



GENEVA CENTRE FOR THE DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF  
ARMED FORCES (DCAF)

OCCASIONAL PAPER NO. 4

**DEVELOPMENT DONORS AND THE CONCEPT OF  
SECURITY SECTOR REFORM**

*Michael Brzoska*

Geneva, November 2003



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# DEVELOPMENT DONORS AND THE CONCEPT OF SECURITY SECTOR REFORM<sup>1</sup>

*Michael Brzoska*

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to provide a survey of current discussion on 'security sector reform'. Created only in the late 1990s, the term has spread rapidly in international discourses. It is now used in a number of contexts, ranging from its origin in the development donor community<sup>2</sup> and to debate on reform in the transition countries of Central and Eastern Europe to changes in the major industrialised countries of Western Europe (Winkler, 2002). That the term is used widely suggests that the time was ripe for it. It would seem obvious that there was a need to find a new term for a plethora of phenomena and activities related to reform of the sector of society charged with the provision of security.

However, as in many other cases, the widening of the term has not led to a clarification of what is meant by it. Several observers confess that they are quite puzzled by the term. Some already seem to be wary of using it, suggesting other words, such as 'security sector transition' (Hills, 2000a), 'security sector transformation' (Chuter, 2000; Cooker and Pugh, 2002) or different approaches to the issue. The Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) also began to promote a new term in 2003, namely 'justice and security sector reform' (JSSR) (UNDP, 2002b) and the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) has switched to 'security system reform'.

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<sup>1</sup> An abridged version of this paper has been published as a chapter in *Challenges of Security Sector Governance* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2003), edited by Heiner Hänggi and Theodor H. Winkler. The author would like to thank Nicole Ball, Peter Croll, Heiner Hänggi, Andreas Heinemann-Grüder, Herbert Wulf and four anonymous reviewers for comments on an earlier draft.

<sup>2</sup> The term development donor organisations and development donor community is used here in a limited sense, and is different from donors. It covers national and international organisations which provide technical and financial aid to developing and transition countries, technically classified as Official Development Assistance (ODA) by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Donors is used in a broader sense, for those states providing any form of aid, for instance military aid. Thus within donor states there can be development donor organisations and other donor organisations, for instance the ministry of defence.

Nor has the popularity of the term within policy statements and debates led to its widespread application in practice. In fact, one aspect that intrigues many observers is the lack of instances of security sector reform on the ground.

This paper aims to clarify some of the aspects of the discussion on security sector reform, its origins, strengths and weaknesses. The emphasis is on the concept of security sector reform, the ideas behind it, and its links to other discourses. Security sector reform has its roots in the development donor debate, an ongoing discussion among various groups of practitioners and theoreticians on how best to target and implement development assistance. This paper traces the quite diverse origins of this debate and how they contributed to the emergence of the concept of security sector reform. It critically analyses the strengths, but also the inconsistencies and deficiencies, that the concept of security sector reform has inherited. It then looks at how the concept of security sector reform has evolved in development donor discourse. Furthermore, the question is asked why security sector reform is so difficult to implement in practice, despite wide acceptance of its principles. Finally, some suggestions are provided on how to develop the concept of security sector reform further, in respect to both its place among other concepts used in development discourse and in development donor practice.

The paper thus only deals with one partial aspect of the current usage of the term security sector reform, namely its relation to economic and social development, and in particular to its attraction for organisations involved in development policy. It is also limited in other ways. For instance, it does not provide specific recommendations for actors involved in security sector reform or for those wishing to support it from the outside – the focus of much of the available literature on security sector reform (see e.g. Ball, 1998a and 2002; Chalmers, 2000; Wulf, 2000a; Cooper and Pugh, 2002; Lilly et al, 2002). Finally, the paper does not include an evaluation of the practical experiences gained in the application of security sector reform. That task has been initiated by a working group of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD which is likely to present a report in early 2004. At this time there is no overview of donor practice in security sector reform and much of the discussion is based on a few examples, often drawn from a few countries, with which a contributor to the debate is familiar. This paper aims to provide a corollary for the outstanding thorough analysis of development donor practice, namely a better understanding of the objectives, capabilities and limitations of the concept of security sector reform.

## **The Origins of Security Sector Reform (SSR) in Development Discourse**

The concept of security sector reform was first put forward to a larger public in a speech by Clare Short (1998), first Minister for International Development in the newly-created Department for International Development (DFID) by the Labour government that came to power in Britain in 1997. The need for comprehensive reform of the 'security sector' had been identified earlier,<sup>3</sup> but it was the speeches by Short (1998, 1999), and the policy statements by her department (UK DFID, 1999, 2000, 2002) that made 'security sector reform' prominent as a term and as a concept.

The time was ripe for it. The development donor community had begun to debate security-related issues intensely in the early 1990s. However, the discussions were occurring in different fora and with little overlap. Donor activities in the realm of security sector reform were largely *ad hoc* while coherence among various donor activities was minimal. This was partly due to the fact that, previously, the donor community had largely refrained from discussing security-related issues. Many actors in the donor community have had, and continue to have, a strong bias against working with security sector players, particularly with the military. Until the early 1990s, the constraints of the Cold War had put strong political caps on the development donor discourse on security-related issues. Another reason was that new demands, such as dealing with the aftermath of peacekeeping operations, were unfolding fairly rapidly in the 1990s. Lastly, dealing with security-related issues required dealing with new sets of actors. Development donors came into contact with actors who had previously been largely outside their fields of activity, such as police forces and the military, both in their own and developing countries.

The post-Cold War world presented a host of new challenges, but also opportunities, for development donors. Since the 1990s, the development donor community has been permanently reassessing its own place in the post-Cold War world. With some of the earlier political constraints lifted, development donor agencies had more manoeuvring space, including access to security-related themes. However, at the same time, increased demands were also being laid on development donors, for instance with respect to conflict prevention, post-conflict rehabilitation, and – particularly after September 11, 2001 – also anti-terrorism.

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<sup>3</sup> See for instance Nicole Ball, *Security and Economy in the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), who also introduced the term 'security sector' for a comprehensive approach towards the institutions charged with the provision of state security.

Security sector reform can be understood as an attempt to connect, in one concept, the opportunities of expanding development assistance into security-related fields and the challenges of new demands on development donors, and to provide both with a common vision. That vision is one of a security sector which promotes human development, helps to reduce poverty, and allows people – including poor people – to expand their options in life. A renewed emphasis, in the late 1990s, on focusing development assistance on results, with poverty reduction in first place, helped to overcome some of the earlier barriers in the development donor community against dealing with the security sector.

While the concept itself was new in 1998, practically all of its components, such as reform of the defence forces, improvement in democratic oversight of armed forces, police reform, etc, were not. In addition to the attempt to add value to existing programmes through redefining them with a new, overarching objective – namely development – the proclamation of policies to promote security sector reform also staked out a new claim to competency by development donors. Development donor agencies who wanted to address security-related activities in a programmatic way had to redefine their relations not only with regard to their clients in the developing countries, but within their own national governments as well.

The willingness of development donors to engage and work with the new concept of security sector reform has differed markedly from agency to agency in the years since it was first coined. The UK government, which took the lead, has found a number of followers in the Nordic countries, as well as in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland and the United States. The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has likewise embraced it (OECD, 2001).

Yet there are also many obstacles to a wider adoption of security sector reform as an element of development donor programmes. For a number of development agencies, as well as international financial institutions, legal restraints limit the range of programmes that can be undertaken (OECD, 2001; Ball, 2001). In several donor countries other agencies, such as defence ministries or ministries of the interior, are in charge of assistance projects in the developing world and are wary of development donors getting in their way.

In addition, there are many sceptics, both in development agencies and outside, as to whether security sector reform is a useful instrument in development policy (Williams, 2000; Wulf, 2000b; Chanaa, 2002). Many critical concerns have been voiced, ranging from the observation that security sector reform constitutes a European centre-left project (Williams, 2000) to the claim that it is devoid of much meaning as it ignores the underlying causes of insecurity in developing countries (Fayemi, 2001). It has also been criticised for being too narrowly married to an optimistic conception of the possibilities for external manipulation of political and social forces (Luckham, 2003) and that in most formulations it leaves out the requirements for major changes in the industrialised countries, such as an overhaul of their arms export policies (Cooper and Pugh, 2002). 'Security-sector transformation' has been proposed as an alternative term which supposedly better reflects the process character of wide-ranging change in the security sector than the more narrowly perceived 'security sector reform' (Chuter, 2000; Cooper and Pugh, 2002). However such juxtaposition seems somewhat artificial – it is hard to imagine a transformation that does not entail a series of coordinated reforms of policies and procedures. Still, security sector reform remains an underdeveloped concept, and the term contested.

Moreover, some of the difficulties with the concept of security sector reform stem from its diverse roots in related earlier discussions. The most important of these will now be briefly described in the following sections.

### ***Military Expenditure in Development Donor Policy***

Development donors first became collectively engaged in security-related issues near the end of the Cold War. However they did so without raising any security issues, focusing instead on purely fiscal matters. As of the early 1990s, the reduction of military expenditure was becoming an important theme in development donor discourse, much promoted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, plus some middle-sized donors as well as the US Congress (Ball, 1998b).

The reduction of military expenditure for development purposes, in industrialised as in developing countries, has been on the international agenda for some time. As early as 1953, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 724A, asking member states to reallocate money to development assistance through disarmament. Similar requests were repeated at regular intervals in later years, for instance in 1978, when

the first Special General Assembly on Disarmament and Development was held in New York.

The rationale behind these proposals is a simple one, as expressed for instance in the words of the 'Brandt Commission', headed by former German Chancellor and Nobel Peace laureate Willy Brandt: "If only a small part of the current expenditure in money, labour and research for military purposes were to be given to poor countries, the future of the Third World would look very different" (Brandt, 1980, p. 149).

Scientific investigation of the links between military expenditure and economic development and growth has reached less clear-cut results. Economists and political scientists researching the links using various models and differing data came to conflicting results (for an overview see eg Lamb and Kellab, 1992; Dunne, 1995). However, the overarching view is that, if used for productive purposes, the additional resources that would become available from a reduction in military expenditure would provide a stimulus for economic growth, thus creating a 'peace dividend' (Gleditsch et al. 1995; Knight et al., 1996).

At first development donors were reluctant to take the issue of military spending on board, despite growing interest in the issue in academic circles and international expert commissions, such as those chaired by Willy Brandt and Olof Palme. However there were a few, if limited, exceptions, of which one telling example is provided by the US government. Requested by the US Congress, the State Department began in the 1970s to review the military spending patterns of recipients of US development assistance. However, whenever strategic political interest in a strong military existed, concerns about their effects on development were simply brushed aside (Ball, 1988).

With the end of the Cold War, the situation changed radically. Interestingly, the World Bank and the IMF took the lead (Ball, 2001). One reason for their activism was their mandates, which do not allow them to interfere in political matters. Interpreting military expenditure as a purely fiscal matter, however, they could espouse views and discuss the matter with recipient country governments. Another reason was that both organisations were dominated by neo-classical economists. In neo-classical economic theory, which emphasises investment in productive capital as the engine of growth and economic development, military expenditure is considered to be pure waste (Knight et al, 1996; Davodi et al, 2001).

