



**Security Sector Reform
Resource Centre**



**Addressing International
Governance Challenges**



Security Sector Reform 101: Understanding the Concept, Charting Trends and Identifying Challenges

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Introduction

The term security sector reform (SSR) was first introduced in a 1998 speech by UK Secretary of State for International Development Clare Short.¹ Discourse on the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to the security sector in development contexts had been ongoing since the early 1990s, but Short's speech and a number of Department for International Development (DFID) policy documents which followed brought it to the fore and embedded the concept in the policy lexicon. SSR can be differentiated from Cold War forms of security assistance in that it focuses on the security of people rather than regimes. It was a product of the growing awareness of the nexus between security and development that emerged in the wake of the Cold War, providing an entry point for development actors to enter the security arena, a sphere they had hitherto avoided.

It would not take long for the contours of an SSR model to take shape, most clearly elaborated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) published a blueprint for the model in 2005 and a handbook for practitioners in 2007 that have become common reference points in the field.² According to the OECD-DAC the objective of SSR "is to create a secure environment that is conducive to development, poverty reduction and democracy" (OECD 2005:16). This "holistic, people-centred approach to security" can be considered a key element of post-authoritarian transitions, post-conflict peace-building processes and state-building projects (OECD 2005:58).

Just as striking as the rapid rise of the model in the development and security communities has been its poor record of implementation. While the model's normative framework has been well developed and has been the subject of rich policy and scholarly debate, scant attention has been dedicated to reform contexts, fostering what one scholar has referred to as a "conceptual-contextual divide."³

The Origins of a Concept

The birth of the SSR concept was fuelled by new thinking on security in the 1990s, which stimulated a paradigm shift from state-centred to people-centred approaches, encapsulated by the term human security. During the Cold War, aid to the security sectors of developing countries was conceived by policy-makers as an instrument of power-politics.⁴ It typically assumed two forms, assistance to security forces and security-related economic aid, and focused on "transmitting military or policing skills and facilitating the sale of equipment to the security forces."⁵ The manner in which the security sector of the recipient country was governed was rarely considered.

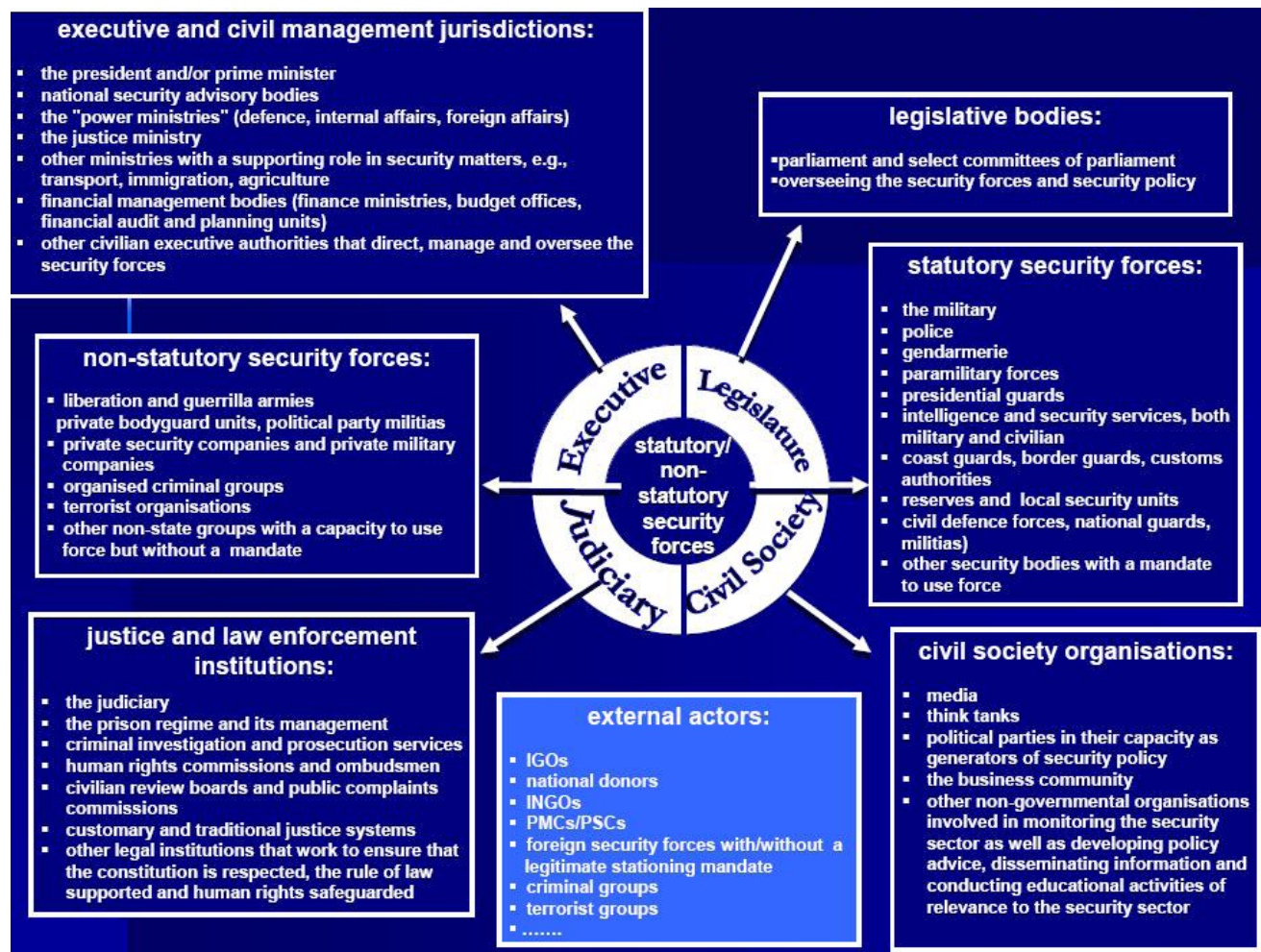
The end of the bipolar world order permitted new thinking on the links between security and development. The World Bank's *Voices of the Poor* study, which surveyed over 60,000 poor women and men from 60 countries, crystallized this connection, as the respondents identified insecurity as one of the paramount obstacles to escaping poverty.⁶ Growing awareness of the inextricable link between development and security focussed attention on how the security sector was governed. DFID recognized in a 2000 report that "development expenditure in the social and economic sectors may not bear fruit unless the security sector fulfils its legitimate functions relatively efficiently and effectively."⁷ The SSR model is built upon the notion that the creation of a responsible, accountable and effective security sector will engender conditions "conducive to development, poverty reduction and democracy."⁸

Breaking Down the Security Sector

The security sector can be defined as encompassing all bodies authorized to use force, such as the armed forces and police; intelligence agencies and security services; civil management and oversight bodies, including line security ministries, legislative committees and national security advisory bodies; judicial and public security structures such as the judiciary, corrections systems, and human rights commissions; non-statutory security bodies comprising private security companies and militia groupings; and civil society actors, most notably NGOs and the media.⁹

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the objective of SSR "is to strengthen the ability of the

Figure 1: Mapping the Security Sector



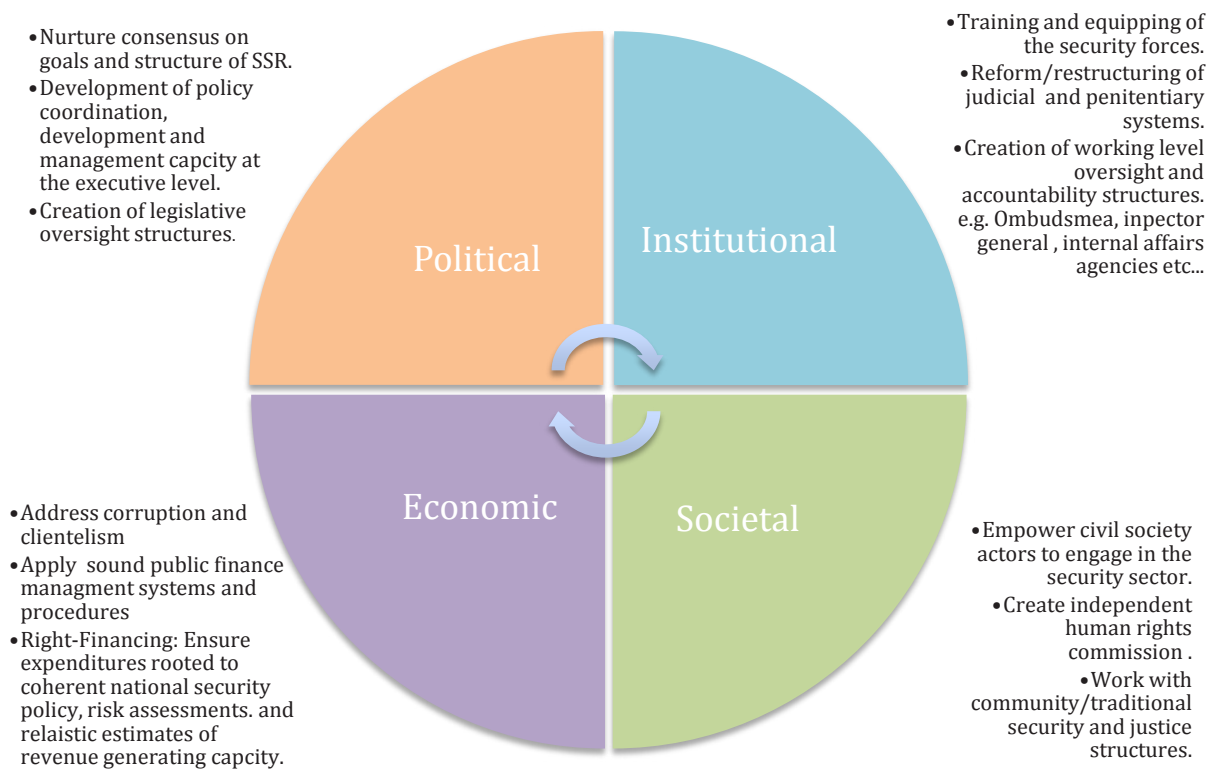
Source: David Law, *An Introduction to Security Sector Reform*, Presentation delivered on 2 June 2008. Access here.

