

# Security sector reform in developing and transitional countries

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## 1. Security sector reform as a new paradigm

### 1.1 Defining security sector reform

Security sector reform<sup>1</sup> is a relatively recent concept in state transformation, development and post-conflict peace-building. Notions of democratising societies, good governance with transparency and accountability, peaceful transformation of societies, human security and poverty reduction programmes have recently made inroads in security thinking (UNDP 1994; Commission on Human Development 2003; Ball and Brzoska 2002; Ball et al 2003). People worldwide are concerned about armed conflict, terrorism, regional conflicts, failed states, violent crime and human rights abuses. The people-centred concept of human security ideally complements, but often contrasts or competes with the notion of state security, or even more narrowly the security of the political elite. These conceptual changes in the security debate happened primarily in developing but less so in transitional countries.

Security sector reform addresses security problems and tries to improve the situation through institutional reforms. Security and peace are seen as a public good (Mendez 1999). Society as a whole, as well as its individual members, benefits from an increase in security. Security sector reform must be understood as a broad concept, which also concerns a more efficient use of scarce resources to improve security. Democratic, civilian control over security forces is crucial for the provision of security in the interests of the population. Democratic decision making requires transparency and accountability. Thus, the public at large needs to be involved. However, democratisation is no guarantee of improved security. The fact that democratisation has so often been associated with rising political violence is probably no coincidence since it challenges established privileges and raises political expectation which are not always fulfilled (Luckham 2003). Hence, the crux of the reform of the security sector is the development of both effective civil oversight and creation of institutions capable of providing security (Ball et. al. 2003, p. 268).<sup>2</sup>

The list of countries in need of security sector reform is long.<sup>3</sup> The reasons why security sector reform is necessary in each of these countries vary. They include post-conflict rebuilding, transition from military or one-party rule to participatory forms of government, recent independence, a lack of transparency and accountability in public affairs, a disregard for the rule of law, problem in conflict mediation due to an often conflict-exacerbating role by actors in the security sector, difficulties in the management of scarce resources, as well as inadequate civilian capacity to manage and monitor the security forces.

The concept of security sector reform has become increasingly popular since it was first put forward to a larger public in a speech by Clare Short, the then United Kingdom Minister for International Development, in London in 1998 (Short 1999; Ball 1998.) Its appeal lies in the visionary integration of a number of objectives under one intellectual roof: the reduction of military

<sup>1</sup> In the official discussions within the OECD donor community the term security system reform has recently been introduced instead of security sector reform.

<sup>2</sup> See Box 1.

expenditures and their redirection to development purposes; security-relevant development; donor activities in conflict prevention and post-conflict situations; and improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of governance over those institutions charged with the provision of security (Brzoska, 2003).

**Box 1: What is the security sector and its reform?**

Security sector reform is the transformation of the security system which includes all the actors, their roles, responsibilities and actions, so that it is managed and operated in a manner that is more consistent with democratic norms and sound principles of good governance, and thus contributes to a well-functioning security framework. Responsible and accountable security forces reduce the risk of conflict, provide security for citizens and create the right environment for sustainable development. The overall objective of security sector reform is to contribute to a secure environment that is conducive to development.

Source: DFID 2003, p. 30, OECD/DAC 2001, pp. II-35

When defining security sector reform and formulating the objectives, the problem arises that too narrow a definition (for instance an exclusive focus on the military) might lead to an inadequate programme. This is because security sector reform is not just about disarmament or reducing the size of the army, but also about security in the wider sense – the security of every single human being within society. Conversely, too broad a definition (that includes everything from protection against HIV to water resources management) might create a lack of clarity concerning the core of the needed reforms.

If adequately designed, the supply of weapons, materials and other equipment as well as military and police assistance can also be part of a programme of security sector reform, as the need for the right equipment by African peace keepers illustrates (Field 2004). One criterion for using the term security sector reform is that this assistance is integrated into an overall strategy of development and democratisation of the society. This implies that security sector reform can never be implemented as a stand-alone programme but has to be embedded in a general peace-building and development programme. The military assistance programmes, implemented during the Cold War, which were essentially ideologically motivated, did not as a rule comply with the concept of security sector reform in use today, since they aimed merely to strengthen or modernise the armed forces in question and consolidate the influence of the donor countries. But they did not seek to help establish a democratically controlled security sector that would be conducive to development.