In addition to concerns about high levels of military spending among development practitioners, there was also substantial public pressure in many donor countries not to tolerate high military expenditure in countries which received cheap loans and grants. Why should taxpayers in countries providing development assistance be willing to indirectly subsidise military expenditure in recipient countries?

The steep decreases in their own military expenditure in the 1990s also gave donor country development institutions a moral justification to clamour for reductions in military expenditure, a justification which they had not had previously. Between 1987 and 1996, OECD member countries reduced their military expenditure by almost 22 percent. Developing countries, as a group, reduced theirs by only four percent over the same period of time (BICC, 1999).

In the new, post-Cold War situation, a number of development donors became active and adopted strong policies on military expenditure. The German government, for instance, decided in 1991 to reduce development assistance to countries that were 'overspending' on their military. A number of governments, such as Japan, discussed similar policies (Büttner and Krause, 1995; OECD, 1998).

Soon, however, it became obvious that such conditionality was difficult to implement (Ball, 1996; OECD, 1998). For instance: what level of military expenditure constitutes 'overspending'? Despite long discussions and the powerful rationale, no internationally-accepted standard or norm for the appropriate level of military expenditure or the ratio between military and social expenditure has ever been agreed. There are no 'objective' criteria to adjudicate where 'overspending' begins. Qualitative and political judgements, such as those on the 'threat environment' of a country, have to be made. This, however, opens the door for points of view and disputes. By way of illustration, Turkey has a military expenditure share of GDP of 5.0 percent, while that for Malawi is 0.8 percent (BICC, 2002). Should Turkey cut more than Malawi because it spends more, or Malawi more than Turkey because it has no immediate military threat to fear?

In addition to the question of the acceptable level of military expenditure, other obstacles to a coherent policy towards recipient countries' military expenditures soon became obvious. In the German case, for instance, there were severe conflicts between the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, BMZ) and

the foreign ministry on policies with respect to China and India. China, by far the strongest military power in East Asia, was judged by BMZ to be 'overspending'. The foreign ministry, backed by the economy ministry, feared countermeasures by the Chinese government and therefore battled against a reduction in development assistance. In the case of India, German submarines were sold at the same time that the ministry for development cooperation was cutting development assistance. The Indian government was quick to publicly exploit this inconsistency and development assistance was raised to earlier levels. Another country where the BMZ ran into a controversy was Peru; again in this case Germany was supplying submarines to the country.

There has also been a notable lack of donor coordination with respect to both analysis and policy implementation. The OECD DAC did indeed become involved in the issue, but at a fairly late stage (OECD, 1998; Ball, 1998b).

Perhaps not surprisingly, the reactions of recipient governments to what they perceived as development donor interference in internal military matters, whether in the form of policy dialogue or as a conditionality, were uniformly negative. Decisions on the level of military expenditure were seen as the prerogative of national sovereignty. Thus, efforts by donor countries to have a say on this matter were strongly rejected.

The effects of attempts by donors to influence the level of military expenditure in developing countries were mixed. In the few cases where donors exercised conditionality, such as in Pakistan in the early 1990s, the effects were nil. Neither could a transfer of resources to civilian activities – a so-called 'peace dividend' – be observed, nor was there an improvement in security. This was in contrast to cases where the initiative for downsizing was clearly domestic, such as in the mid-to-late 1990s in South Africa (Williams, 1990, p. 1). Linking development assistance to a reduction in military spending, that is, creating conditionality, quickly also ran into problems. Those governments that had officially adopted such policies quickly abandoned them. In 2001 the OECD DAC member countries agreed that: "In accepting the legitimate needs for well-functioning security systems with professionalised security forces, a single-minded focus on downsizing the security forces and reducing military and/or security spending, often a component of donor conditionality, may not be consistent with the end of enhancing security as a foundation for development. Strengthening state capacity to fulfil legitimate duties

may help restore and maintain security” (OECD, 2001, p. 39). ). It seems that ‘positive conditionality’, that is, an increase in assistance to countries adopting a course of military expenditure reductions as their own decision might be more appropriate and effective.

While the issue of inappropriate military expenditure has not disappeared from the development donor agenda, the emphasis in discourse shifted in the late 1990s. The focus on fiscal matters gave way to a broader view of security spending. Other elements of the security sector came into view, lack of security began to be recognised as an important development issue and governance over security spending became a central concern. Still, concerns about ‘overspending’ remain on the agenda for the international financial institutions as well as for many development donors. A recent example is that of Zimbabwe. The government was asked by international donors not to raise military expenditure beyond a certain threshold. Other countries are also under pressure not to spend beyond certain levels. However, these thresholds are neither declared to be conditions for development assistance, nor are they publicly discussed. So, the main policy instruments of development donors have shifted away from declared conditionality to ‘policy dialogues’ with recipient countries, in which development donors make their concerns known, along with an emphasis on increased transparency in data and decision-making. The philosophy behind this approach is that it is predominantly dictators and authoritarian governments who maintain overblown security apparatuses (Winkler, 2002, p. 8).

The concept of security sector reform came in quite handy for development donors to keep the concern with ‘overspending’ alive, at the same time it relieved their policies of a possible ‘neo-colonialist’ taint. Now it was up to the governments of developing countries themselves to decide what to spend on their security sectors, but this was to be based on principles of transparency and accountability, acceptable at the same time to development donors (see below).

Both the IMF and the World Bank are concerned about fiscal data transparency, including that on military expenditure. The IMF for instance adopted a “Code of Good Practices on Fiscal Transparency” in March 2001 (IMF, 2001a and 2001b), which requires governments to publish a wealth of fiscal data. Both organisations have made it clear that in their view military sectors should adhere to transparency requirements similar to those expected of the civilian parts of government (Ball and

Holmes, 2003). Despite this, very few countries publish detailed data on the funding of their military sectors. Many continue not to publish any credible data at all (Ball and Brzoska, 2002). Arcane funding of military forces from seemingly civilian budget items or off-budget remains a frequent practice (Ball and Hendrickson, 2002, Short, 2002).

### ***Post-Conflict Peace-Making and Conflict Prevention***

As a number of development donors were discussing military expenditure as a development issue in the 1990s, they were confronted with the urgent need to directly address matters of physical security within their work. The growing number of international peacekeeping missions, along with a wider spectrum of activities by development donors in post-war situations, led to new challenges that brought development donors into contact with uniformed forces, eg in demobilisation, de-mining, small arms control and policing. The cost of wars and post-conflict reconstruction also strengthened the impetus to develop more effective assistance for the prevention of militant conflicts.

After wars, regardless of whether they end with the victory of one side or in a negotiated peace, military forces regularly need to be reorganised and downsized. One reason is their cost, which needs to be reduced in order to make more money available for development purposes. In addition, during open conflict, armed forces often take over most of the security functions of the state, external and internal alike. A major challenge in the post-war period is thus to completely reorganise the government's role in protecting its citizens' security and human rights. While the armed forces have to be downsized, often a national police force needs to be thoroughly reformed, or sometimes even newly created, in order to make it professional, civilian, well-trained and deserving of the respect of the entire population.

Wars also regularly leave a legacy of surplus weapons which can prove to be an impediment to development. Without de-mining, areas may remain inaccessible or unusable for productive activities such as agriculture. Widespread illegal use of small arms, in criminal acts and personal violence, reduces economic growth and development (Muggah and Batchelor, 2002).

While post-war situations obviously present specific major obstacles to development, which development donors by definition should be interested in addressing, it nevertheless takes time to define and adopt the appropriate role. Post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building continue to be experimental situations – not only for a great many of the development donors but also, for example, for peacekeepers (Ehrhart et al, 2002; Fitz-Gerald, 2003).

During peacekeeping operations, the division of labour among the various external actors, especially among peace-keeping troops, UN administrations, humanitarian organisations and development donors, is often unclear. With increasing frequency over the 1990s peacekeeping forces have been responsible for conducting demobilisation activities, organising police forces, supporting de-mining, and initiating disarmament programmes (Oakley et al, 1998; UNIDIR, 1996). However, as peacekeeping troops generally do not stay in the respective country long, the question of succession soon arises. More or less naturally, eyes then turn to development donors. They, however, have needed time to gain experience in these fields, and in dealing directly with players such as the armed forces and police.

While in theory, there is a ‘peacekeeping-to-development’ continuum in security-related activities, similar to the ‘relief-to-development’ continuum on the humanitarian side, in practice a gap has opened up in many cases between activities begun (or not begun) by peacekeepers and continued (or not continued) by development donors. In fact, many issues relating to the division of labour in post-conflict situations remain unclear and tend to be solved in an *ad hoc* manner on the spot (Taft, 2002; Fitz-Gerald, 2003; for a concrete example, see King et al., 2002).

In the past few years, efforts have been made to close this gap from both sides. Peacekeepers have become more aware of the importance of taking longer-range development objectives into account, particularly by initiating and actually commencing activities related to demobilisation, de-mining and disarmament. A particularly prominent illustration of this change is the ‘Brahimi-Report’ of 2000 (United Nations, 2000) in which it is argued that “the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants – key to immediate post-conflict stability and reduced likelihood of conflict recurrence – is an area in which peace-building makes a direct contribution to public security and law and order“ (p. 7).

Development donors have also been increasingly asked to concern themselves with the security-relevant aspects of post-conflict situations where external peacekeepers are absent. With some reluctance, at least some of them are on the road to becoming experts in such programmes. A number of development donors have gained experience in a wide range of post-war activities, including demobilisation, de-mining,<sup>4</sup> police reform and judicial reform. The World Bank and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), for instance, have conducted a good number of demobilisation and reintegration programmes, while UNDP has organised various police reform projects.

Even so, it soon became clear that more coordination, more cooperation and a certain degree of conceptual clarity was needed. One important basis was at least a rough sketch of what the objectives and priorities in security-related activities should be.

In some circles, the term 'micro-disarmament' gained prominence in relation to such activities. First mentioned in the supplement to the Agenda for Peace by the then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (United Nations, 1995), it became particularly important in discussions at the UN. Later on the term 'practical disarmament' attained popularity, basically covering the same ground as micro-disarmament. This term was first introduced in a UN General Assembly resolution on 'Support for Practical Disarmament' sponsored by the German government in 1997, which has hence been adopted annually, in similar form, as one of the disarmament-related UN resolutions (e.g. A/RES/57/81 of 22 Nov. 2002).

However, with its focus on disarmament, the term 'practical disarmament' had far less attraction for the development donor community, of whom many preferred the term 'DDR', standing for 'Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration' of former combatants. But this latter term obviously only covered a part of the security-relevant activities and hence a broader term was needed.