sector as a whole and each of its individual parts to provide an accountable, equitable, effective, and rights respecting service.”¹⁰ An ideal security sector features “well-managed and competent personnel operating within an effective institutional framework defined by law.”¹¹ By extension, “a badly managed and unprofessional security sector” will prevent the state from providing a security guarantee to the populace.¹² Not only will this undermine the legitimacy of the government, but it will prompt the population to seek security from other sources, leading to the proliferation of weapons and non-statutory security forces.

According to Jane Chanaa, SSR has four dimensions: political, institutional, economic, and societal.¹³ The political dimension involves the development of mechanisms to manage the security sector. It is intended not just to ensure civilian governance, but liberal, democratic civilian control. The institutional dimension focuses on reform and capacity-building within the security institutions. It is a process of professionalization aimed at increasing operational effectiveness, rationalizing bureaucratic structures, eliminating corruption, and institutionalising international standards. The economic dimension is concerned with the security sector’s consumption of resources, stressing the long-term sustainability of reforms. Promoting sound public financial management practices, consistent with the standards applied across the public sector, is central to meeting the resource demands of an appropriately sized and equipped security sector. Finally, the societal dimension accords a crucial role to civil society in the security functions of the state. Community NGOs, the media, and independent research and advocacy institutions are seen as occupying an important role in monitoring the security sector and ensuring transparency and accountability.

The weighting or level of priority accorded to each dimension at different stages of the reform process is contingent on societal

Figure 2: The Four Dimensions of SSR



conditions. For instance, in cases facing severe problems of insecurity, extra weight may be accorded to the security dimension at the outset of the process and more attention placed on societal aspects in its more advanced stages. What is critical is that in aggregate all dimensions receive commensurate attention.

The Objectives of SSR

SSR processes, particularly in post-conflict and fragile state settings, pursue three overarching goals:

1. To enhance the capacity of service providers (state and non-state) to deliver essential services in an effective, fair, accessible, accountable and rights-respecting fashion. This involves the strengthening of the relationship between state/non-state service providers and the end users of those services (the citizenry).
2. To strengthen governance and rationalise organizational structures and management systems at the national and sub-national levels. The objective is to develop the capacities of the state to develop policy, manage institutions and provide oversight of the security sector at its various levels, in a manner consistent with basic democratic standards.
3. To establish a security sector that is both fiscally sustainable and appropriately sized and resourced to meet existing and future threats and satisfy the security needs of the population. Over the medium- to long-term the sector should be integrated into the regional and global security architecture, allowing it to contribute to the mitigation of transnational security threats.

Key Norms & Principles of SSR

The SSR model is rooted to several key norms and principles. As the model has evolved and matured so too have its methodology and best practices, but these fundamental principles have largely remained constant:

1. *People-Centred*

SSR is a people-centered concept, emphasizing the security of individual citizens rather than governments or regimes. The model recognizes that these two objectives need not be mutually exclusive, but are nonetheless not always in sync. An over-emphasis on safeguarding a regime can have the perverse effect of reducing the freedom and security of individual citizens subject to it.

2. *Primacy of the Rule of Law*

The SSR model affirms that all persons, institutions and entities, including the state, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated and are consistent with international human rights norms and standards.

3. *Transparency*

Information about security planning and resources must be widely available, both within the government and to the public, with adjustments for confidentiality appropriate to national security.

4. *Democratic Accountability & Oversight*

Improving governance within the security sector and ensuring that it is subordinate to democratic civilian authority is the central concern of the SSR model. All security entities should be accountable to democratically elected civil authorities, independent oversight agencies and civil society. Working level institutional mechanisms providing direct oversight related to issues like human rights and financial management should be formed.

5. *Whole of Government Coordination*

SSR prioritizes the establishment mechanisms/modalities that encourage and institutionalize coordination and cooperation among security/justice actors, based on their respective constitutional/legal roles and responsibilities

6. *Operational Effectiveness*

A well functioning security sector depends on the creation of operationally effective security and justice institutions and agencies. However, the imperative of enhancing the operational effectiveness of the security forces and the justice system must not be advanced at the expense of mechanisms to ensure respect for human rights, curb corruption and guard against abuses of power.

7. *Coordination, Sequencing & Integrated Policy Responses*

The SSR model conceptualizes the security sector as deeply integrated and interconnected. The malfunctioning or breakdown of one element, such as the courts, can catalyze the destabilization or even collapse of the entire sector. Reflecting this reality, SSR doctrine demands careful sequencing and coordination of reforms that build upon synergies between sectors and institutions. The successful actualization of this approach demands integrated policy responses from donors and local actors alike that mobilize resources and expertise across government sectors.

Box 1: What is SSR Right-Financing?

Right-financing is about:

- Ensuring the sustainability of security and justice structures.
- Ensuring that the size and structure of the security sector reflects financial realities as well as a threat analysis that takes into consideration human security needs.
- Making decisions and setting priorities, within budgetary constraints.
- Establishing systems of financial accountability consistent with the standards applied across the public service.
- Recognizing that reforms which fail to consider revenue generating capacity and long-term budgetary constraints could lead to the breakdown of the security sector and a resumption of conflict.
- Mitigating corruption through the establishment of transparent budgetary and management systems.

The aim of right-financing is to:

- Build a clear security policy framework, linking national security, law and order, justice and human security to be supported and justified through the national budget process – but also through traditional (non-state) systems.
- Strengthen the institutional framework for the delivery of security services based on setting policy goals and service delivery targets, and outcome monitoring capabilities.
- Strengthen both internal and external (parliamentary and civil society) oversight capabilities particularly around budget approval.
- Balance the composition of spending across security agencies to meet both national and human security outcomes.
- Build enhanced capacities in budget management and prioritization across the security sector, within entities and over time.

Source: Peter Middlebrook and Gordon Peake, *Right Financing Security Sector Reform*, (New York: Centre on International Cooperation, 2008).

8. *Civilianisation*

Post-authoritarian and post-conflict security sectors tend to be heavily militarized or securitized, featuring a preponderance of military personnel in roles designated for civilian actors. Civilianizing the security sector is accordingly a key component of the SSR agenda, as it defuses the “military mentality” in the sector, which is often ill-conducive to the establishment of democratic civilian control and oversight.

9. *Civil Society Engagement*

Civil society, whether it is the media, human rights advocacy groups, or community organizations, plays a vital role in the security sector, providing an external check on policy and practice. It also serves as an important conduit or medium for state-society communication and interaction. Accordingly, SSR programs should prioritize efforts to empower civil society to engage in security issues and interact with security institutions.

10. *A Political Process*

SSR is innately a political process that should be conceptualized as an outgrowth of the wider political transition. In post-conflict contexts, the process should be anchored to the peace agreement or political settlement. Building the crucial political consensus surrounding the SSR strategy and agenda, both among local actors and external stakeholders, invariably involves complex political bargaining. Over the long-term, the goal is to de-politicize and bureaucratize the sector, but the process of reform, particularly in its early formative stages, is a highly contentious political game.

11. *Ownership*

The long-term viability of SSR is dependent on the willingness and capacity of local actors to own, direct, and internalise the process and its fundamental principles. Ownership should not be solely the prerogative of elites; the process must reach out to non-state groups and the wider society to secure their buy-in.

12. *Gender*

Women and children occupy particular roles in conflict systems and require specific types of assistance in the post-conflict or stabilisation period. Targeted assistance to these groups under the auspices of SSR can help not only to meet development priorities but to address some of the root causes of conflict and instability. As the SSR process is intended to create a security sector that is inclusive, accessible, and people-centered, it must be framed to address the specific needs of all societal groups.

13. *Sustainability*

The purpose of SSR is to build a self-sufficient security sector not an external dependency. Realizing this goal requires reformers to carefully calibrate reforms to reflect long-term political and fiscal realities. The SSR process should seek to “right-size” and “right-finance” the security sector, balancing the demands of existing and future threats with projections of the revenue-generating capacity of the state.