**Box 2: The historical perspective**

The recent debate on security sector reform is not the first period during which development theoreticians and practitioners had turned their attention to these themes. Back in the sixties – partially brought about by a large number of military coups d'état in Latin America, Africa and Asia – the development community was interested in helping identify an appropriate role for the military and the input of resources for the military sector. The debate focused on

1. the consumption or wastage of resources by the military, and the issue addressed in various UN reports of whether those resources should be employed for other purposes.
2. the role of the military in nation-building. Development theoreticians put forward the hypothesis that, in view of the often artificial borders drawn up in the decolonisation process, the military might play a role in uniting people and building nations.

3. the role of the military as a pillar of modernisation. Anglo-Saxon sociologists and political scientists in particular viewed the military as a key group for the modernisation and industrialisation of emerging third-world societies. In so doing they provided the legitimisation for extensive military assistance programs.

What had previously been a predominantly positive image of the military as modernisers had changed by the late sixties, if not before, when the predicted rapid development failed to materialise and the military in many countries had become anything but pillars of growth and development. The more empirical analyses of the seventies focused more closely on the causes of coups d'état and the consequences of policies pursued by military governments. Development co-operation – primarily in response to the negative role of the undemocratic, often repressive and state-terrorist armed forces – proceeded to keep its distance from these actors. The role of the military and paramilitary groups and the absorption of resources by them came to be seen as a highly sensitive area which was too political.

Presently, still existing reservations about security sector reform are attributable to the fact that development co-operation programs geared to the security sector have been viewed as support for the military. This aloofness from the military was problematic in that military assistance and other forms of co-operation with the armed forces in the third world was left largely or in most cases exclusively to the armed forces in the industrialised countries. These activities then took place in the context of the confrontation between East and West and the competition between the respective systems, the Southern dimension of the East-West antagonism. The support provided to third world countries by the USSR was founded almost exclusively on arms exports, and training for the armed forces or underground movements. Yet in countries like the USA and France too, where military assistance was declared as development co-operation, in purely quantitative terms military assistance at times dominated development co-operation. The focus was on military training and the supply of weapons, whilst the issue of what might be the appropriate role of the military in society in general received little or no attention. In both the East and the West, rationales were sought to justify this support to the armed forces, and it took the end of the Cold War to bring themes involving military and security policy back into the mainstream of development policy debate.

Source: Wulf 2000.

## 1.2 Elements and actors of security sector reform

Often the reforms are limited and ignore the need for strengthening civil oversight and professionalising civil society for this task. The emerging security sector reform paradigm instead is based on broad principles such as democratic control and accountability, public participation and transparency, good governance and public expenditure management. Instead of single issue reforms, a holistic concept and approach is now called for especially by the donor community (Hendrickson 1999, Hendrickson and Karkoszka 2002). In many post-conflict countries of the world (e.g. the conflict zones of West and Central Africa and in the Balkans), security sector reform has been donor-driven. Donors have insisted on and assisted in security sector reform projects and made such programmes a condition of their post-conflict assistance. In other regions, particularly in many Latin American countries, as well as in some of the countries in transition in Europe, the democratisation of civil-military relations was also included on the national agenda (Diamint 2002, Born, Caparini and Fluri 2002).

**Box 3: Dimensions of Security sector Reform**

Political dimension:	civil control
Economic dimension:	appropriate consumption of resources
Social dimension:	guarantee of citizens' physical security
Institutional dimension:	professionalisation of actors in the security sector

Source: Brzoska 2000, Wulf 2000.

Security sector reform initiatives address four broad areas (Brzoska 2000, Wulf 2000, pp. 19-23):

- The political dimension: democratic, civilian oversight of the security sector forces. The core task of reform in this area is good governance, including the capacity of the civil society (e.g. media, NGOs, researchers, the public at large) to facilitate debate on security priorities as well as civilian oversight of the security forces.
- The economic dimension: the allocation of resources. The rational allocation of human, financial and material resources to the security sector is a precondition for its efficient functioning. An excessive security apparatus deprives other policies (e.g. sustainable development) from scarce resources and creates an inefficient security sector. At the same time, an under-funded security sector cannot ensure the security of the population. Reform here includes identifying needs and key objectives, determining what is affordable, prioritising resource-allocation and ensuring the efficient and effective use of resources.
- The social dimension: the actual guarantee of the security of the citizens. The prime task of the security sector and its actors is to guarantee the internal and external security of the population. Security is not identical with security of the state provided by the military. Rather, it includes the security of the population from attacks of all types on their life, health or property.
- The institutional dimension: the structure of the security sector and the institutional separation of the various forces and institutions. The different forces can only be efficient and be held accountable if the various institutional tasks are clearly defined. An institutional overlap between domestic public security and external defence increases the danger of intervention by the military in domestic affairs. The concept of a security sector should not become an excuse for militarised police forces or a major internal role for the armed forces.