Again, the concept of security sector reform came in handy to describe a range of activities about which peacekeepers, UN administrations and development donors

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<sup>4</sup> De-mining is a tricky issue for development donors, though. The World Bank, for instance, which has conducted a great number of demobilisation programmes (see Coletta et al, 1996), has also supported de-mining but, like other development donors, with the reservation that the areas cleared of mines were to be used for productive activities. Mine-clearance with a general objective of improving the physical security of people, but which is not directly relevant to development, is not funded by the World Bank. See World Bank, 1997b.

needed to talk. Not only did it suggest a comprehensive approach, instead of one dealing separately with each of the issues mentioned, but it also provided a comprehensive perspective for the direction of change, even if only roughly sketched. A typical example of such usage of the term 'security sector reform' is provided in a text from the World Bank: "Controlling the illegal weapons trade, demilitarising police forces, and restructuring armies can be important stabilising factors in countries making the transition from war to peace. Sometimes weapons are one of the country's major investments; close attention must be paid to the disarmament process to avert further conflict. A reformed security sector will alleviate many concerns of potential investors, and thus help to rebuild the economy." (Coletta, Mendelsson and Vanheukelom, 1998).

Security-related issues were likewise an obvious target for development donor activity in the field of conflict-prevention. The behaviour of security sector forces themselves has often been described as a cause of conflict, or as turning latent into open conflict, both at a regional level and internally. A reformed security sector, incorporating armed forces geared towards regional cooperation, police forces serving all the people, and a judicial sector that delivers justice, is clearly a contribution to conflict prevention. To leave this sector out of conflict-prevention activities would be dangerous. Slowly, if reluctantly, at least some development donors expanded their envelope of activities to include those with security relevance, generally from judicial reform issues to police forces and, at least in a few cases, the control of military forces. The concept of security sector reform is well suited to describe both the content and the objectives of security-related activities in conflict prevention.

### ***Governance and Public Sector Reform***

A third root of the current usage of security sector reform, already mentioned above, is concern with improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of the provision of government services. 'Governance' had been a primary concept of development policy since the early 1990s, and reform in the provision of public services one of the major instruments of development policy.

Development theory has long pointed to the importance of state institutions for development. While neo-classical economic theory, on which for instance the World Bank and the IMF have primarily based their development policy, is particularly

concerned with the size of government relative to the private sector (World Bank, 1997a), other economists, as well as political scientists, have pointed out the negative effects of “rent-seeking” (seeking income through positions of political power) and corruption on development which need to be countered by greater transparency and accountability in government activities. They have also stressed the importance of a balance between a vibrant civil society and state institutions capable of delivering public benefits, not only those such as a good infrastructure but also justice and security (UNDP, 1997, 2002b; Stiglitz, 2002).

In development donor discourse on ‘governance’ in the early and mid-1990s, the neo-classical model was dominant, resulting in a preference for downsizing over improvements in the delivery of public goods. For many donors, with the World Bank and the IMF in the lead, the provision of a limited set of public services at the lowest possible cost was the priority. Donors quite aggressively pushed recipient countries to implement major government reform programmes for public enterprises, government agencies and government ministries. More transparency and accountability were seen as fundamental means to improving efficiency in generally overstuffed public sectors (World Bank, 2000).

A certain shift occurred in the late 1990s. Donors began to redirect their attention to the provision of public goods again, focusing on the way these were delivered more than on cutting costs. Programmes aimed at reducing corruption and improving accountability and transparency in governments gained in importance in the late 1990s. A good indicator of such change is the difference in discussion of the role of the state by the World Bank in its World Development Reports of 1997 and 2002 (World Bank, 1997a, 2002).

The World Bank defines governance and public sector reform as one of its main objectives: “A fundamental role of the Bank is to help governments work better in our client countries. The Public Sector Group’s objectives are based on the view that the Bank must focus more of its efforts on building efficient and accountable public sector institutions (...) rather than simply providing discreet policy advice”.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the importance of governance reform for development donors in the 1990s, efforts largely excluded defence ministries; the military, police and other security bodies remained largely outside such reform efforts until the late 1990s. The reasons

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted from: <http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/index.cfm>.

for this were similar to the ones given above regarding the limited effect of policies on military expenditure. One principal reason was that the organisations leading the governance reform agenda, such as the World Bank and the IMF, were concerned that they might overstep their mandates which exclude political activities. Similarly, bilateral donors had long entertained reservations about extending their programmes into security-related issues that were not directly linked to economic measures such as military expenditure. Nor were governments in recipient countries keen on development donors meddling in this core area of statehood. In fact, with strong pressure on reform in all other parts of the government, the military, police and judiciary gained in importance as sectors where ruling politicians could place cronies. There are in fact some indicators – such as increasing corruption in the international arms trade in the early 1990s – that the level of ‘good’ governance in the military sector actually fell with the efforts of the international donor community to increase it in other sections of the recipient governments.

There is no sound logic behind excluding the security sector from governance reform. Security is a service like others. Albeit it can be rightfully argued that as a matter of national sovereignty final decisions on size and structure are the prerequisite of national governments, development donors have the obligation to question the efficiency and effectiveness of security institutions too, as these influence the success of the development assistance that donors provide.

In fact, many developing states had already been working on reforming the part of their government charged with the provision of security, even though this was not termed security sector reform, and efficiency was more important than democratic accountability. Often they had received external advice on improving the efficiency and professionalisation of their uniformed forces from foreign sources, such as militaries, defence ministries, police forces and the like. Development donor agencies seldom had a part in these external support activities. It was, in fact, not until the late 1990s that they got involved in this field and then it was with a particular agenda to promote transparency and accountability under the new label of ‘security sector reform’.

By the late 1990s, there was much experience in recipient countries on issues that the development donors were keen on, such as the improvement of the democratic accountability of armed forces, including the police. In South America, for example, an end was brought to military rule and states of emergency in a number of states.

Democratic civilian institutions, such as parliaments, regained control over decision-making, and the media and the general public could discuss security-related matters more freely. This generally took place without much foreign assistance, but many of the ideas and principles adopted for the democratic control of uniformed forces were strongly influenced by international academic discussion on this topic, generally under the label of 'civil-military relations' as well as 'best practice' in some industrialised countries, such as Germany (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986, Pion-Berlin, 2001; Alagappa, 2001; Cawthra and Luckham, 2003).

An often-quoted 'best practice' case is that of South Africa. The post-Apartheid South African government was committed to a thorough reform of the military, the police and the judicial sector. The reforms included a complete overhaul of the legal framework, as well as many institutional changes, greater ethnic balance, and professionalisation of administrations and forces. A major focus was improvements in transparency, democratic accountability, and the participation of civil society in decision-making (Nathan, 2000; Williams, 2000). If external assistance played a certain role, the major players were nevertheless clearly South Africans, who often drew on experiences from other countries.

There is some overlap between the practices and instruments of earlier reform efforts in security sectors and those found in the security sector reform agenda that began to be promoted in the late 1990s (Williams, 2000, p. 2):

- The security sector reform agenda has a clear normative and practical commitment to development. Reform is thus ideally planned and implemented in a way that maximises its contribution to development. Obstacles presented by the security sector to development or gaps in the provision of services seen as important for development are thus priority areas for security sector reform.
- There is a strong normative commitment to consolidation of democracy, promotion of human rights, good governance and the creation of a culture of accountability and transparency.
- Defence reform, police reform and reform of the judicial sector were generally seen and conducted as separate efforts in the past. The relevant institutions – armed forces, police, the courts, etc – have quite different cultures and operate under distinct normative frameworks. The security sector reform agenda favours a holistic approach to the provision of security, integrating all the relevant institutions and their connections.

## ***Relation to Other Debates***

In addition to the three roots discussed above – debates on military expenditure, conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction, and public sector governance – certain further discussions in the development donor community have had an impact on the concept of security sector reform.

One such issue was the older debate on civil-military relations (Welch and Mendelson-Forman, 1998; Brzoska, 2000). Beginning in the late 1950s, a lively academic discourse began to produce a large number of studies on the conditions and effects of coup d'états, military rule and civilian control over armed forces. Together with literature examining civil-military relations in the political sciences, there is also a rich sociological research tradition focusing on issues such as recruitment patterns, the internal cultures of armed forces and the belief systems of soldiers and officers. With the growing number of military governments in developing countries in the 1960s, literature on civil-military relations burgeoned, reflected for instance in the establishment of a major journal, *Armed Forces and Society*. Like political science and sociology at large, this strand of academic work is dominated by US academics, though there have been a good number of contributions from Western Europe, Latin America and, since the early 1990s, Eastern Europe.

These academic debates found an avid reception in defence ministries and among armed forces personnel throughout a great number of countries. Some armed forces opened dedicated research institutions to study issues related to the sociology of armed forces and civil-military relations, such as the German SOWI (*Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut der Bundeswehr*). In certain developing countries, not only in Latin America in particular but also in some Asian countries such as Indonesia and Thailand, academics working on civil-military relations were able to engage in reform efforts within the armed forces. Some defence reformers in South Africa in the early 1990s were also known to be well aware of the relevant research.

Certain providers of military assistance, such as the United States, also included civil-military relations in their training programmes for foreign military personnel. In the late 1990s, the US government founded specialised centres to train not merely foreign military personnel but also bureaucrats, along with representatives of the media and NGOs, on defence reform, including civil-military relations. These were set up on the basis of regional specialisation within the National Defense University

in Washington, DC (Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, Near East South Asia Centre for Strategic Studies, Africa Centre for Strategic Studies).

Having said this, it was not until the late 1990s that the development donor community began to take notice of both the relevant literature and corresponding training activities. DFID and other development donors began to be exposed to these when they started to get more serious about security-related assistance work and came into closer contact with the armed forces in their own countries, as well as armed forces and civilian defence reformers in developing countries. There is some obvious overlap between the issues on the civil-military relations agenda and what was developed under the heading of 'security sector reform', particularly its governance aspect. However, significant differences also existed. The older literature was exclusively concerned with military forces. Its focus was predominantly political – Who was in charge? – and sociological – How do military people differ from civilians? – rather than being concerned with development.<sup>6</sup> Still, it is remarkable that not much of this earlier literature has been absorbed into the discourse about security sector reform. This may partly be due to the different jargon of the development donor community and partly to the wish to distance itself from the period of great hopes in the military as agents for development in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Interestingly, the term 'security sector reform' turned out to have an attraction for academics who had earlier focused predominantly on the more traditional research agenda of civil-military relations and military sociology. In a good part of the research on the post-Cold War transition of armed forces in Central and Eastern Europe, the term 'security sector reform' is now preferred to older concepts such as 'civil-military relations', in order to stress the broader economic, institutional and societal consequences of reform, including such 'second generation' instruments of the establishment of civilian control over the military as demobilisation, defence industry conversion, and the formation of a civil society capable of engaging in informed debate on security-related issues (Edmunds, 2002; Hendrickson and Karkoszka, 2002; Winkler, 2002).

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<sup>6</sup> An exception needs to be made for that part of literature on civil-military relations interested in the differences in outputs between civilian and military governments. The effects of different types of regimes on economic growth, and also on broader measures of development, has been a popular topic particularly among political scientists using comparative quantitative methods. For an overview see Decalo, 1990.

Another important, though largely indirect, influence on the development of a concept of security sector reform has been the discourse on an expanded concept of security, particularly on the concept of 'human security'.