14. *Long-Term*

A process of institutional transformation and societal engineering, SSR is invariably a long-term undertaking. As such it demands a high level of political will on the part of internal and external stakeholders and a durable resource base to succeed. Efforts must be made to sensitize the publics of both donor and recipient to the protracted nature of the process and contain immediate expectations. The emergence of unrealistic expectations in the public sphere can undermine SSR processes before

Box 2: Peace Agreements & SSR

In post-conflict countries there is a need to clearly acknowledge SSR in the peace agreement that ended hostilities, outlining its role in the war-to-peace transition and the primary goals of the process. This can have the effect of establishing a legal and political foundation for the process and tying the main parties to the conflict to its implementation. References to SSR in a peace accord need not and should not identify an SSR strategy or set rigid timelines or benchmarks. Rather it is about building the vital domestic political consensus for the SSR agenda at a formative stage in the post-conflict period.

SSR is generally viewed as a cornerstone of post-conflict reconstruction and state-building processes, a key to establishing a level of security and stability conducive for development. In spite of this, it has tended to be treated as a peripheral issue in peace agreements. For instance, police reform was only mentioned in Annex 11 of the Dayton Peace Accord which ended the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, despite the fact that it would become one of the largest single recipients of international assistance. Afghanistan’s Bonn agreement only contained vague references to SSR, a process that would in subsequent years be perceived as the centerpiece of the peace-building and stabilization strategy. Greater attention must be paid to embedding SSR at the core of future peace agreements in complex post-conflict societies.

they begin to pick up momentum.

15. *Context-Specific*

While organizations like the OECD and the United Nations have sought to map out a normative blueprint for SSR, there are no template or “off-the-shelf” SSR solutions that can be applied universally. SSR is a highly context-specific process that must be carefully calibrated and shaped to reflect and engage the historical, political, socio-economic, and security conditions prevalent in a particular reform context. Transposing SSR programs and initiatives directly from one country to another is a failing proposition.

Preconditions for SSR

One can conceive of SSR as dependent on the existence of a number of specific conditions:

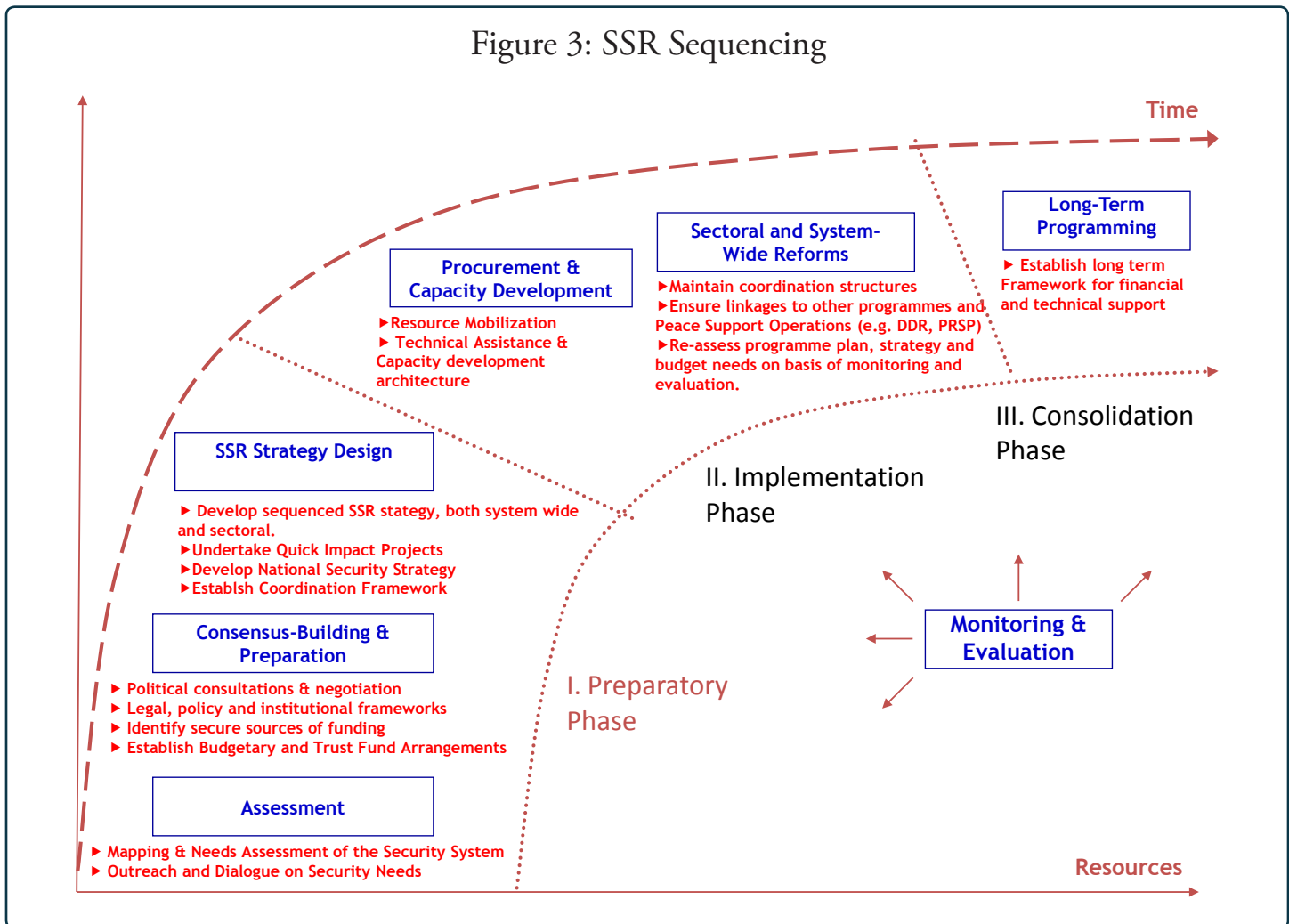
1. SSR programmes “must be locally designed, locally implemented, and locally evaluated, for what may appear to be productive from the perspective of the international community may have significantly different connotations and effects when judged by domestic actors.”¹⁴
2. If the process is successful in entrenching formal, Western-oriented security structures, “the attitudes beneath them may remain deeply wedded to tradition.”¹⁵ Accordingly, the principles, policies, laws and structures developed during the reform process must be reconciled with the reforming country’s history, culture and legal framework.
3. The success of SSR programmes “depends upon there being a consensus among domestic actors on the principles of their SSR programme, on the strategic vision embedded in the programme, and on the specific objectives the programme seeks to achieve.”¹⁶ There has been a tendency among external actors to rely on a narrow set of like-minded elites to oversee reforms. In many cases, the selection of local partners has been based more on expediency than the need to foster an inclusive process. The formation of clientelistic relationships with certain ethnic-based groups is a common practice of external actors, with far-reaching ramifications for SSR. Robin Luckham notes the dangers of “ethnicising” the process: “When ethnic patronage is built into military, police and security bureaucracies, it corrupts them, weakens discipline, reinforces a sense of impunity and fosters public (and especially minority) distrust of the state itself.”¹⁷
4. A minimum level of security is required to advance the process. SSR cannot be implemented in a security vacuum; it is a long-term process intended to address the structural causes of insecurity, not a means to confront immediate security threats. Post-conflict countries are invariably confronted with a high degree of residual insecurity. The deployment of a peace support mission offers one means to provide a security buffer for the process and “raise the cost to local stakeholders of choosing violence over dialogue and compromise.”¹⁸
5. Implementing comprehensive reforms that are owned and directed by local actors requires at least the foundations of stable institutions and human capacity. In countries that have experienced state collapse or are recovering from civil strife, institutional and human capacity is invariably limited. Determining a starting point for the process and how to sequence reforms in such contexts is exceedingly difficult.
6. With a multiplicity of external and local stakeholders involved in the process, all with their own goals and interests, it is important to establish mechanisms to ensure its coherence at the planning and operational levels. Donors in particular “often bring with them their own set of concerns”, which Chanaa warns “can seriously jeopardise the agenda’s holistic vision.”¹⁹
7. External actors must recognise that SSR is a lengthy process. While the immediate aftermath of a conflict represents a vital formative period during which concerted donor attention and support are required to launch reform and recovery efforts, SSR can take up to a decade to reach its fruition. There is no quick fix for SSR; it requires a long-term outlook and durable supplies of resources to succeed.

Implementation

SSR processes encompass three interlinked phases:

1. Preparatory Phase
2. Main Implementation Phase
3. Reform Consolidation Phase

Each phase comprises a number of key steps or tasks. The appropriate sequencing of these steps is critical for the success of the process (See Figure 3).



I. Preparatory Phase

Conduct Assessment

The first step in designing an SSR policy agenda and strategy for a particular country is undertaking a comprehensive assessment. Assessments satisfy one of the principal prerequisites for an effective SSR program, a detailed and nuanced understanding of the local context. They enable the translation of the SSR normative model into a practical reform program. Assessments guide the design of an SSR strategy, provide baseline data for monitoring and evaluation, and facilitate the development of a political consensus on the goals of the reform process. They should combine sector-wide analysis with specific area/institution-based studies to offer a holistic picture of the security sector.

Assessments should be conducted through a partnership between the indigenous government and the donor community. They must be comprehensive and engage a wide range of societal actors, both state and non-state. In the past, SSR assessments and the tools they employ have tended to be donor-driven and statist in nature. For the process to be sustainable the assessment upon which it is based must be owned by the partner government and reflect grass-roots realities. In other words, it should seek to deconstruct and analyze both formal state security sectors and their informal customary equivalents and make citizen perceptions towards security, not those of the state, the focal point for analysis.