**Box 4: The security community**

- Core security institutions: armed forces; police; paramilitary forces; coast guard; militias, and intelligence services
- Security sector oversight bodies: legislatures and legislative committees; ministries of defence, internal affairs, justice, foreign affairs; office of the president; and financial management bodies (ministries of finance, budget offices, auditor general's offices)
- Non-core security institutions: judiciary, customs, correctional services, and other uniformed bodies
- Non-statutory security force institutions: liberation armies, guerrilla armies, traditional militias, political party militias, and private security companies.

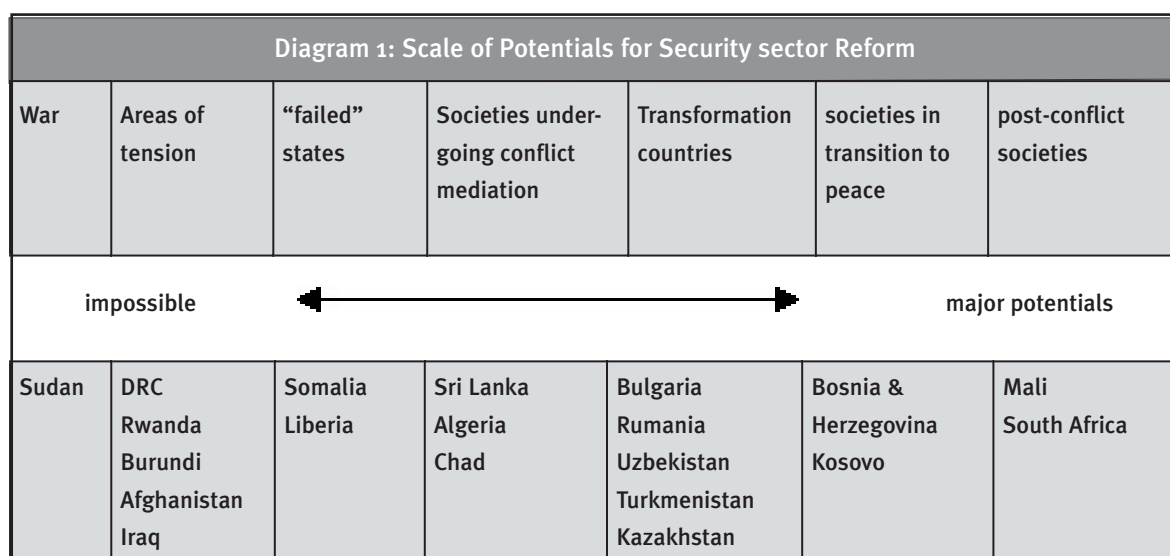
Source: Ball and Brzoska, 2002, p. 8.

## 2. Empirical experiences and preconditions for reform

### 2.1 Potential for security sector reform

It is very difficult to generalise on the nature and the required steps of security sector reform, since the respective political, economic and social conditions, as well as the regional constellations, need to be taken into account. The context in which the security sector is to be reformed is vital, and the differences in the various countries are as critical as their commonalities. Nevertheless, an attempt will be made here to identify a number of general conditions and draw corresponding conclusions. A central prerequisite for the successful implementation of reforms is the will to reform on the part of various relevant partners in developing countries, although equally important is the situation in which the specific country finds itself.

The opportunities and potentials for reform in different situations can be measured on a scale, although categorising these countries on that scale is somewhat based on subjective judgement. The two poles are formed by countries at war (such as Sudan), and countries in post-conflict situations (such as Mali, South Africa and possibly Sierra Leone).