The concept 'human security' was first introduced in the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report. Two ideas which had gained in prominence in the early 1990s were given a particular twist in that report. The first was that there were broader threats to security than the classical military threats, including such threats as major ecological disasters or epidemics (Matthews Tuchman, 1989). The second idea was that the objective of security policy should not be the security of the state – the main unit of concern in traditional security policy – but the security of individuals (Buzan, 1991). In a bold step, the authors of the 1994 Human Development Report, led by the pre-eminent development economist Mahbub ul-Haq, combined the two notions and defined human security as a complement to their earlier creation of 'human development'.

Unfortunately, on closer examination the elegance of the concept is lost. It is not clear, for example, what it is that essential threats consist of. Also, there are numerous internal inconsistencies in the definition, such as the relative importance of threats emanating from violence in comparison to that of other threats to life and health (Paris, 2001). In recent years, the concept of human security has developed in two directions. The first essentially equates the objectives of human development and human security, reserving the latter concept for catastrophic interruptions or other major shocks in the more gradual course of human development. It takes the view that achieving human security involves alleviating all types of insecurity that can afflict a person. The OECD wrote in 2001: "The concept of security has shifted away from a fundamentally military focus on protecting territory and sovereignty with national defence forces. The new conceptualisation includes the responsibility, principally of the state, to ensure the well-being of people. As a consequence, discussion of security issues, "systems" and actors has become comprehensive and no longer refers to military systems only" (OECD, 2001, p. 37). The second trend is more narrowly focused on protecting individuals and communities against violence. It views human security and human development as distinct – yet complementary – concepts, arguing that human security should be reserved for the objective to achieve freedom from fear of physical violence from other human beings. From such a perspective, conflict, crime and repression receive primary attention in the human security agenda.

Not unlike similarly comprehensive concepts, 'human security' has found more proponents among policy-makers than among academics. Currently there are several multilateral efforts being undertaken to identify ways of defining and operationalising the concept of human security. The Human Security Network, which counts 12 governments among its members and one as observer, focuses its activities on protecting individuals and communities against violence ([www.humansecuritynetwork.org](http://www.humansecuritynetwork.org)). The independent Human Security Commission, chaired by Sadako Ogata and Amartya Sen, which was created at the beginning of 2001 *inter alia* to promote and develop the concept of human security as an operational tool for policy formulation and implementation, adopted a fairly broad definition of human security in its final report (Ogata and Sen, 2003). In contrast, the concept featured in the Human Security Report from the University of Vancouver in Canada is more narrow, with data focusing primarily on violence ([www.humansecurity.info](http://www.humansecurity.info)). This narrower conception is also favoured by the Canadian government (DFAIT, 2003).

Interestingly, the overlap between the two interpretations of the concept of human security is of particular importance for the debate on security sector reform. On the one hand, the concept has given somewhat more intellectual depth to the development donors' idea of reducing military expenditure. Here was a concept that justified looking hard at the level of military expenditure, taking into account all threats to the survival and health of people. In fact, the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report unabashedly argued for deep cuts in military expenditure (UNDP, 1994). On the other hand, by arguing that violence was but one threat among many to peoples' lives, it helped the development donor community take all threats – including those from violence – seriously. If development policy needed to address all threats to life and health, the development donors could also claim responsibility for all such policies, including those addressing protection from the threat of collective or individual violence.

### **Summary**

The concept of security sector reform emerged in the late 1990s bringing a number of converging concerns under one intellectual roof. The development donor community, for whose purposes the concept was first developed, required a concept that intellectually justified its venture into security-related activities. The original justification – reducing military expenditure and investing the savings in development

– had proved too narrow a focus. Also, there was no yardstick, no positive assessment of what would constitute the ‘right’, or even the maximum permissible level of military expenditure. Growing post-conflict reconstruction requirements and conflict-prevention activities raised the profile of issues relating to militaries, police forces and the justice sector, that were often more conflict-enhancing than conflict-solving. In the next step of thinking on security-sector related issues, it was natural to ask who makes the relevant decisions about both the level and the priorities in spending in the security sector. This fitted well into the debate on governance that the donor community was engaged in *vis-à-vis* the broader set of government activities. “The term ‘security sector reform’ has emerged over the last few years – joining related concepts such as ‘governance’, ‘public sector reform’, ‘conflict-prevention’ and ‘peace-building’ – as a state-of-the-art term in donor discourse. This does not mean that the policy concerns now labelled security sector reform did not already exist – only that they are now placed together under this conceptual umbrella, recognising that security issues cannot be excluded from development strategies” (Lilly et al 2002, p. 1).

The demand in the development donor community, at least by some of its actors, to find a concept to justify greater involvement in security-related issues was met in the 1990s by an opportunity for these actors to do so. The Cold War taboos on not alienating certain governments no longer had their previous effect. Security policy in industrialised countries had to be reconsidered and reorganised – in a way necessitating security sector reform throughout the world (Winkler, 2002, pp. 34-39). Development donors were asked to take on new tasks, particularly in post-conflict and conflict prevention contexts.

Obviously, both the amount of interest in broadening activities into security-relevant areas, and the opportunities to do so, differed from donor country to donor country. It is hardly surprising that the term ‘security sector reform’ originates from the new Labour government in London. The United Kingdom has long had a history of military assistance programmes, to which the new government in London could at the same time give a new direction and complement it with a corresponding civilian programme. Those donors who followed, such as Norway (NUPI, 1999) – with a focus on police activities – Germany ([www.gtz.de/security-sector/english/materials.htm](http://www.gtz.de/security-sector/english/materials.htm)) or the Netherlands (Groenewald and van Tongeren, 2002), are also renowned for their innovative approaches to development policy and their particular concerns about conflict-related issues.

Nevertheless, the diverse origins of the concept of security sector reform proved to be a burden, in that the concept was expected to cover a multitude of issues, activities and policies. Can the concept of security sector reform indeed incorporate so many? Is such a broad understanding of its essence, its priorities and limitations possible?

Clearly, for the development donor community to get involved, this question was intimately linked to another one, namely whether there were links between security sector reform and the promotion of development, particularly the reduction of poverty.

The postulation of such links is at the heart of the original concept of security sector reform. However, because of its many facets and connotations, it has expanded into areas far beyond development policy, most notably insofar as it serves as a concept for defence reform in transition countries. This expansion has not made it any easier to further refine the concept as an instrument of development policy. Furthermore, practical support for security sector reform on the part of the development donors has been slow to materialise, thus providing little in terms of empirical underpinning of the conceptual development of the term. It can be argued that the essence of security sector reform is even more vague today than it was when it was first coined in 1998 (Chanaa, 2002). However, much of this contention seems to be due to the success of the concept on the one hand and the lack of implementation by donors on the other, rather than to the concept as such.

## **Competing Paradigms for Security Sector Reform?**

### ***Development Theory as an Anchor***

The concept of security sector reform spread quickly from its origin in 1998, both within and outside the development community. The purpose of this section of the paper is to illustrate the directions the debate on security sector reform has taken within the development community, that is among development donor organisations and academics, as well as NGO researchers writing on security sector reform as a development issue.

The debate on security sector reform in development donor policy since 1998 has been enriched by a number of significant contributions. Both academics and

development practitioners have piled up evidence underlining the importance of security sector reform for sustainable human development. Writers have refined the lists of possible activities within the realm of security sector reform and have analysed prior experiences. On the other hand, there have been fewer papers aimed specifically at the clarification of the concept. Looking at the body of literature, fairly little contention and disagreement seem to exist, beyond some doubt about the usefulness of the broad version of the concept (Wulf, 2000b; Chanaa, 2002). However under the surface of general agreement about the need for, and basic principles of, security sector reform, some major differences on priorities, timing and institutional arrangements are apparent.

Not all differences are differences in substance. In some cases, what might appear to be a difference in substance is really a difference on the levels of objectives. For some authors, improved democratic control over security forces is the main objective of security sector reform, while for others this is at best one instrument among several to reach a broader goal such as improving the physical security of poor people. However, there are also real differences. The most important of these is the relative weight given to the provision of physical security versus more democratic control over decision-making in the security sector. Further differences are, for example, the overlap between security sector reform and reform of the judicial sector, or the overlap between the security sector and other sectors of the government.<sup>7</sup>

The following sections attempt to assess how deep, and how significant, the differences in recent conceptions of security sector reform are. The discussion begins with an examination of the links between security sector reform and poverty reduction, the dominant objective of development policy today. This is followed by an exposition of the two differing paradigms postulated in the debate on security sector

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<sup>7</sup> From the beginning of the discussion of security sector reform, there has been debate on what to include. There are both conceptual issues – what is counted under the label ‘providing security’ and what is not – and organisational aspects – UK DFID, for instance has excluded police work because it is not one of its responsibilities within the division of labour in the UK government. Theoretically, it makes much sense to count all those public services charged with the effective provision of security which includes the penal justice and the prison system. Current definitions of security sector reform tend to include large parts or the whole of the judicial sector as one element in need of reform. In addressing requisite changes to the judicial sector, advocates of security sector reform can tap a wealth of practical experience. The World Bank, for instance, has been running security sector reform programmes for several decades ([www4.worldbank.org/legal/leglr/](http://www4.worldbank.org/legal/leglr/)) and has gained considerable experience (Botero et al, 2003). Because of this rich tradition in judicial reform, UNDP in late 2002 even began to speak of ‘justice and security sector reform’ or ‘JSSR’ (UNDP, 2002b) instead of subsuming those parts of judicial reform which deal with criminal justice and the penal system under the concept of security sector reform. However, with judicial sector reform activities currently more established and accepted in the donor community than reform efforts aimed at uniformed forces, there is a danger that traditional security sector reform activities might be crowded out by judicial sector reform activities such as transitional

reform. Finally, post-conflict reconstruction will be discussed, which in some respects is a special case but at the same time has attracted most of the relevant development donor activity.

### ***Poverty Reduction***

At the beginning of the 21st century, development policy is now focusing on improving the plight of the poorest people on the earth. Poverty reduction has become the prime rationale of development donors. This is reflected, for instance, in the Millennium Goals, adopted during the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in September 2000. The heads of member states of the United Nations reaffirmed their commitment to working together towards a world in which sustaining development and eliminating poverty would have the highest priority. The Millennium Development Goals grew out of the agreements and resolutions of world conferences organised by the United Nations over the past decade. The goals have been commonly accepted as a framework for measuring progress in development. Targets number 1 and 2 read:

- “Target 1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day.
- Target 2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger” ([www.developmentgoals.org/Poverty.htm](http://www.developmentgoals.org/Poverty.htm)).

The major development donors have been geared towards the overall objective of poverty reduction for some time. For instance, UNDP made poverty reduction its main objective after the Copenhagen Social Summit of 1995. As for the World Bank, its mission statement reads: “The World Bank’s Mission is to reduce poverty and improve living standards through sustainable growth and investment in people” ([www.worldbank.org/poverty/mission/index.htm](http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/mission/index.htm)).

But how can the goal of reducing poverty be achieved? The World Bank identifies three primary elements ([www.worldbank.org/poverty/mission/rp1.htm](http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/mission/rp1.htm)):

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justice and access to justice which are highly worthy in themselves but have little to do with the provision of physical security in a narrow sense.