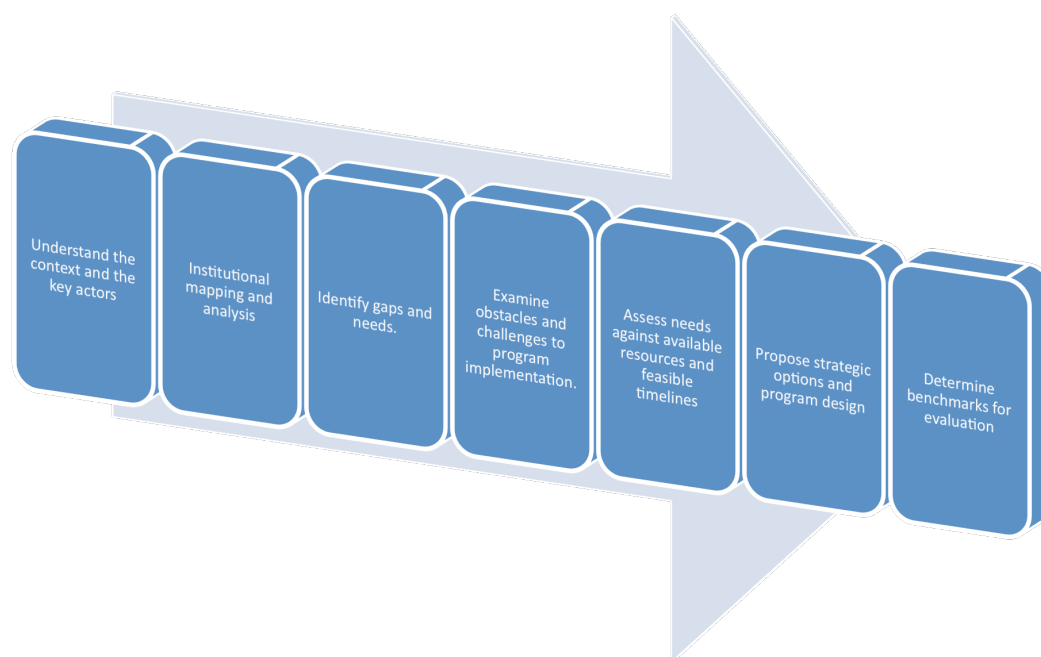
Through its analysis of the security sector, the assessment process can help to create a hierarchy of needs and design an incremental or sequenced strategy to achieve them. For instance, in cases where internal security threats such as crime and illicit

economic activity represent the preeminent security threat, the early focus of the process may be on developing police and judicial capacity. Similarly, in states where the security forces are well developed and operationally effective, but perceived by the population as repressive, predatory and corrupt, the focus of the reform process in its early stages may be the development of robust management and democratic oversight structures and the restructuring of line security institutions.

Assessments seek to carry out the following tasks:

- Develop an understanding of the local context and its key actors
- Conduct institutional mapping and analysis
- Identify gaps and needs
- Examine obstacles and challenges to program implementation
- Assess needs against available resources and establish feasible timelines
- Propose strategic options and program design
- Determine benchmarks for evaluation

Figure 4: The Assessment Process



Supporting such a wide-ranging assessment demands the mobilization of expertise from across donor government departments and agencies. Ensuring that assessments take into consideration the interdependent and interconnected character of the security sector, it is critical that they are carried out by integrated missions. Such whole-of-government support frameworks for SSR become even more indispensable during the implementation phase of the process.

Consensus Building & Preparation

The purpose of SSR is not to impose a Western liberal reform agenda. Rather it aims to work with partner governments and civil society to develop a security sector that reflects local norms, history, and tradition; is economically sustainable; operationally effective; and meets basic international democratic standards of security sector governance. Developing a consensus on such an ambitious agenda requires careful negotiation with the partner government and non-state actors and outreach activities with the general population. It is a process of manufacturing political will for reform, which will clear political space for the design of the SSR strategy and the actual implementation of reforms. Generating a critical mass of political will to advance reforms satisfies one of two primary prerequisites for local ownership. With this demand met, the second prerequisite, the development of adequate indigenous human and institutional capacity to direct the process, becomes manageable with the right investment

of donor resources.

SSR experience has shown that donors have not always invested the necessary political capital in reform processes to ensure their success, treating them instead as an apolitical technical issue. The reality is that beneath the surface of the SSR process is a set of highly fluid and complex negotiations that donors must be prepared to engage in if the process is to succeed. Donors must be ready to take both a conciliatory approach through the offering of incentives, and a hard bargaining approach through the employment of disincentives and conditionality.

It is crucial that the political process underlying SSR is inclusive, engaging all stakeholders in the security field, not just like-minded actors—those who speak English or who are Westernized. Actors with significant constituencies who hold contrarian views should not be ignored or marginalized, otherwise they are likely to assume the role of spoiler. Core principles of the process should not be compromised to accommodate recalcitrant actors, but efforts must be made to engage as wide a cross-section of stakeholders in the process as possible.

Developing the political consensus underpinning the SSR process in post-conflict or fragile state settings begins with the peace accord ending hostilities or the agreement launching a political transition process. Bargaining and negotiation to mobilize political will behind the reform program is not divorced from the overarching political process but is an indispensable element of it. Accordingly stakeholder compliance with the peace agreement or political process, and the incentives associated with it, can be leveraged against acquiescence to SSR reform principles.

SSR is a long-term process that is not well disposed to half measures or short-term solutions. It demands durable resource commitments and political engagement, which should perhaps be measured in decades rather than two- or four-year time horizons. Donors seeking quick fixes when applying reforms can, in some cases, do more harm than good. Just as developing local political will and ownership is a precondition for the success of the reform process, so to is the generation of donor political resolve to see the process through to its fruition. Willingness to make such a long-term commitment should be the main determinant of a donor's decision on whether to engage in an SSR process.

Removing the culture of impunity from the security sector – a common characteristic in post-war security institutions – containing corruption, and embedding democratic principles necessitates a cultural transformation in the security institutions. This would be difficult for any state to undertake, let alone one whose infrastructure and institutions have been severely damaged by war and its population traumatized by the atrocities and instability that it unleashed. Like any process of institutional transformation, it is often ad hoc, based on a methodology of trial and error, and advanced in fits and starts. It is not a neat process, nor is it well disposed to artificial donor deadlines or timelines.

Preparing the Foundation for a Reform Strategy

During this phase, construction should begin on the institutional and structural architecture of the SSR process. This includes the development of the legal, policy and institutional frameworks needed to launch and support an SSR agenda, such as laws delineating the role and mandate of the security forces, government policies stipulating the parameters for the engagement of non-state security providers and civil society; and the formation of institutional bodies like a national security council to facilitate consultative decision-making. It is essential during this period to identify sources of funding for the process, both

Box 3: Assessment Toolbox

Desk-based Research/Analysis: Scanning of primary and secondary material (policy reports, academic articles, media coverage, web and multi-media sources, books, government documents).

Interviews: With experts, practitioners, government representatives, donor officials, security personnel, the public.

Multi-Party Consultations: Focus groups, workshops, conferences.

Data Analysis: Statistical and qualitative data mapping and synthesis (e.g. crime figures, judicial case loads, prison population).

Surveys/Polling: Limited expert polls, community and nation-wide surveys, etc.

Comparative Analysis: Contrasting with other SSR cases and contexts.

Analytical Methods: SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats); Drivers of Change; Strategic Conflict Assessment.

Scenario Building: Simulations, modeling.

Box 4: The Need for a Whole-of-Government Approach

There is wide acceptance in the international donor community of the need for joined-up government responses to the multifaceted challenges presented by post-conflict and fragile states. Donors active in this area, such as the UK, US, the Netherlands and Canada, have responded by establishing new institutional mechanisms to facilitate horizontal decision-making and resource mobilization. However, this has not always translated into integrated strategies in the field. Differing institutional cultures, approaches and reporting lines—to name a few obstacles—have slowed the actualization of the whole-of-government vision. Nonetheless it is crucial for the implementation of SSR programs. Just as the SSR model views the security system as highly integrated, reforms must be advanced in an integrated fashion to be successful.

The mere complexity of SSR processes demands a whole-of-government approach. Depending on the needs of a certain country, an SSR programme can entail activities as diverse as conducting a defence review, establishing a community policing program, improving pre-trial detention conditions and providing policy support for a legislative commission. It is highly unlikely that a single government department or intergovernmental agency will possess the full range of capacities required to support these activities. The necessary expertise is scattered among numerous governmental and non-governmental entities, necessitating a coordinated and integrated approach.

The Government of Canada has recognized this reality and launched several initiatives to develop the institutional architecture to facilitate the advancement of whole-of-government policy responses. The most prominent of these initiatives was the formation of the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (START) in September 2005. START is a standing body based in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) dedicated to enhancing inter-departmental information-sharing, policy coordination and resource mobilization on issues related to the stabilization and reconstruction of fragile and post-conflict states. To enable START to fulfill its mandate, it was accorded responsibility to oversee a newly-created Global Peace and Security Fund (GPSF), with a budget of \$100 million per year. The intent of the fund is to circumvent budgetary and bureaucratic obstacles to rapid resource sharing and mobilization.

