem and therefore to be avoided and marginalized, rather than as part of the solution to be engaged with. By and large they tend not to take a serious interest in security sector issues.

It is not hard to see why. Military solutions to conflict are based on a very different paradigm from conflict transformation. Most people are interested in peace but there are very different views on how to get there. In some conflicts the concept of peace through war is promoted, meaning that peace will be achieved through military victory over the opposition, whether they be insurgents or another state. It is the idea that one view must prevail and if one or more parties are not prepared to use non-violent means then force may be the only alternative. Conflict Transformation on the other hand is based on trying to reconcile different interests and working with the different groups in conflict to see how a solution can be found which is compatible with the interests and needs of all parties. Even when one or more parties are willing to use force, the transformative approach believes the parties can be helped to see that an imposed solution is not helpful in the long run. Is it possible for such different approaches to complement each other or are they always operating against each other?

Further, people using a conflict transformative approach will often doubt the good faith of people committed to the military and military solutions. Some doubt the security sectors willingness to change and the capacity to change even if the willingness is there. Others claim that security sector structures are by their nature hierarchical and authoritarian and as such antithetical to values of conflict transformation. If they were to change, the security structures would loose their effectiveness. Some would go farther and point to militarism that they feel is endemic in security structures and pervasive in states which have a strong military influence.

If the security sector is part of the problem it has to be recognised that it is also part of the solution. The security sector cannot be ignored. It plays a central role in conflict, and often security sector personnel are the first to realise that a military solution will not solve the conflict, though they may not know how to bring about an agreed solution. The security sector also has an important

impact on the process of rebuilding society. Major concerns of people in conflict zones are insecurity and a lack or confidence in the services that are established to provide security. Therefore in order for any solution to the conflict to be effective, the people in the community need to feel personally secure and have confidence in the security services. Often that does not happen and the settlement may collapse. To build that sense of confidence and security will normally require restructuring of the security service to ensure greater accountability and openness and, perhaps, the merging of the former combatants into new structures.

What changes are needed in the security sector to create systems which can play a constructive role in the peace process and in peace building after and in nation building in general? If we acknowledge that officers and staff of the military and security agencies will find it difficult to introduce and implement such changes when they themselves have been working and serving within those agencies for a long time and are imbued with their ethos, then others have to be willing to engage with them and co-operate with them in taking the necessary reform measures. Otherwise reform will fail.

This issue of the Berghof Dialogue Series examines the arguments for engagement with the security sector and provides an analysis of the dilemmas that arise and suggestions for how they might be overcome. The lead paper provides an overview of the current state of knowledge and practice. Herbert Wulf, the former Director of the Bonn International Center for Conversion describes the historical development of thinking about the topic, acknowledging past scepticism in the wider development community but also noting the reorientation which obliges the wider conflict resolution and development communities to engage with the issue. He offers a typology of the different conditions that exist in states that indicate different capacities and commitment to reform and therefore suggest that different approaches are needed. He identifies the motivations for reform and the sources of the impetus for reform and he indicates the parameters and components of a programme of security sector reforms.

Laurie Nathan and Najib Azca then provide an insight into experiences in two different regions – South Africa and Indonesia. South Africa is often offered as an example of a successful process of conflict transformation and associated security sector reform and it had many advantages in terms of resources yet Laurie Nathan, former Executive Director of the Centre for Conflict Resolution in Cape town and currently Visiting Fellow at the Crisis States Programme at the London School of Economics, shows that there were many problems and obstacles which had to be overcome and gives some insight into how they were addressed. He reinforces the point that failure is not always a sign of lack of political will, though finding a way to reconcile the different agendas of different groups is a political, not a technical process.

Indonesia is unusual in that the role of the army in society was uniquely important and systematic under the former Soharto regime, and it is interesting to look at the approach taken to reform described in the paper by Najib Azca, from the Centre for Security and Peace Studies in Yogyakarta. He shows how some had an interest in keeping conflict going and thereby justifying the need for maintaining a power based model of social cohesion. In a substantial section of his paper he relates how the community tensions in parts of Indonesia have worked against reform in the security sector.

Both make the point that, as Laurie Nathan puts it "the higher the level of instability and violence in the nation and the region, the less likely will be reforms that have an anti-militarist orientation." In Najib Azca's words "communal violence can be perceived as a consequence of the poor performance of the security sector and, therefore, a symptom of a need for security sector reform." On the other hand, communal conflict is likely to handicap the implementation of security

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sector reform, as is evident in the case of the communal conflict in Ambon. However, the South African case underlines the argument that the military may sometimes overcome militarism while a militarist perspective reliant on force remains imbued in the wider society.