- **Accelerating economic growth.** Growth is the most powerful weapon in the fight for higher living standards. Faster growth will require policies that encourage macroeconomic stability, which shift resources to more efficient sectors, and which integrate countries into the global economy.
- **Improving the distribution of income and wealth.** The benefits of growth for the poor may be eroded if the way income is distributed worsens.
- **Accelerating social development.** Social indicators will benefit from improvements in economic growth and income and wealth distribution, but there is still room for policies that target interventions which appear to have a large impact on health and educational outcomes. At the top of the list are the following: female education; safe water and sanitation; child immunisation; and the provision of safety nets to protect the most vulnerable. Attention must also be given to the social structures and institutions which affect development.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has emphasised prioritising 'pro-poor' policies, the development of national plans to eradicate poverty, and the participation of poor people in decision-making as key elements in an anti-poverty strategy (UNDP, 2000). Recently all major international and bilateral donors have come together with the governments of poor countries to begin writing Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) that will provide concrete plans on how to comprehensively address poverty ([www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies](http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies)).

Poverty reduction has also been a major rationale for security sector reform, particularly for the UK Department of International Development, DFID (UK DFID, 1999, p. 2; see also UK DFID 1997). In the corresponding literature, a number of links constituting the intermediate objectives of security sector reform are mentioned alongside poverty reduction and security sector reform. The most important ones include:

1. **Making more resources available for investment** in poverty-reduction activities. One way to make such resources available is to reduce expenditure on security-related forces in developing countries.
2. **Better protection of individuals and society.** One of the factors inhibiting economic development is insecurity about personal safety and the safety of property.

Where crime and violence are rampant, growth rates are reduced. In addition to the direct destruction of people's livelihoods, crime and violence also reduce confidence in savings and investment. Studies suggest that poor people are more affected by crime and violence than more affluent people who have the means to buy private protection.

**3. Improving the contribution of the security sector to conflict prevention and management.** Open conflict is one of the major causes of poverty. Conflict prevention is one of the main instruments for reducing poverty. Security sector reform can contribute to this, for instance by prioritising regional arms control, confidence-building measures and other activities aimed at reducing regional tension. However, as most conflicts today are internal conflicts, SSR must also include security-related policies that reduce internal tensions, arising for example, between different ethnic groups. Often, although they can represent a factor in conflict management (as examples show), security forces such as police forces are accused of aggravating such tension.

**4. Greater participation in decision-making on security sector forces as well as more access to security and justices.** As mentioned above, participation by poor people in decision-making is seen as a crucial element in making policies more 'pro-poor'. In the security sector, which is often not subject to much oversight and control, there is often a long way to go to make it more 'pro-poor', improved oversight being one of the most important steps.

These four links between poverty reduction and security sector reform are fairly well established through scientific research, even though some gaps remain. For instance, there is general agreement that the reduction of military expenditure does make more resources available for economic development (Gleditsch, 1995, Dunne, 1995); however if no productive use is made of these additional resources, as is often the case, there is no effect on indicators such as economic growth. Similarly, although it can be shown econometrically that the simultaneous reduction of military expenditure within a regional security nexus is beneficial to all countries in the region (Collier and Hoeffler, 2002), joint action is difficult to achieve. There is also econometric evidence showing that increases in military expenditure generally do not deter civil wars (Collier et al, 2003. pp. 71-72). When war arises, this will generally result in major negative economic effects. In an econometric study, Collier found that countries tend to grow around 2.2 percentage points more slowly during civil war

than during peace. Over an average civil war period of about 7 years, this accumulates to a 15 percent loss in GDP and an approximately 30 percent increase in the incidence of absolute poverty. Stewart, Huang and Wang (2001) have calculated an average annual growth rate loss of 3.3 percent for a sample of 18 countries in conflict. While the links between conflict reduction and poverty are well established, it is difficult to judge whether more participatory decision-making will indeed result in military sectors that are more 'pro-poor'.

There is even less 'hard knowledge' when it comes to other parts of the security sector. The best established link is that between crime and economic development. A number of studies, mostly from Latin America, provide strong confirmation of the negative effects of crime on economic growth and income distribution (Fajnzylber, Lederman and Loayza, 1998).

Unfortunately, the four intermediate objectives of security sector reform cited are not free from internal contradictions. In particular, there are several points of friction between a view that prioritises the oversight and control over security forces, and another that prioritises the provision of physical security.

### ***The Provision of Security***

Lack of physical security – threats to life, health and property – are acute problems experienced world-wide. Along with those in poor countries, people in rich countries are anxious about armed conflict, terrorism, violent crime and war. In surveys focusing on the concerns of poor people, worries about physical violence generally rank high.

To take one example, participatory poverty assessments conducted by the World Bank and others have confirmed that crime and violence are among the primary concerns of the poor. The poor are often particularly worried about abuse by government forces, such as the police (Narayan et al, 2000). In their extensive collection of 'voices of the poor', Narayan et al. report the following findings regarding unacceptable behaviour on the part of the police:

- *Unresponsive*: [The police were] absent where needed, not coming when called or coming very late; only coming when someone has been killed.

- *Corrupt*: False arrest, accusation, and imprisonment, with release only on heavy payment; theft, including stealing money from children; bribes for documents or to register cases; lying; threats, blackmail, and extortion; demanding protection money; using drugs; and conniving with criminals and releasing them when arrested.
- *Brutal*: Harassing street vendors and other poor people; confiscating identity documents; raping women who go to police stations; beating up innocent people; torture; and murder, including killing street boys.

It also appears that the poor are more likely to become victims of violence than are people with higher incomes. Although data is hard to come by and not very reliable, empirical studies of the incidence of violence suggest that the victims include a larger share of the poor and disadvantaged than of those who are better off. This is true both with respect to violence in 'peace time', for instance from common criminality (Ball and Brzoska, 2002), as well as during war (Collier et al, 2003). In the extensive statistics on violent death collected by the World Health Organisation, for instance, low income *per capita* and unequal distribution of income are listed as major risk factors for violent death. Quantitative studies show higher homicide rates for countries with lower *per capita*-income (WHO, 2002, p. 80). "The security of persons, property and assets, and the protection of human rights are fundamental to sustainable development and a precondition for people to improve their lives, particularly the poor (...) Poorly functioning security systems can create or destroy prospects for peace, social and economic progress" (OECD, 2001, p. 37).

The statistical evidence, as well as the 'voices of the poor', suggest that poor people are in general in more need of protection for their lives, health and property. Narayan et al. report (2000) that, despite having a low opinion of police forces as they exist, poor people say they are desperately in need of police to provide a modicum of neighbourhood safety.

Failure to provide physical security on the part of government forces has led to an upsurge in private security activities. For a number of countries, including among others the United States and South Africa, the number of private security personnel is actually larger than the public police forces. According to an estimate by the Security Industry Association, a trade organisation, the total turnover of the global security industry was US \$100 billion in 2000, with US \$30 billion paid for all kinds of equipment, ranging from alarms to sophisticated computer equipment, and US \$70

billion for services ([www.siaonline.org/data/irn00q2.pdf](http://www.siaonline.org/data/irn00q2.pdf)). While most of the spending on private security is by rich people, poor people have also organised protection privately in many cases, for instance in *favelas* in Brazilian cities. Private provision of security, however, has major dangers. As a market activity, those who pay will get more of it. Often private security is outside regulatory frameworks and not subject to legal restraints on the use of violence or fairness. In short, private security can only be a 'second-best solution' to publicly provided security.

Based on the diagnosis of an eminent lack of security on the one hand, and the importance of a secure environment for development and poverty reduction on the other, almost all authors who make prescriptions for security sector reform include the improvement of physical security as one of its major elements. Some authors, however, go even further and argue, effectively, that the provision of security should be the *priority* of security sector reform. For instance, the Advisory Mission on The Control and Collection of Light Weapons in the Sahel-Sahara Subregion organised by the UN Department to Disarmament Affairs in 1994 with the objective of investigating what could be done about managing the conflict that was going on in Mali in the early 1990s came up with the concept of 'security first'. 'Security first' outlined a set of policies linking 'micro-disarmament' – that is, small arms control and demobilisation – with national reconciliation and economic development into a single comprehensive programme for nations emerging from war. While 'Security First' rests on the idea of positive feedback among its various components, the creation of physical security through disarmament and the improvement of policing is seen as a precondition for further advances in the direction of building civil society and improving economic development (Poulton and Ibrahim, 1998; van der Graaf, 1999; see also Chuter, 2000).

Authors arguing in favour of putting priority on security do not neglect to mention the importance of effective oversight and control over security forces. However, some authors' recommendations can be interpreted as implying that, when pressed to choose, the priority should be the provision of security even if it is not clear whether effective oversight and control exist or not. Some of the security sector reform programmes funded by governments do focus on the provision of security. To name one prominent example: the UK government's 2003 security sector programme in Afghanistan, funded at the level of £18 million out of the Global Conflict Prevention Pool, allocates £1 million to the Human Rights Commission, £10 million for the interim payment of army salaries to the newly-trained force, an unidentified amount of

money for the secondment of a DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration) expert to UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan) in Kabul and £1.8 million for mine action programmes (UK Government, Afghanistan Fact Sheet, January 2003).

A particularly intriguing issue is the fight against terrorism, especially after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. With a view to strengthening their capabilities to detect and counter terrorist organisations, security sectors in many countries around the world have invested in increases in their effectiveness. At least in some instances, democratic governance seems to have been a victim of this expansion of security sector capabilities (Hendrickson and Karkozska, 2002).

### ***Good Governance***

While some authors stress the lack of physical security and the need for the provision of increased physical security, others argue that the armed forces, police and other elements of the security sector are themselves a major source of insecurity and that the priority must therefore be on the improvement of accountability and democratic decision-making; in other words: oversight and control. Lilly et al. write that: “Donors have increasingly begun to perceive military, police and security agencies as equally a part of the problem as of the solution – not only failing to protect the poor but also becoming sources of insecurity and conflict in their own right” (p. 3). Where the control over security forces is weak, these forces can act with impunity. Without accountability, the security forces are liable to become agents of repression themselves, disregarding human rights and willing to interfere in politics; protecting élites from the population at large while failing to adequately protect the state from external threats (Nathan 2000).

In order to minimise such negative effects, efforts must be made to develop and strengthen democratic governance over the security sector. Although participatory government offers no guarantee that security forces will act in the interests of the people, the absence of broad-based participation is a recipe for the inequitable, non-transparent, socially irresponsible and unjust behaviour of such forces (UNDP, 2002a). Governance is, in this view, the main priority of security sector reform. “The two main objectives of security sector reform are to establish good governance in the security sector and to enhance a country’s capacity to develop systems of economic and political governance that benefit society as a whole and foster the creation of a

safe and secure environment at the international, regional, national and local levels” (Ball, 2000, p. 14). “Security sector reform is the quintessential governance issue. This is so both in the sense that there is an enormous potential for misallocation of resources and also because a security sector out of control can have enormous impact on governance – indeed be a source of malgovernance” (Luckham, 1998, quoted in Ball, 2000, p. 14).