To address the specific challenges of advancing SSR in post-conflict and fragile states START established the Security System Reform (SSR) Interdepartmental Working Group in June 2006. Among the responsibilities assigned to the group are: information sharing, the enhancement of SSR knowledge and capacity across government, assistance to multilateral norm-setting processes at the OECD, UN and G8, and the development of a Canadian strategic framework for the support of justice and security sector engagement in fragile states.

domestic and external. The SSR strategy must be based on realistic estimates of available resources. Structures should be formed to facilitate the delivery of funds in a manner that will minimize the potential for malfeasance. A budgetary framework for the security sector, adhering to public sector finance management standards, is a necessity along with the formation of trust funds to provide a safe and reliable conduit for donor contributions.

Other reform tasks that can be conducted during this period include:

1. Developing inventories (stability assessments): This includes inventories of capital infrastructure, laws, policies, administrative regulations, and national and local justice and security providers.
2. Initiating policy-related dialogues on several levels: Across government, between government and non-state security providers, and between government and civil society.
3. Vetting of security and justice personnel.
4. Development of mechanisms to link with related peace-building initiatives such as peace support missions, DDR, transitional justice, or mine action.
5. Support regional security dialogue and confidence-building measures.

SSR Strategy Design

During this stage an overarching strategy for the SSR process is designed, based on the completed needs assessment, government consultations, public outreach, and estimates of available resources. In parallel to the design of an SSR strategy it is advisable for the government to draft and publicly release a national security strategy that reflects the goals and principles enumerated

ed in the SSR strategy. The SSR strategy should feature a clear sequencing and prioritisation of objectives, outline time-related benchmarks and targets, and establish a coordination framework and flexible division of labour for all actors involved.

Coordination

SSR programs tend to be multi-lateral affairs, involving multiple state and non-state bodies each bringing with them their own interests, capacities, experiences, and approaches. Just as whole-of-government approaches are crucial for the implementation of effective SSR policy and programming for individual states, harmonizing the diverse array of external actors engaged in an SSR context is indispensable for the success of reforms. Integrated planning, joint assessments, and the formation of a formal coordination and communication framework¹, assembling both domestic and external stakeholders, should help to foster a common vision and unity of effort.

Even the most well-designed coordination structures will be hard-pressed to bring greater coherence to a multi-lateral reform process if funds are still delivered and spent in a fragmented and compartmentalized manner. Leveraging donor funds to achieve the broader objectives of the process necessitates the formation of multi-lateral funding instruments. A mechanism that can serve this purpose is the trust fund. In addition to achieving greater coherence in the allocation of donor funds, trust funds provide a means to channel aid through government institutions, thereby building their capacity and public legitimacy in a manner that minimizes legitimate donor concern over absorptive capacity and graft. The drawbacks to the trust fund system include delays in the delivery of funding due to cumbersome authorization and accounting procedures and overhead costs.

Coordination mechanisms tend only to be effective if they have a focal point capable of exercising leadership over the process. The actor best placed to assume this role is the executive branch of the partner government. Serving in this role will help to develop its policy development and oversight capacity and clearly demonstrate its ownership of the process. Establishing lead donors over particular sectors tends to territorialize the process fostering donor turf wars rather than cooperation, as seen in the case of Afghanistan.

Parallel to the formation of a sector-wide coordination structure, bodies should be established at the working level to ensure adequate vertical and horizontal coherence in reforms. Every level of the process – the executive/legislative, ministerial, or agency – has to be subjected to a layer of coordination. Beneath the umbrella of the sector-wide SSR strategy, individual institution-based strategies and programs should be finalized in areas such as policing, the judicial system, and corrections.

In order to manage expectations, the goals set in the process should be realistic and reflect both the developmental position of the country and its capacity constraints. Countries emerging from war or state collapse invariably face wide deficits in institutional and human capacity that cannot merely be glossed over with funds or technical assistance. Addressing such capacity

Box 5: Peace Support Operations & SSR

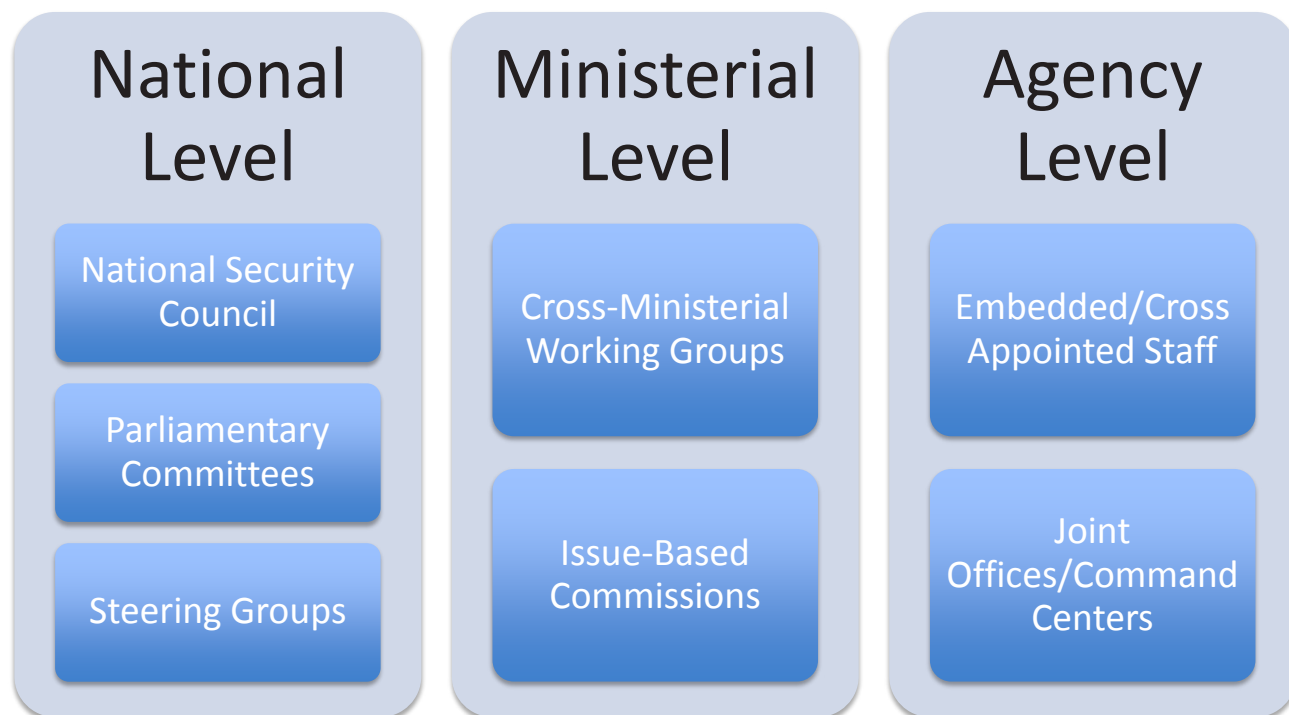
In many of the contexts where SSR programs are implemented, peace support operations (PSOs), primarily UN-mandated, are deployed. Beyond the provision of security – offering a security umbrella for SSR activities – PSOs can have wide ranging mandates covering areas of SSR, including the provision of support for policing, correctional services and the judicial system. However, the attention of PSOs is often fixed on supporting the immediate delivery of services, with little consideration of, or contribution to long-term reforms and capacity building.

The extent of PSO engagement in the security sector is largely determined by their mandate and the conditions on the ground. If the mandate is short-term in duration, PSO activities tend to be reactive, focusing on the rapid development of the operational effectiveness of local security and justice actors to create conditions conducive for withdrawal according to the mission timeline. Such an approach rarely considers issues of democratic accountability, transparency and sustainability. Moreover, if the security situation is volatile, PSOs characteristically focus on the “hard” security dimensions of SSR, the training and equipping of the security forces.

It is critical that PSOs are endowed with adequate resources and mandates lengthy and robust enough to facilitate the transition between short-term crisis management and longer-term security sector development. Not only are PSOs a critical source of expertise and resources for SSR processes but they play an important confidence building role for local and external actors. If they withdraw prematurely or are ill-equipped to play a productive role in SSR, they could undermine the process altogether.

¹ This can take the form of steering committees, working groups, or commissions. Regardless of the name, the keys for the success of such a body include: a membership that is inclusive yet not unwieldy, a strong secretariat and adequate resources to manage the coordination process and ensure implementation of decisions, and a process that is directed and owned by local actors.

Figure 5: Coordination Mechanisms



Box 6: Multilateral Organizations & SSR

Multilateral organizations have played a key role in both elaborating the SSR policy model and implementing it in the field. The OECD-DAC has been at the forefront of developing the SSR-conceptual framework and identifying best practices in implementation. Its SSR Handbook is widely perceived as the standard text in the field.

The UN and its various agencies have also played a key role in SSR policy development and practical implementation. The 2008 UN Secretary General's Report on SSR set out the basic principles guiding UN support to SSR implementation and the roles (normative and operational) it could play in the SSR field as a whole. Among the roles identified were: Setting international norms and standards; elaborating policies and guidelines for SSR implementation; needs assessment and strategic planning; facilitation of national dialogue; and the provision of technical advice and capacity building.