The other three papers by Nicole Ball, Marina Caparini and Vanessa Farr look at ways of overcoming such problems and ensuring that appropriate reforms are introduced and that they are implemented effectively. Nicole Ball, who is Senior Fellow at the Center for International Policy in Washington and is also associated with the Center for International Development and Conflict Management at the University of Maryland, offers her security sector institutional assessment tool as a way to analyse what kind of reforms are necessary and feasible. This typology focuses on the context of the security sector in the state and in this way facilitates the identification of entry points for reform and indicates the essentially political nature of SSR, an aspect that Laurie Nathan had also noted. She particularly notes the poor prospects of reform in authoritarian states.

Marina Caparini, from the Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces notes that security sector reform is rarely achieved in practice and argues that it requires a holistic approach with inter-agency co-operation. However inter-agency rivalry is more often evident. She also emphasises the importance of civil society involvement while recognising the lack of expertise within the wider community. She makes the interesting observation that specialist NGOs often are made up of ex-military personnel and those close to the military and therefore "lack critical distance" which allows them to introduce fresh perspectives. A significant part of her paper deals with the importance of dealing with SSR within a broader regional perspective.

Vanessa Farr, working with the United Nations Development Programme, takes up the question of civil society involvement and in particular the lack of attention paid to the weakest sections of society. She reminds us that they are acutely aware of issues that normally are overlooked and that it is not sufficient to listen to their perspectives but they need some leverage to ensure that their concerns are incorporated into any programme of reform and that the reform includes ongoing attention to their concerns. She also points to how groups such as women whose needs and roles have been ignored have through the use of creative and striking approaches been able to inform and change the debate about SSR. Vanessa Farr, in common with the other authors, considers that a rights-based approach is essential to make a real impact on ensuring that security sector reforms address the individual's concerns about human security.

Some points of particular interest to those working in conflict transformation are only referred to briefly by the authors. In particular there is the question of reform in a post conflict situation and dealing with the legacy of war, as Nicole Ball mentions. What to do about past abuses of human rights under the old regime in the context of creating new structures and systems? Najib Azca refers to the question of immunity for past abuses of human rights under the old regime. Those implicated may impede the process of reform unless they are granted immunity. But is that a satisfactory outcome? There are also the problems associated with non-formal military units such as paramilitary groups, vigilantes, rebel fighters and so on. The existence of such groups will often make reform more difficult but there may also be scope for programmes of disarmament and demobilisation or integration of some groups into the state security services. Laurie Nathan touches on the question of how to integrate ex-combatants in new structures and how to manage potential ethnic tensions.

The authors open up the issues of what needs to happen to reform or transform the security sector but all are agreed that clarity is important because, as Nicole Ball puts it, much is done under the name of SSR which is not, and it may be used to describe programmes to strengthening military capacities without addressing the way in which the military operates within the state and

in the community. All the authors agree that this issue is more acute at the present time, because in the context of major or perceived security challenges compromises are being made in tolerating abuses of rights and militarisation. They indicate how the war on terror and global crime are used as a justification for supporting regimes which abuse human rights and where the security sector is not open and accountable to democratic control. As Marina Caparini puts it, Western states are "subordinating human rights concerns to the requirements of improving military or security capacities." Herbert Wulf refers to is as "a lack of a coherent response and double standards". One might also describe it as hypocrisy.

This brings us back to the question of public participation because the real concerns of the people are lost sight of in this context. Laurie Nathan acknowledges the "lack of capacity in parliament, judiciary or civil society to allow oversight" and Vanessa Farr argues that even these bodies do not speak or understand the positions of the most vulnerable in society. Military personnel are by and large suspicious of outside influence especially from those who have not themselves had a career in the military. It is a vicious cycle because without participation the militarist culture and discourse will not change and without a change in the culture it will be hard for the system to hear other voices. In many ways the global security community is addressing the wrong questions and looking for answers from the wrong people. Herbert Wulf notes that "externally brokered and assisted reform has primarily addressed the warring parties rather than the forces advocating peace" and that there is a "feeling that security sector reform in a broad sense does not necessarily address the immediate security needs."

The public need some leverage but unless there is an informed public debate where the individual can consider what they require from the security sector and that those concerns have priority, the dominant discourse and culture will continue to reflect a militarist mind set. This is where the conflict transformation community can make an important input on, for example civil society engagement with security issues, systems of civil oversight of the security services, and conscientisation of military personnel to human rights issues and the maintenance of human security. We look forward to our readers' contributions to the debate and will publish on the web those that are interesting and original.