Increasing the size of security forces, or their effectiveness, will fail to produce the desired outcome if oversight and control are deficient or defective. Simply providing training to the police, for example, will not improve law and order, if the political leadership thwarts the efforts of the police force to bring criminals to justice.

Security sector reform in a governance perspective is therefore not a one-sided concept. Not only is civilian control over security forces essential – all institutions, including those charged with oversight and control, also have to meet the test of being democratic, participatory and under the rule of law. Furthermore, the armed forces have to be given enough space to ‘professionalise’ themselves so that they do not risk becoming the instruments of the political interests of those civilians in control. Professionalisation of the security forces “implies acceptance of the roles and responsibilities of security forces in democratic societies and of the need for a clear distinction between the types of behaviour that are legitimate in discharging these responsibilities and those that are not” (Ball, 2000, p. 18).

The priorities for security sector reform with a governance focus are well summarised by Ball (2000, p. 14, see also Wulf, 2000b) :

- “Ensure that security sector organisations, especially the security forces are accountable both to elected authorities and to civil society and that they operate in accordance with democratic principles and the rule of law;
- Make information about security sector budgeting and planning widely available, both within governments and to the public, to promote the achievement of manageable levels of security expenditure;
- Create an environment in which civil society can actively monitor the security sector and be consulted on a regular basis on defence policy, resource allocation and other relevant issues;
- Strengthen civil society organisations and other non-governmental actors to play such roles;

- Foster an environment that promotes regional/sub-regional peace and security;
- Give adequate attention to specific legacies of war, such as practical disarmament and demobilisation.”

### ***The Special Case of Post-Conflict Reconstruction***

As mentioned above, post-conflict work on security-related issues is one of the roots of the debate on security sector reform. Nowadays such activities are still the major focus of activities subsumed under the heading ‘security sector reform’. There is little disagreement about the need to restructure armed forces, police and other elements of the security sector after the end of open conflict. While not principally different from security sector reform activities in other settings, post-conflict situations offer quite specific opportunities for security sector reform. The need to ‘rightsize’ the security sector and to reform it after the end of conflict is almost universally accepted as an important factor in post-war reconstruction.

Post-war security sector reform typically serves a number of objectives. One of the more prominent of these is cost reduction through downsizing. Further objectives include a contribution to conflict resolution, among other things through the integration of various forces into one new armed force; more effective provision of physical security, for example through police reform; and crime prevention, such as through a reduction in the number of small arms in society. Demobilisation, small arms control, and police reform are the activities that donors most favour as immediate post-war activities with relevance to security issues (Reychler and Paffenholz, 2001; Zeeuw, 2001).

Thus post-war situations represent ‘windows of opportunity’ for the introduction of broader security sector reform projects. Many of the best-known examples of wide-ranging security sector reform – South Africa (Nathan, 2000), Bosnia (King et al, 2002) or Afghanistan (Sedra, 2002), to name but a few – occur in post-war situations. This should come as no surprise, as post-war situations are generally fluid and result in changes in many areas. This makes it easier for development donors to legitimise their own support of broader security sector reform efforts.

## **Summary**

Debate on security sector reform during the last few years has added additional issues to the ones already flowing into the original conception. The reform agenda – even if limited to the development perspective – has grown considerably.

Unfortunately, however, while it may have grown in width, it has not grown in depth, in coherence and in clarity of objectives. Criticism of the concept expressed soon after it was first postulated (Hendrickson, 1999; Smith, 2001), namely that it is intuitively right at a general level but hard to conceptualise beyond this very general level, remains valid (Chanaa, 2002). Although poverty reduction provides a solid, but very broad, framework within which a great number of security-related activities can be usefully placed, such activities cannot be easily prioritised or sequenced. Lists of actual or possibly activities falling under security sector reform have become long. A good number of such lists can be found in the relevant literature, often drawn up for development donor organisations by consultants with academic background (see e.g. Ball 1998a, 2000; Chalmers, 2000; Wulf 2000b; Lilly et al 2002; UNDP, 2002b). While recommendations are generally commensurate, there is little indication as to what to do first under which particular circumstances. In fact, there is a general stress on the importance of comprehensive and consistent programmes, which obviously puts a great burden on those actually planning security sector reform activities. There is little guidance on priorities for activities in much of the thinking on security sector reform so far.

Thus, under the general umbrella of security sector reform, about which there is much agreement in the relevant literature in general, some divergences in views have become apparent. There is, however, no unanimity about how significant these divergences are.

One view is the ‘catholic’ one: Taking the overall objective of security sector reform as a contribution to the promotion of development as the starting point, the various mid-range objectives and instruments of security-sector reform are seen as reinforcing each other (Lilly et al, 2002, p. 3). In particular, no major difference is perceived between the promotion of the provision of physical security and improving governance over security sector forces. It can make sense (depending on the particular situation which needs to be identified in detail) to either promote both, or one of the two priorities. The key is to achieve results, that is, a security sector that is

actually providing more security to people (Lilly et al, 2002). Some authors are more adamant in stressing that this can only occur within a strong institutional framework of oversight and control than others who see some potential in self-control of the armed forces by a professional ethos. The variety of mid-range objectives, as well as instruments, of security sector reform presented in relevant studies are seen as a menu from which to choose, depending on opportunity and circumstances.

The other interpretation emphasises the aspect of competition (Wulf, 2000b) among various objectives of governments. Ball (2002, p. iii) writes that the “crux” of security sector reform is to “develop both effective civilian oversight mechanisms and affordable security forces capable of providing security for the state and its citizens within the context of democratic governance”. (Ball, 2002, p. iii). Some of the objectives and instruments of security sector reform are seen as contradicting each other. For instance, larger forces, even if actually providing more security, will cost more, thus reducing the money available for other purposes, including development spending. On another plane, oversight and control can be cumbersome and time-consuming, thus reducing the immediate effectiveness of forces such as the police. Anti-terrorism provides another example of possible conflict between improving the capabilities of security sectors and their effective civilian oversight.

It is argued here that the differences in priorities regarding security sector reform for development have two main causes: the first relates to the differences in the analysis of the major obstacles to development. As described above, some view the lack of the provision of any kind of security as the main problem, others that security sector forces themselves are a potential source of insecurity, namely when they act against the interests of citizens. When describing the general problems of security sector reform, authors often argue on the basis of a single or a few countries where one or the other problem is predominant.

A second reason for a divergence in perspective results from variations in the understanding of the proper role of development donor institutions. Some, such as the UK DFID, claim a fairly large mandate for themselves in security sector reform, even though they acknowledge that there are areas, such as the training of military personnel, that are in the realm of other agencies, in this case the Ministry of Defence (UK Ministry of Defence, 1999). Other development donors show far more restraint, such as the German development agency, GTZ ([www.gtz.de/security-sector/english](http://www.gtz.de/security-sector/english)). And a good number of development donors are not engaged in

security sector reform at all. Accordingly, academics who play a role in advising development donors differ in their recommendations, some arguing that development donors adopt a proactive role (Lilly et al, 2002), while others urge caution (Wulf, 2000b).

There is no better expression of these different attitudes than the OECD DAC (OECD Development Assistance Committee) guidelines on helping prevent violent conflict. “Not all DAC members are equally ready to engage directly in work on security issues which frequently involves other parts of their governments (especially Defence and Foreign Ministries)...These distinctions reflect some longstanding concerns related to security cooperation, as well as questions of appropriate mandates and budgetary responsibilities” (OECD, 2001, p. 37). In some donor countries there are also legal restrictions surrounding security-related assistance. While endorsing security sector reform as a key instrument for development policy and recommending more action, a good number of cautious remarks are made. More importantly, only some of those activities listed in the many publications as falling under the umbrella of security sector reform are eligible as development aid by the OECD DAC. The OECD DAC stresses that there is permanent debate among its members as to what is permissible Official Development Assistance (ODA); thus more security sector reform activities may become eligible as more members become convinced that they are essential for the promotion of development. However, currently there is no consensus among DAC members on the acceptance of a broad understanding of security sector reform as ODA.

Be that as it may, points of non-agreement mentioned here should not detract from the fact that there is an overwhelming consensus on the potential usefulness of a comprehensive and broad security sector reform agenda. Despite reservations on issues such as ODA eligibility, the OECD DAC is unequivocal about this: “Reforming security forces to improve accountability and professional conduct and strengthening civilian oversight can play an important role in peace-building. Taking these efforts in parallel with activities designed to strengthen legal systems and civil society as a whole can help promote informed debate and wider participation in these processes“ (OECD, 2001, p. 119).

Still, despite the general recognition of security sector reform as a key issue in development policy, and the well-elaborated literature, including many suggestions for meaningful action, comparatively few comprehensive major programmes exist.

The situation is in actual fact more mixed: there are a great number of partial programmes which can be seen as being on the fringe of the security sector reform agenda (such as demobilisation and small arms control); a good number of programmes in areas of donor activity prior to the introduction of the concept of security sector reform (such as police reform and penal reform); but few projects on security sector governance. No inventory of such activities existed at the time of writing, so the foregoing statement must be classified as provisional.<sup>8</sup> It is primarily based on a cursory review of related literature, on some of the major donors' lists of relevant projects and on conversations with specialists in the area. Nonetheless, it is given with some confidence. What is most glaringly absent is what is perceived, in the view of many observers, to be the main contribution of the concept of security sector reform to the development debate on security-related issues: comprehensive programmes covering the breadth and depth of security sectors, programmes, that is, that give expression to the idea that security sector reform needs to be comprehensive and encompassing. The question discussed in the next section is why security sector reform has not taken off in practice in a bigger way than it has.

## **The Practice of Security Sector Reform: Beyond the Mixed Bag?**

### ***Eclectic Practice***

Security sector reform is a curious phenomenon. It has been marked from the beginning by a strong and widely accepted normative agenda on what a 'good' security sector reform should look like, incorporating long lists of suggestions for activities on how to get there. During the past few years, these lists have become longer, and so have the lists of organisations that have adopted security sector reform into their project portfolios.

The practice of security sector reform, including external assistance for it, has become a very mixed bag. A number of development donors have chosen from the suggested lists of activities and have initiated new projects, particularly in post-conflict situations. At the same time, there has been a tendency to rename some existing activities under the new, widely-debated, concept of security sector reform.

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<sup>8</sup> As mentioned above, OECD DAC, supported by external consultants, is currently seeking information from member countries on their relevant activities and plans to publish this survey in early 2004.

As shown above, the scope of security sector reform activities now extends beyond its development policy origin and is being applied in a number of contexts where poverty reduction *per se* is not the main issue.

However, the growth in the number of projects has been very uneven and has had little reference to an overall framework of security sector reform. Although projects ostensibly falling under the umbrella of security sector reform can be found in many countries, there are only a few countries where a comprehensive framework appears to have been created, the prime examples being South Africa, with strong domestic participation, and Sierra Leone, where the UK government has taken the lead.<sup>9</sup>

The popularity of the concept is, from a development point of view, both an asset and a liability. It is an asset because it raises the profile of an issue that is clearly important for successful development policy. It is a liability because the broad concept provides little guidance as to what activities to prioritise within a consistent framework.