Regional organizations have also sought to develop their own policy frameworks for SSR. Both the European Council Secretariat and the European Commission (EC) developed concept papers for EU support to SSR and the EU has launched a number of SSR programs in recent years in contexts ranging from the Balkans to Afghanistan.

In January 2008, the Assembly of the African Union adopted decision Assembly/AU/Dec.177(X), which "encourages the Commission to develop a comprehensive AU Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform, within the context of the Policy Framework on Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development adopted by the Executive Council in Banjul in June 2006." On 23-25 March 2009, the Commission of the African Union and the UN General Secretariat, represented by the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), jointly convened an "African regional workshop on security sector reform (SSR)" at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, that served as a the launching pad for a UN-AU partnership to develop a comprehensive policy framework on SSR.

Other regional organizations like the Organization for American States (OAS), and multilateral bodies, like NATO, have engaged in SSR activities but have not gone as far in developing unified approaches to SSR policy and implementation.

Source: UN Secretary-General Report on "Securing peace and development: the role of the United Nations in supporting security sector reform," United Nations General Assembly (A/62/659-S/2008/39).

gaps requires an incremental reform process that progressively introduces additional capacities and skills. Such an iterative approach is also essential due to resource limitations. Even if it were politically and strategically viable to do everything at once, resource constraints would not allow it. Nonetheless, in post-conflict states, where the needs are so great, it is common and understandable to perceive everything as a priority. The problem is that when everything is a priority, nothing is a priority. Goal-setting and prioritisation is difficult but crucial for the success and viability of the process.

Quick Impact Projects

Simultaneous to the development of an SSR strategy, the government and donor community should begin to implement quick impact projects (QIPs), whose purpose is both to address pressing needs in the security sector and to demonstrate to the government and population the importance and necessity of reform. Conducting public outreach is not enough to secure the legitimacy of the process, it is necessary to provide a tangible illustration of the utility of SSR. It also provides an opportunity for pilot activities to validate some of the assumptions made during the assessment process. Areas where there are clear entry points for assistance and existing reform champions should be targeted for QIPs. The purpose is to achieve quick and very visible wins. The type of projects that could be undertaken include infrastructure repair, the establishment of community security committees or bodies to liaise with the government, and the provision of vital equipment to security and justice actors.

II. Main Implementation Phase

This is the main phase of the SSR process, that involves the most intensive concentration of SSR activity. It involves two stages which are as follows:

Procurement & Capacity Development

With the needs assessment completed and the reform strategy set, resource and technical assistance requirements are clear.

This stage involves the mobilization and deployment of the needed resources, whether it is human capacity – in the form of trainers, advisors, mentors, and program managers – equipment, or cash. Systems are necessary to monitor and evaluate both the disbursement of funds and the efficacy of technical assistance. Experience has shown that technical assistance can be of variable quality, particularly in insecure post-conflict environments where the recruitment of qualified personnel is more challenging. There is a tendency for technical assistance to be deployed in such a manner that it replicates government functions rather than improves the capacity of the existing administration. This does little to build long-term capacity and can undermine the legitimacy of state institutions.

Area and Sector-wide Reforms

During the main implementation phase, special attention must be dedicated to linking the SSR process to parallel peace-building and state-building activities, including DDR programs, poverty reduction strategies, and transitional justice initiatives. Not only is it crucial that links be developed across the SSR process, but the process itself must be enmeshed in the wider state-building framework. Doing so requires a robust coordination framework capable of harmonizing the varied interests and

Box 7: Mechanisms for Donor Coordination

Most SSR processes are multilateral, with a variety of donors and other external actors engaged, each with their own interests, mandates and approaches. It is critical to establish coordination mechanisms to bridge gaps between donors and establish a level of unity of effort and purpose. Otherwise, duplication, disjointed programming and the sending of mixed signals to recipient actors and institutions will be the inevitable result. The following are some examples of structures and strategies that could mitigate coordination deficits among external actors and between donors and local stakeholders:

Joint Committees/Working Groups

- Facilitates joint planning, but group membership can become large and unwieldy.

Joint Programs

- Ensures unity of effort, but complicated by multiple reporting lines and accountability structures.

Compacts

- Helps establish dual responsibilities and benchmarks amongst donors and between donors and local actors, but difficult to hold stakeholders to commitments/timelines.

Pooled Funding/Trust Funds

- Permits local government access to funds and joint expenditures, but monitoring and disbursement guidelines can be cumbersome.

Embedded Officials/Contractors

- Cross appointments of donor officials/contractors helps to build capacity and foster operational cooperation. Such officials can also be injected into local institutions, a practice that can create parallel government and undercut local ownership and initiative.

approaches across the donor community and amongst domestic state and non-state actors. It is important to remember that each donor brings particular norms and traditions to the reform table, which can clash, sending contradictory messages to the partner government. A coherent reform strategy implemented through coordination bodies can help to prevent such damaging contradictions.

During the main phase of the process it is important to periodically reassess the sector-wide and area-specific strategies on the basis of input from the ongoing monitoring and evaluation process. SSR strategies must be flexible to accommodate changes in political, economic, or security conditions. In many respects, the approach taken during the main implementation phase can be partly characterized as trial and error. The goal is to ensure that the process is on track when it enters the final consolidation phase.

III. Reform Consolidation Phase

As its name would suggest, the focus of this phase is the long-term consolidation of reform achievements made during the main implementation phase. SSR is by nature a long-term process. Even if the process is rooted to local values, norms and traditions, as SSR best practices would dictate, it still involves a high degree of institutional engineering and demands a comprehensive attitudinal shift within the partner government. It may be apt to measure such a transformation in decades or even generational terms.

Facilitating SSR Implementation

In addition to the imperative of establishing integrated SSR policies and missions, donors can take a number of steps to strengthen their capacity to deliver effective support to SSR programs. There are two intimately-related areas relating to human capacity that are particularly pressing and important:

SSR Expert Deployments

There is a need for two categories of donor staff to support SSR:

1. **Technical Experts:** These are individuals with specialized expertise such as police officers or prison officials who can provide direct technical advice in particular sectors. Among the reform tasks that they are involved in are the provision of technical advice, training and mentoring, and assessments and reporting.
2. **Process Experts:** They have a keen understanding of the overarching SSR model and its key principles as well as an awareness of the local context. They are involved in the political dimensions of the process, issues of coordination, and broader sector-wide monitoring and evaluation.

Often there is an over-reliance on Technical Sector Experts, which leads to the creation of apolitical strategies out of sync with the local context, taking a tactical rather than strategic view. Both groups of personnel are critical for the success of an SSR program.

Box 8: The DDR-SSR Nexus

In the aftermath of armed conflict one of the first programs characteristically implemented under the auspices of internationally-sponsored reconstruction processes is the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants (DDR). DDR programs are intended to deconstruct and decommission military units and collect and/or destroy their weaponry as both a symbol of the end of violence and to facilitate the war-to-peace transition. It is now widely recognized that DDR and SSR programs are not only intricately interconnected but mutually interdependent.

The implementation of DDR initiatives in most contexts is a precondition for SSR. Without DDR, SSR programs could face a security dilemma in the form of well-armed non-state actors that could render efforts to achieve the main underlying goal of SSR, investing the state with a monopoly over the use of legitimate force in accordance with democratic principles, difficult or even impossible to achieve. The inverse is also accurate, as DDR and demilitarization programs will be hard-pressed to succeed until local populations feel secure, have confidence that the security forces are competent and acting in their interest, and have legal recourse if their rights are violated – the fundamental objectives of SSR. While most existing policy frameworks on SSR and DDR recognize the links between the two initiatives, this recognition often does not translate into integrated programming on the ground. In an effort to address this gap, the UN, as a part of its Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) – which provide guidance to UN missions on the planning, management and implementation of DDR processes – created a module on the DDR-SSR nexus (module 6.10).

Source: You can access the IDDRS [here](#)

SSR Education & Awareness-Raising

While the SSR model has gained wide recognition over the past five years, it is still poorly understood by a large cross-section of the international policy community. It is conceived of by many as indistinguishable from Cold War forms of security assistance, which centered on the security forces and were typified by the classic train-and-equip program. Furthermore, as the imperative for whole-of-government approaches has widened, the number of actors working on SSR issues—many of whom have strictly domestic portfolios—has multiplied, and the overall level of SSR knowledge and understanding has declined. There is a need for cross-governmental SSR training and education programs. Such a program should have four modules:

1. *SSR Norms & Principles*: This module should deconstruct the SSR model, examining its evolution and fundamental norms and principles.
2. *SSR Cases Studies*: The application of SSR in various different settings should be examined. Emphasis should be placed on the different forms the process takes depending on the context. For instance, SSR in a post-authoritarian state looks completely different than SSR in a post-conflict country.
3. *Area Specialisation*: This module is intended for the Technical Experts. Although they have wide practical expertise in their own area of specialisation, their international experience in supporting a reform process in unstable environments may be limited. The training is intended to provide some practical instruction on their sector as it is situated in a range of reform contexts. For instance, policing experts may receive training on the specific challenges of police reform in post-conflict environments as compared to post-authoritarian states.
4. *Country Study*: This module is intended to be a part of immediate pre-deployment training and will focus on particular country cases. It is intended to provide the attendees with an overarching understanding of the political, socio-economic, and security dimensions of a particular country, with specific analysis of the security sector. This training is particularly vital for the Process Experts who must engage the process on a political level.