Development donors and others concerned with development policy and poverty reduction need to refocus on the priorities of security sector reform as a development issue. Only a limited amount of help in this direction can be expected from further discussions on the nature and concept of security sector reform as such. More important will be that development donor organisations and other actors strive for a greater convergence between the agreed normative objectives of security sector reform and the capabilities for action on the part of development donors.

There are several factors that currently limit the capacity of development donors to provide assistance of the type foreseen in the normative literature. One is the limited resources that are available for security sector reform among development donor organisations. A second is that the impetus for reform is often lacking in recipient countries – sometimes a question of capacity for reform, but more often simply a lack of willingness to reform. Up to now development donors have underinvested in thorough, country-specific analysis of the difficulties of security sector reform, and this is another reason for the gap between rhetoric and reality. One cause of this is certainly that many development donor institutions are unsure how far their mandates extend. In some cases, there is no clear division of labour with other relevant actors

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<sup>9</sup> Additional cases are at the planning stage, see eg the working papers of the Global Facilitation Network on Security Sector Reform of Cranfield University ([www.gfn-ssr.org](http://www.gfn-ssr.org)).

in development donor countries, such as ministries of defence or the interior. In many others, there is simply a reluctance to enter unfamiliar fields of activities which are not within the traditional spectrum of development projects.

### ***Limited Development Assistance Resources***

Among the causes of eclecticism are the limited financial and institutional capacities of development donors. There are many, and growing, demands on development policy. At the same time, many development donor governments are cutting personnel. Thus fewer persons have to deal with more, and often more complicated, issues. Moreover few of those employed by development donor institutions have either prior knowledge or experience of security-related issues.

In addition, security sector reform is to some extent the victim of its own demands. “Successful security sector reforms require the cooperation of a wide range of actors – national and international, governmental and non-governmental...[and a] wide range of expertise” (Ball, 2000, p. 20). The danger of anything less than such a comprehensive approach, is – as Wulf (2000b) has pointed out – that a partial activity may end up increasing insecurity instead of security. For instance, a training programme for police forces, even if it focuses on community policing, may actually backfire when the judicial sector refuses to penalise police violations of human rights and there are no civil society organisations to deal with complaints about police violence. In the absence of comprehensive programmes, which require – as the Sierra Leone example shows – a tremendous amount of resources, donors generally shy away from all individual programmes which are likely to prove difficult.

In such a situation, it is no surprise that security sector reform activities tend to be found in post-conflict situations rather than elsewhere. The link between the reform of the security forces and the promotion of development is most obvious in post-conflict situations where a facilitating political framework for security sector reform is generally provided. Usually security sector reform has already been planned, or is even underway, and has been initiated and supported by national actors including, where applicable, peacekeeping forces.

## ***Local Ownership***

National leadership, or at least partnership by some select and relevant groups, is crucial for successful development projects. Hence a major impediment to the broader and more comprehensive adoption of the security sector agenda frequently lies in the difficult relations between development donors and significant actors in many developing countries.

Security sector reform activities require what in development parlance is termed 'local ownership'. If local interest and leadership is vital for development donors in principle, this is even more the case in politically sensitive areas, such as security sector reform. Development donors normally refrain from projects that have no strong local base within the developing countries for, without the commitment of national leadership to the process, much of security sector reform is apt to fail, or at best to remain marginal to the overall political process. Even if it is not necessary for all relevant governmental actors to favour reform before external actors broach the issue, there need to be good 'entry points' and key reform-minded actors available, otherwise security sector reform will not become a lasting activity. "The responsibility for undertaking security sector reform is ultimately the concern of governments and societies in developing countries. However, donors can provide assistance and form partnerships to support and assist reform processes" (Lilly et al, 2002, p. 9).

Unfortunately it is not always easy to find such local leadership particularly where the security forces are part of the problem. On the contrary, the powerful are hardly likely to be interested in change. Thus ironically 'local ownership' for security sector reform is likely to be the most severely restrained where it is actually most needed, namely in cases where repressive governments are using the security forces to protect their own regimes and interests (Luckham, 1994; Hutchful, 1997).

Having said that, donors do still have certain opportunities to launch programmes even in countries where the powerful are not interested in security sector reform. Local groups in opposition to the government, independently-minded parliamentarians and the media, etc can still provide for some 'local ownership', at least in cases where the government is not repressing all diversity of opinions. Frequently it is possible to find local partners, such as human rights groups, who are working on issues that clearly fall under the security sector reform agenda, such as documenting police abuses and the increase in transparency concerning security

forces. But, for many bilateral and international development donors whose activities within a country are based on framework agreements with local governments, it is difficult to support such groups directly. What is more, foundations and NGOs from development donor countries can usually only provide limited resources to compensate for this shortfall.

At the other end of the spectrum, however, it is sometimes the case that strong, reform-minded governments have little inclination to let development donors interfere in their reform programmes. Security issues are close to the heart of any government, and external actors may disturb what they see as core concerns (Groenewald, 2002, p. 15). Again, donors may be pushed to the fringes of a security sector reform agenda that is set by local governments. If the national agenda is compatible with what the development donors want, then this is the optimal situation. If, however, the local actors have a diverging agenda, for instance with little concern for improvements in transparency and accountability, donors will be limited to a small number of marginal activities.

### ***Differentiating Between Cases***

To some extent, all countries need security sector reform – but obviously great differences exist as to the urgency of reform, its priorities, and the possibilities for development donors to support it. Lilly et al. (2002, pp. 12-13) differentiate between five types of country groups:

- **Consolidating democracies** (security sector reform less pressing than elsewhere; external assistance essential for civil capacity-building, peacekeeping and regional security).
- **Lapsing or stalled democracies** (problematic without real government commitment; approach should aim at not doing harm, with a priority on justice, capacity-building and human rights training).
- **Transitional democracies** (a whole range of security sector reform activities required, including re-professionalisation of the armed forces, police, etc).
- **Conflict-torn societies** (problematic, where the legitimacy of public authorities is contested but still very essential; focus on conflict resolution, flow of arms, capacity-building, demobilisation and professional training but only for legitimate forces).

- **States under reconstruction** (a whole range of activities required, including re-professionalisation and training of security forces).

Helpful as this taxonomy is for focusing attention on the variations among recipient countries, it obviously needs to be differentiated even further. It is essential that security sector reform activities suit the circumstances of a particular country. The only conceivable foundation for the assessment of whether certain security sector reform activities are appropriate is a thorough analysis of the deficits and deficiencies of the security sector in a particular developing country, as well as a constant review of ongoing security sector reform projects.

For some countries already receiving external support for security sector reform, such as South Africa, such analyses and reviews exist. In the South African case, the analysis was mostly carried out by South Africans themselves (Williams, 2000; Nathan, 2000). In other cases, like Afghanistan and Indonesia, relevant analysis has in fact been undertaken, but this has usually been incorporated into other academic discourses such as regional studies, human rights reports or analyses of civil-military relations and it is not clear whether the results of these studies are properly reflected in the security sector reform activities that development donors support in these countries.

Generally speaking, there is a specific lack of analysis of how security sectors in many countries function, their role in society, their behaviour in crisis situations and their relations to other elites, etc. Up to now, most research that has been done has focused on the military along with certain aspects of behaviour, such as human rights violations. As a rule, the greatest lacunae relate to institutional and sociological aspects of policing and other non-military security forces.

Likewise, it would appear that development donors have invested only a very limited amount of resources in the improvement of analysis regarding the deficits, requirements, obstacles and opportunities of security sector reform. UK DFID has begun funding a network, one of the objectives of which is the initiation of case studies ([www.gfn.ssr.org](http://www.gfn.ssr.org)). Some of the traditional research institutions concerned with development research, such as the Clingendael Institute in the Netherlands, also sponsor relevant work ([www.clingendael.nl/cru/index.htm](http://www.clingendael.nl/cru/index.htm)). Although up to now regionally limited to the Euro-Atlantic area, DCAF's extensive series of papers on security sector reform provides a number of good and relevant studies

(www.dcaf.org). Furthermore, area specialists are increasingly acquiring expertise on security-related issues, even if many regional and development specialists are reluctant to enter what for them is a new area of expertise, as is the case with many development donors themselves. Knowledge of how the security forces function internally seems to require contact with such forces, or even personal experience gained within similar forces, and this is something many involved in development work do not have. There are still a great number of institutional and personal barriers that curb effective interaction between academics working on regional and development studies on the one hand and those that study security – including research on security forces – on the other.

### ***The Role of Development Policy Actors***

To a certain degree, the research community reflects the divisions that are also found among relevant government agencies in many donor countries. Development agencies, foreign offices, defence and interior ministries often all claim responsibility for at least some part of the broad security sector reform agenda and, in certain countries at least, the promotion of a security sector reform agenda by international development ministries is viewed critically by other ministries.

It is significant, in this respect, that the first major speech on security sector reform by Clare Short was made at the Royal United Services Institute in London (Short, 1998). For her, it was clear that security sector reform – even that with a clear development focus – would be regarded as an intrusion into terrain claimed by other agencies, particularly the UK Ministry of Defence. But it was also clear to her and others in the development community that security sector reform could not be successfully conducted by development donor organisations alone. Reform required the cooperation of other ministries: the Defence Ministry for work on defence reform; the Foreign Ministry for conflict-related activities; the Ministry of the Interior for police programmes; and the Ministry of Justice for projects in judicial sectors. In short, overall consistency in donor government policy towards a particular recipient country was what was needed.

The United Kingdom has been comparatively successful in bringing at least the most important ministries together to coordinate activities, after some initial problems, which does not mean that there are not major policy differences, for instance on arms exports (Hills, 2000b; Cooper and Pugh, 2002). Two major inter-ministerial funds

have been created and are being administered jointly by DFID, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the Ministry of Defence, one of which addresses problems in Africa and the other problems in the rest of the world. The UK example shows that cooperation among relevant ministries on security sector reform is possible.

However, the course followed by the United Kingdom has remained something of an exception. In certain countries, such as the Netherlands and Sweden, the problem is somewhat different as there are no separate development ministries, development policy falling under the auspices of the foreign ministries. In yet other countries, the competition between development ministries and foreign ministries is somewhere between 'strong' and 'fierce'. Sometimes foreign offices deem that development ministries are invading their political territory and, in doing so, are well-equipped with resources that foreign offices generally do not have at their disposal. Cooperation between development ministries and ministries of defence, as well as ministries of the interior, may well be problematic for different reasons, though: while there is generally little competition for resources, bureaucratic cultures may be quite different. What is more, the ministries' primary local partners in the developing countries themselves may vary, and may sometimes even be in conflict with each other, thus reducing the coherence of the assistance offered. Whereas development ministries may well be perceived by the so-called 'power ministries' as being politically weak and full of 'do-gooders', there is often an aversion in development assistance circles to the 'command approaches' to problems with which such 'power ministries' are identified.

There is an additional dimension to the question of the role of development actors in security sector reform. Industrialised countries send a host of signals to actors in developing countries, including on security-relevant issues. One example of these is the expectation that armed forces from developing countries participate in international peacekeeping missions. Some of the training provided, for instance under the US government's Africa Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) has been criticised as not being suited to the difficult conflict environment in Africa (Gocking, 2001). Another example concerns the exports of arms. The German example mentioned above demonstrates that it is difficult for a development donor to maintain a high profile on security sector reform without exercising strong restraint on arms exports (Wulf, 2000b; Cooper and Pugh, 2002). Generally, however, the influence of development actors over arms export policies is limited. Again, the German case

provides a good example. The Ministry of Development Cooperation has a seat in the Federal Security Council, the interministerial decision-making body on arms exports; however it has been overruled by other members, led by the Ministry of Economics, on a number of occasions, including a sale of corvettes to South Africa in 1999.

Thus, both power and culture can combine to produce the unfortunate outcome of only limited cooperation, or even coordination, among relevant ministries within donor countries. According to the OECD DAC, the aim of a comprehensive approach to security sector reform would be “to broadly agree on the security challenges with the partner countries and identify appropriate roles for their different government departments and those of the various external actors.... Traditionally, this was not the case since the strategic objectives of development and security practitioners were often parallel or in opposition with each other, partly because their focus tends to be uni-disciplinary” (OECD, 2001, p. 37). Lilly et al. have argued that “adopting a security sector reform requires a major reorganisation of how donor governments conduct their external affairs so that the different instruments are mutually enhancing and not the reverse” (p. 15) and that “SSR implies in some respects as many changes in donor practice in terms of improvements in coherence and coordination as it does in aid recipient countries” (p. 1).

Up to now, few donor governments have instituted such far-ranging changes. Some have not made changes at all, resulting in a neglect of security sector reform activities by their development ministries. In the case of others, development donor organisations have only started up a few such activities, being restrained by interventions from other ministries.

### ***Summary***

In practice, development donor involvement in security sector reform is constrained by a number of factors. Among these are the limited amount of opportunities for support of the reform of the security sectors in developing countries; lack of relevant capacity and knowledge within development donor institutions themselves; and, thirdly, competition with other ministries and agencies. While the latter is obviously typical of many policy arenas, in the case of security sector reform it is compounded by a general uncertainty about what role is proper for development donor institutions. It is true that policies for development and the reduction of poverty should be the objective of all government agencies and that, in an era of increasing globalisation, a

great many actions by a wide range of government agencies can be seen as relevant to the improvement of the prospects of the poor in developing countries. But where in this web of policies do the responsibilities of development ministries and agencies begin and end? The broad agenda for the fight against poverty – reflected, for instance, in the Millennium Goals – is interpreted by some academics, as well as politicians, as implying a leading role for development ministries in all policy issues that affect the poor. However, foreign ministries have generally successfully fought back such institutional challenges. One of the victims, at least in some countries, has been practical assistance in support of security sector reform efforts. Although development ministries and agencies have managed to sponsor studies and publish texts which make a clear case for security sector reform, it has been much more difficult to actually implement anything other than fairly limited projects.

Inter-agency conflict is one major factor which considerably hinders security sector reform in practice; another is power politics in developing countries. Like any other policy, security sector reform has winners and losers, and, more often than not, powerful actors stand to lose from security sector reform programmes. Under such circumstances it is difficult to find local actors who are both willing to support reform and are in a position to actually implement it. Obviously, it is easier to find local actors who are in opposition to the government, however, development donors often have difficulty in supporting their activities.

Thus the obstacles against comprehensive programmes of development donor support for security sector reform are powerful and are difficult to overcome, except perhaps in post-conflict situations. While some of these obstacles are 'home made' in the industrialised countries, that does not make them any easier to avoid. One way to improve security sector reform in practice would be to give development ministries a clear and overarching responsibility for all security-related issues in countries receiving development assistance. Another, less radical, approach might be to arrange close cooperation among relevant ministries similar to the British model. However, as indicated above, competition among ministries is often fierce and there could well be repercussions in other policy fields if development ministries were given such large briefs. Even if cooperation is stressed officially, the venturing of development ministries into security-related activities is privately observed with a considerable wariness in some foreign ministries and will not easily be achieved.

## **Outlook – Norms for Security Sector Reform Support**

The essential vision of the concept of security sector reform was to positively link the provision of security to human development and the reduction of poverty. All too often, those charged with the provision of security do not in fact provide it, particularly to the poor, who are the main addressees of today's development policy. In many cases such security forces are even a source of insecurity. While attempts to link security and development have been made before, the visionary concept of security sector reform is regarded as superior in that it looks at all institutions involved in the provision of security in a comprehensive way and focuses all reform activities on the promotion of development goals, particularly the reduction of poverty. Security sector reform marks the effort to overcome a 'blind spot' in much development donor policy of the past, namely an engagement with those actors within developing countries charged with the provision of security.

As a result of this boldness, the concept of security sector reform quickly began to enjoy wide recognition in the development donor community. Lists of possible activities to promote security sector reform grew concomitantly. While there are significant differences in priorities among those writing about security sector reform, the general principle – namely that it is vital to improve both the provision of security and the democratic oversight over the security forces – is undisputed even if there may be disagreement about the need for and sequencing of support in particular situations. Nevertheless, in practice, development donor support for security sector reform activities lags seriously behind, despite such widespread agreement on principles. It has proven difficult to translate the general recognition that reform of the security sector is crucial to attaining development goals in many countries into widespread practice of support of such reform. The gap between rhetoric and activity is large, leading some to question the rhetoric (Chanaa, 2002).

However, it would be counterproductive to downscale the vision of security sector reform and reduce objectives to the level of current practice. Much of the very attraction of the concept stems from its high level of normative ambition. Nevertheless, it would be a good thing if practical policies had an additional yardstick to give effective support to the vision of a near-perfect security sector. Priorities for activities need to be deduced from the general principles of a 'good' security sector, and criteria need to be developed for judging the security sector reform compatibility of initiatives started in developing countries.

Some elements for judging the contribution of concrete activities for security sector reform have been developed in the course of recent debate on partial norms for elements of the security sector. “There are no detailed road maps for donor support to security sector reform processes. There are however relevant international agreed principles, standards and laws” (OECD, 2001, p. 25). These norms include certain general norms, such as the promotion of human rights, transparency and accountability, but also some very concrete norms concerning the internationally acceptable behaviour of police forces, arms control and civil-military relations (Ball and Brzoska, 2002). Some of these norms have legal character, others are ‘cultural’ norms, that is, widely accepted even if not enshrined in a binding legal document. In addition to norms which already exist, there are also norms *in nascendi*, for instance on the admissibility of the violent overthrow of a government by military coup (Ball and Brzoska, 2002). Such norms can provide development donors with a means of measurement by which to evaluate even partial activities in support of security sector reform. When one or more of these norms is strengthened, and none weakened, such activities are worthwhile. In a way, this approach is similar to the one of ‘do no harm’ for humanitarian assistance (Anderson, 1999).

In addition, work is under way to analyse in more depth the successful sequencing and interactions of elements of security sector reform. The empirical input needed for such assessment is slowly accumulating. Eastern Europe provides some good examples, as do some other countries, for instance South Africa. None of the available examples is a blue-print or provides a model for others simply to follow – all have shortcomings and contradictions. However, there are some ‘best practice’ examples as to how policies can be devised, and support given, that makes a contribution towards security sector reform, for instance in the fields of transparency, public participation in decision-making, and professionalisation of security forces. These changes have been brought about with limited resources, but with leadership and commitment by major actors, including government agencies, as well as civil society. In addition, such partial approaches were guided by comprehensive visions of ‘good’ security sector practice.

Even with clearer priority setting, security sector reform will remain a difficult field for development donor organisations. They generally have a hard time to justify a role in security-related matters both in their home countries and in developing countries. The links between good governance in the security sector and the reduction of poverty may be fairly well established in academic research, but they are not guiding

much policy. Security relations are power relations and security sector reform changes power relations, among political actors in developing countries, and among foreign assistance bureaucracies in donor countries. Development donors with the willingness to make a contribution towards security sector reform need to be aware of the various pitfalls and be prepared for setbacks.

Still, the importance of development donors getting involved in security sector reform is hardly disputed. Many countries lack the ability to provide public goods for their people, including the safe and secure environment that is crucial for sustainable human development. Most African countries are particularly weak in this respect, but these problems are experienced to one degree or another by all countries, especially those emerging from conflict or making other fundamental political transitions. Obviously, even an effective and accountable security sector cannot provide security and safety to all at all times.

It would be futile, and highly counterproductive, to try to deal with problems of security through improvements in the security sector alone. Crime and war have causes that even democratic force alone cannot eradicate. However, one reason why the provision of the public good of security is grossly inadequate in many countries is poor leadership – within political society, the public sector, and civil society – both on a technical level and in terms of adherence to the rule of law and democratic principles. Furthermore, the effects of bad government tend to spill over borders in the security arena and develop into threats to citizens of other countries, through international crime and war. Reforming the security sector in a way that serves the needs of the people, and not only of narrow elite groups, is often a daunting challenge. However, the damage that unaccountable security forces wreck on the promotion of democracy, social justice, equity and sustainable, poverty – reducing economic development makes them a prime source of insecurity for people, in particular poor people, and seriously undermines progress towards human development. At the same time, accountable and effective security sectors are one of the elements needed for human development. For these reasons, the challenge of reforming the security sector must be confronted.

## ***Research Priorities***

In this paper, the lack of additional research into how security sector institutions function as well as their links to society at large has been identified as one of the current shortcomings in the discourse on the security sector. There is a growing body of literature on the normative aspects of the concept. While some contributions are controversial, general agreement prevails both on the overall validity of the ideas behind the concept of security sector reform and on the difficulties of specifying priorities for practical action.

While some additional progress is both possible and requisite at the conceptual level – for instance on country typologies and taxonomies – the most important lacuna seems to be a dearth of good-quality analysis of security sectors and the possibilities for reform in particular countries, analysis which links the normative suggestions in the security sector reform agenda to the realities on the ground.

More of such analysis is not only needed for activities in individual countries, it also provides the basis for distilling priorities for activities out of the current body of thinking on security sector reform. Some of that thinking is too abstract to provide much guidance for concrete sequencing and judging of the usefulness of concrete activities. On the other hand, suggestions for action that are not deduced from a more general framework of security sector reform, are running the danger of being irrelevant, or even counterproductive, to comprehensive security sector reform.

While the elements for research on particular security sectors and security sector reform activities exist within various research traditions, what tends to be lacking is their integration (Fitz-Gerald, 2003). Regional and development specialists often have good insights into power structures, including the roles played by security sector institutions. However, they frequently lack knowledge of – or an interest in – analysing the internal functioning of the security sector forces, which is necessary if proposals for purposeful activities are to crystallise. Support for additional research, joining both this and other relevant fields, would constitute an important step in underpinning successful security sector reform activities in the future. Such research should best be done as a joint effort involving both experts from the relevant countries and international experts. “Both donors and partner countries need to invest in deepening and widening their understanding of security challenges and possible responses” (OECD, 2001, p. 36).

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