Evolutionary Approaches to SSR

The conventional SSR model, outlined in documents like The OECD-DAC Handbook on SSR, and reflected in the analysis above, would seem to indicate that successful SSR programs need to be rooted from their outset to a clear strategy or blueprint. However, a growing number of scholars and practitioners have begun to question this orthodoxy, arguing instead for an “evolutionary approach” that eschews comprehensive reform blueprints in favour of iterative and incremental processes that allow for greater flexibility, more ad hoc approaches and the gradual development of strategies over time. The rationale behind this method is that it can be counter-productive to be overly prescriptive in the early stages of an SSR process, particularly in environments where domestic political will and capacity to implement reforms is weak. Moreover, experience has shown that donors should be wary of setting a strategy in a fluid and complex environment that they have had little time to fully understand. By setting modest objectives in areas ripe for reform, all built upon a deliberate dialogue with local actors, evolutionary approaches can achieve quick wins that can build momentum for the process and buy time for political consensus and capacity to develop.

According to its advocates, the evolutionary approach is more attuned to empowering local ownership, as it is based upon dialogue between local agents of change and external reformers. It is intended to address locally identified security imperatives and reform needs rather than externally imposed ones. The approach is also touted as more realistic as it focuses on achieving what is possible under existing conditions rather than what is desirable in ideal circumstances.

It is clear that rigid SSR strategies in complex and fluid environments could tie donors and recipients to arbitrary deadlines and approaches that could be based on faulty initial assumptions, thereby setting up the process for failure. But, while an evolutionary approach may have traction in contexts like Sierra Leone, where the United Kingdom is the primary donor and has made a firm and long-term commitment to reform, or Burundi, where the Netherlands has committed to an eight year reform program, it may be less desirable and viable in cases where there are multiple donors and interests that need to be reconciled and less enduring funding commitments. In complex, multi-lateral SSR cases like Afghanistan and Bosnia-Herzegovina, a coherent and flexible SSR strategy developed in the early stages of the post-conflict period could have helped to rationalize what were at times disjointed donor assistance, and foster greater unity of effort. The key is flexibility and adaptability. An effective strategy must be able to dynamically change over time in response to evolving conditions on the ground, raising the importance of well-developed monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

All of this points again to the importance of context. In some cases, local conditions as well as donor interests and objectives may point to the need for an evolutionary approach, while other contexts may demand a more conventional blueprint strategy.

Challenges and Obstacles to Implementation

1. Sequencing

A major challenge facing SSR programs is how to adequately sequence reforms. Although SSR is inherently a long-term process, it is imperative that it catalyze some change over the short and medium-term to establish the legitimacy and utility of the process in the eyes of the local population and partner government. It is also important for donors to see the fruits of their efforts in order to build confidence and sustain resolve. The process does demand a high degree of simultaneity in that reforms in certain institutions like the police are dependent on parallel change in others, like the legal system; however, donors cannot be everywhere and do everything at once. The wide range of reforms in the SSR agenda would be difficult to implement in advanced Western democracies let alone fragile post-conflict states. Resource and capacity deficits demand the staggering and sequencing of reforms. The ordering of reforms should be based on careful analysis of the local security and political context.

2. Coordination

Coordination at various levels – donor-donor, donor-government, donor-civil society, and government-civil society – has been problematic in the process. This stems both from the lack of an overarching strategy for reform and the differing interests and reform approaches of the stakeholders. There are as many interests as actors working on SSR in any context.

3. Local Ownership

It is an axiom of state-building that reforms must be locally owned to be successful and sustainable. It is no different in the security sector. However, determining the level of local support that constitutes ownership or to devise strategies on how to generate it can be problematic and ambiguous. Further compounding this problem are the invariable gaps in human and institutional capacity present in fragile or post-conflict states. Partner governments often lack the policy development and managerial capacity to adequately assert ownership over SSR processes.

4. Engaging Civil Society

One of the central tenets of the SSR model is that the engagement of civil society actors in the security sector is crucial for its long-term health. However, effective programming to achieve this goal has rarely been actualized in reform contexts. The main problem lies in the fact that civil society in fragile, post-conflict environments, like state structures, tends to be weak and fragmented. Moreover, the relationship between civil society and the state is often frayed and characterised by mutual suspicion. There is also a dilemma of definition: Who exactly is civil society and among them who should be engaged in the SSR process? Finally, how should civil society actors be engaged – as a provider of external oversight, as a medium to raise public awareness of the goals of the process, or as a tool to advance capacity development in the security services (such as the inculcation of human rights norms)? These questions have proven to be difficult to answer in SSR contexts.

5. Capacity Deficits

In the aftermath of war or state collapse, the human and institutional capacity of the state is highly circumscribed. The design of many SSR agendas seems to assume a level of implementation capacity among partner governments that is simply not there. The reaction from donors to such deficits has often been to substitute local capacity with international contractors, creating a form of parallel administration. Rather than slowly building the capacity of local actors, the donors merely do the work for the local partner, a phenomenon driven by the desire to show quick results. Unfortunately, such practices are not only unsuitable but build a damaging culture of dependency in the system. It is crucial that donors recognize capacity limitations and focus their assistance on sustainable capacity building rather than capacity substitution.

6. Spoilers

Any political process or state-building endeavour is bound to create winners and losers. Some of those losers may be coaxed to cooperate with the process through a combination of incentives and disincentives, while others will invariably reject such efforts and resist change. The SSR process must have the capacity to resist spoilers, which can come in many forms, such as

warlords, insurgents, terrorists, and guerrillas. The international community must develop a range of tools to confront spoilers, from political and economic inducements for political and social reintegration to coercive mechanisms. Since the local security forces are often at a nascent stage in their development, the latter role often falls to international security forces. Peace support missions provide a vital security buffer for state security institutions to develop. Contexts like Iraq and Afghanistan have shown the challenges of creating security forces and using them in combat at the same time. As US General David Petraeus remarked when he commanded US forces in Iraq, doing so is “like building an airplane while in flight, and while being shot at.”

7. Durable Funding & ODA Eligibility

There is some ambiguity surrounding whether SSR expenditures qualify as Official Development Assistance (ODA), something that has served as a disincentive for investment in the process, particularly amongst donors with smaller foreign aid envelopes. It is also important to note that many donors have imposed their own restrictions on security-related economic assistance. For instance, many donors have self-imposed prohibitions on the allocation of monies to support foreign penal systems. This has been motivated out of concern that such money could be used to wrongfully imprison or even oppress dissidents and innocent civilians. The result has been to squeeze penal reform processes of much-needed funds, leaving thousands of inmates in these contexts subject to inhuman conditions. There is a need for more flexible funding guidelines that will encourage rather than discourage investment in SSR priority areas.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

One of the foremost challenges confronting the SSR process is how to measure success. Often quantitative indicators have been used, such as the number of security forces trained or the amount of resources funnelled into infrastructure development. However, such metrics say little of how the sector is being governed or public perceptions of the security forces. The figures used tend to measure donor input rather than reform output. New instruments, indicators and measures of effectiveness, both qualitative and quantitative, are needed to evaluate the impact of SSR programs, not just following the conclusion of the process, but during implementation to enable course adjustment. This requires robust baseline data and indicators that must be developed during the preparatory phase of the process in line with the needs assessment. Among the analytical tools that should be used are polls and focus groups to determine citizen attitudes toward security, the security sector, and the reform process. As the end-user of the security sector their perceptions are key to understanding the efficacy of SSR.

9. Regional Dimensions

Most contemporary conflicts tend to have a regional character. It is no longer apt to speak solely of intra-state conflict dynam-

Box 9: SSR and the Private Sector

The role of private sector actors in SSR has grown steadily in recent years. There are four types of private sector actors typically engaged in SSR:

1. Small consultancies focusing specifically on SSR.
2. Development consultancy firms that have moved beyond the scope of their core competencies in areas like health and education to engage more in issues of governance and SSR.
3. Large management consultancy firms that have typically been contracted to undertake large-scale projects in the development and governance fields.
4. Private security companies (PSCs) that have characteristically been involved in the implementation of security force train-and-equip programs under the rubric of SSR.

Private sector actors can play an important role in providing technical assistance and facilitation for reforms, filling gaps in donor programming. There are, however, a number of problems and challenges presented by increased private sector engagement. First, there is a danger that increased outsourcing of SSR implementation to private sector firms could result in the gradual disengagement of donors from the process, depriving it of indispensable political direction. Second, the fact that the private sector actors most actively engaged in SSR are private security and military firms raises concerns over the securitization or militarization of SSR programming. Finally, there is a conspicuous lack of established and effective oversight and accountability structures for private sector actors in post-conflict and fragile state settings.

The need for rapidly deployable technical expertise for SSR will only increase in the years ahead and private firms, particularly PSCs, are uniquely positioned to address that gap; however, it is clear that there is a need for greater clarity in mandates when dealing with these actors and more robust oversight and monitoring mechanisms.

Source: Mark Sedra, *e-Conference Report: The Future of Security Sector Reform* (Waterloo, Canada: CIGI, 2009).
Access [here](#)

ics but regional conflict formations and zones of instability. From the Great Lakes Region of Arica to Central Asia, regional phenomena such as the trade in arms, drugs, gemstones and other illicit goods; cross-border ethnic clientelism; and environmental resource scarcity, have fuelled conflict and instability. Just as peace-building and state-building processes must address this regional dimension to conflict, so too must SSR programs. Initiatives to address issues such as border management, the containment of illicit trade, and counter-terrorism should have a regional focus, encouraging regional security cooperation. However, such a regional focus is rarely operationalized in practice. This can be attributed to political rivalries and concerns over sovereignty among partner countries as well as the nature of contemporary aid missions, which tend to be nation-state specific rather than regional character.

10. Fiscal Sustainability

The purpose of SSR is to build a self-sufficient security sector, not an external dependency. Doing so requires donors and recipients alike to be closely attuned to the sustainability of reform programs from their outset. There is no point constructing security forces that the partner government cannot sustain with its own resources once international donor support recedes. In fact, doing so could stimulate the collapse of the security sector and the state. The design of the SSR process must be informed by both an analysis of existing threats and capacities and long-range projections of the revenue-generating capacity of the state. It is inevitable that partner governments will be dependent on international donor funding in the immediate post-conflict or collapse period, not only to cover the capital costs of restoring the functioning of the security sector but the recurrent costs of maintaining it. However, there must be a clear understanding that this situation is temporary and plans set in place to incrementally transfer funding responsibility from the donor community to the partner government. Such planning should involve the creation of a sound budgeting system, adhering to the same principles as the rest of the public service, and the setting of security force targets rooted to fiscal realities as well as perceived threats.

Recent Trends in Security Sector Reform

Despite some variations in the names ascribed to the SSR model – it has been referred to as security system reform, security sector transformation and justice and security sector reform – there is a broad-based consensus on its utility and the general outline of its normative framework.²⁰ However, the level of “buy-in” to the model among international and local actors has been uneven.²¹ The OECD recognized that “the basic SSR concept and terminology varies significantly among donors, as do approaches, according to differing institutional mandates, priorities and constraints.”²² Furthermore, the SSR agenda has gradually expanded in recent years as different actors integrate new reform instruments and practices under its conceptual roof.²³ Such variances in interpretation of the concept have contributed to a significant disjuncture between policy and practice. While numerous activities are being implemented in a wide range of contexts under the rubric of SSR, few conform to the normative model. In many cases, traditional security programmes have merely been re-labelled as SSR.²⁴ The SSR model has only been actualised in its entirety in a few cases, such as Sierra Leone and Afghanistan; the majority of SSR initiatives can best be described as “partial programs” that address certain components of the SSR model, such as police or military reform, but fail to actualise its holistic vision.²⁵

One of the reasons for the diversity in approaches to SSR among development donors has been the difficulty of mainstreaming the concept within donor governments. According to Ball and Hendrickson, “none of the DAC member states has yet succeeded in mainstreaming SSR, either into development work or into security-related activities.”²⁶ Adopting the SSR concept necessitates a radical change in policy and practice among donors. Above all, it requires close cross-governmental coordination, a whole-of-government approach. As Lily et al state, “security sector reform implies in some respects as many changes in donor practise in terms of improvements in coherence and co-ordination as it does in aid recipient countries.”²⁷

The “Conceptual-Contextual Divide”

While few would dispute the fundamental principles underlying the SSR model, in numerous ways its design is ill-conducive for implementation. Its agenda is immensely ambitious. To be effective the process must do more than reform institutions but transform the mindsets, behaviour and security culture of the recipient country. The model seeks to introduce Western democratic norms and principles of security sector governance to unstable and contested contexts whose existing structures and practices can be antithetical to those norms. In the words of Scheye and Peake, “it may be more productive to be less rather than more ambitious in order to achieve effective, measurable SSR results for an identifiable beneficiary.”²⁸

SSR programs are characteristically undertaken with a poor understanding of local political, security and socio-economic dynamics. An OECD survey of non-OECD countries' perceptions of SSR found that "donors often lack adequate understanding of the country in which they are engaging, in particular relating to how countries perceive and define security threats, how security institutions function, and the concerns of the reforming government."²⁹ The inevitable result is a donor-driven process out of sync with local needs.

Local ownership of the SSR agenda is held to be the central prerequisite for its success. According to the OECD, "the most critical task facing countries embarking on SSR processes is to build a nationally-owned and led vision of security."³⁰ However, it has rarely been achieved in practice. The model seems to ignore power dynamics in recipient countries, where reforms are invariably political, producing winners and losers. Based on this power calculus, the losers will likely resist reforms, perceiving them to be an external construct motivated by foreign interests.³¹ To meet ownership requirement, donors tend to rely on a narrow stratum of like-minded elites, often Western-oriented technocrats, whose constituency in the government and wider society is precarious. This hardly meets the standard of ownership envisaged by the OECD, implying a broad-based consensus on reforms.

Another one of the more distinctive facets of the SSR model as compared to its Cold War-era predecessor is its emphasis on engaging civil society. The OECD calls for the promotion of "dialogue between civil society and the security system actors" as a means to "encourage a broader understanding of the principles and objectives of SSR."³² Civil society actors can also play an important oversight role for the security sector. However, as Scheye and Peake note, "there is no single, adequate definition of civil society capable of informing the SSR debate with theoretical consistency or practical reliability."³³ Actors that fall into the category of civil society range widely from private business to indigenous NGOs. Furthermore, many civil society actors in SSR contexts can hardly be considered autonomous or independent, as they maintain close links to state actors through informal networks. The model provides scant guidance on how to engage this amorphous group.

The Impact of 9/11 & SSR "Under Fire"

The September 11th terrorist attacks in the US engendered a shift in security thinking that has had significant implications for the SSR model. The elevation of terrorism to the head of the threat matrices of most Western states has prompted them to view assistance to the security sector through a counter-terrorism lens. This has led to the appropriation of the SSR model, or at least the language of SSR, in the pursuit of hard security objectives. The exigencies of the "global war on terror," rather than the goal of advancing human security, have dictated the shape of many security sector assistance programs in the post-September 11th era. Developing countries that have become new fronts in the "war on terror" have received a huge influx of assistance from Western states, principally the US, to enable them to bolster intelligence and internal security capability.³⁴ These states, many of whom were transformed from rogue states or strategic backwaters to indispensable allies overnight, have exploited the increasing ambivalence of Western donors toward democratic principles in the provision of security assistance to revive or preserve authoritarian and undemocratic practices inimical to SSR orthodoxy.

Just as increasing concern has been raised in the development field over the securitization of aid, its instrumentalization to achieve strategic objectives, one can perceive the same phenomenon in the security sector. The securitization of the SSR model is clearly apparent in the two most prominent cases of SSR in the post-September 11th period, Afghanistan and Iraq, where there has been a massive disparity in the levels of resources and attention dedicated to "hard" security programs, aiming to build the capacity of the security forces, and "soft" security initiatives, geared to entrenching the rule of law and fostering democratic principles of good governance. The process has been stripped of its holistic character, leaving only its Cold War security shell. This shift in focus is understandable in light of the adverse security environments in both countries. Labelling either Iraq or Afghanistan as post-conflict contexts remained problematic in 2010. These two cases have presented a new contextual challenge for the SSR model, namely wartime reform, or as practitioner has put it: "SSR under fire."³⁵

The cases of Afghanistan and Iraq have shown that the SSR model is unqualified to handle the challenge of advancing reforms in a conflict environment. The inevitable result in both cases has been a "slide toward expediency" in which the fundamental principles of the SSR model are gradually sacrificed to meet the exigencies of the security situation. One could even say that the SSR process in these cases has been weaponized in the service of counter-insurgency goals. The processes in Afghanistan and Iraq are SSR in name only. The Iraqi and Afghan SSR experiences, while perhaps more the exception to the rule in the SSR

experience, have nonetheless challenged the legitimacy of the model and demanded new thinking on how to adapt it to the changing international security environment.

Conclusions

SSR is now widely accepted as an indispensable element of state-building processes and democratic transitions, but its record of achievement seemingly contradicts the growing influence of the model. The reality is that there are few clear SSR success stories to point to. The first decade of SSR witnessed the rapid development of the SSR normative framework, but implementation did not keep pace, fostering a policy-practice gap. Narrowing that gap should be the centerpiece of the next generation of SSR.

Despite wide variances in contexts and conditions, a number of universal lessons and best practices have emerged from studies of SSR implementation over the past decade. Those best practices should form the foundation of a new SSR model more attuned to the specific implementation challenges of contemporary SSR contexts. This second generation SSR must make strides to foster greater unity of purpose and vision among its principal global stakeholders. Developing a second generation SSR model requires a new and invigorated research agenda that can draw on the SSR experience to produce new policy and programming strategies and practices. If SSR is to be practical tool for positive change over the coming decade rather than just an admirable normative framework, than the dilemmas and gaps outlined in this paper will have to be addressed. Moreover, donors will be faced with a stark choice: change the way you do business, or find another model of security assistance.

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