It goes without saying that, where war and violent conflicts are being pursued, there is no broad-based will for reform. On the contrary, the belligerent parties usually attempt to strengthen their martial potential in order to defeat the enemy. Reforms to introduce civil control of the military, the growing influence of civil society or demobilisation and disarmament cannot be expected in countries at war, or can be expected only on a limited scale. Nevertheless, this is the very situation in which civil society is needed as a watchdog or whistleblower. Plans for later programmes of demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration can already be drawn up during the conflict. Corresponding support measures are possible. Given the present situation, for example in Sudan, there is no basis for security sector reform. Hence, Sudan could even be placed outside of this continuum.

Similarly problematic is the situation in areas of tension and countries with a high probability of war. In these countries, there is usually a process of armament followed by mobilisation of the armed forces, whereupon civil norms cease to apply. External support is usually accepted by



a government only to support its own war effort. In such cases, however, it is also conceivable that support be focused on civil society. Here too it is necessary to seek paths and support structures that strengthen human security.

Poor preconditions for comprehensive security sector reform also prevail in so-called “failed” or “collapsed” states. Characteristic of this development is the loss of state control over the monopoly of force. External assistance, even on a large scale, is no guarantee for success. In such situations, reforms of the apparatus of legitimate state coercion are virtually impossible. Somalia is a prototypical instance of such situations; the fragmentation of the individual militarily active groups and warlords demonstrates that groups are only willing to be disarmed under favourable conditions (for instance where alternative economic prospects are created). However, the preconditions are not in place for fundamental security sector reform.

Potentials are more conducive in countries where conflict mediation is under way, and where chances for solving or containing conflicts are good. However, there is often not sufficient mutual trust to be able to embark on comprehensive reforms during the conflict mediation phase. It is therefore important to plan and if possible reach agreement on security sector reforms during the phase of cease-fire and peace negotiations (as was the case for instance in the 1992 Rome Accord for Mozambique).

Overall prospects in transformation countries are good. If these countries aim at joining NATO or the European Union they can expect to receive assistance, including programmes for democratising the actors in the security sector. However, post-authoritarian experiences in many countries show that the Soviet legacy, continued authoritarian political leadership, nepotism, police involvement in criminal acts and corruption are the main hindrances for reform. Often civilian oversight is almost non-existent. Security sector reform has come mainly through external pressure and is triggered by bilateral or multilateral arrangements (International Crisis Group 2002).

In countries in transition to peace, the prospects for reform are also good. However, resistance by the security sector forces must usually be anticipated here. The inertia of the armed forces and police and their tendency to adhere to traditional structures and assumptions constrain necessary reforms. This position within the armed forces and police does not necessarily mean an irrational or illogical opposition to reform on the part of the actors concerned, but can be explained by the threatened loss of privileges by the security elite. External support to the elements for reform (usually civil society, but possibly also elements within the security forces themselves) can help actually kick-start reforms.

In contrast to countries at war, potentials in post-conflict societies, where peace accords have been signed and where possibly even the reduction and adjustment of security forces have been agreed, are very positive indeed. Generally speaking, in such countries there is also a strong will to accept external support for reorientation and reform. The example of South Africa illustrates the deep structural transformation of the security sector. With the reform largely being completed, South Africa as a successful case might even be taken out of this continuum.

## **2.2 Domestic commitment and ownership: many, but limited reforms**

Virtually every state is involved in some sort of reform that changes the way security institutions and actors operate. This, however, does not imply that these reforms can all be labelled ‘security sector reform’ as it is understood in the development community (see box 1). Questions remain about the direction of such reforms and how reforms are implemented. Often, the reform efforts are not directed at improving the security of the population but are exclusively aimed at

rationalising or modernising armed forces and police to save money or to enhance their postures and capabilities.

We can identify several contexts or reasons for reforms with some of these categories obviously overlapping:

- Budgetary necessity (almost all countries with reform programmes)
- End of war or conflict and post-conflict peace-building (Afghanistan, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, East Timor, Mozambique, South Africa, Haiti)
- Continued war or unsettled conflicts with strengthening of the security sector organs (Columbia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Nepal)
- Transitions from military rule (several Latin American countries, Ghana, Benin, Mali, Indonesia)
- Post-authoritarian experience (all successor states of the former Soviet Union)
- Single-party authoritarian dispensation (Cap Verde, Tanzania, Laos, Vietnam)
- Participation in UN peacekeeping (several West African and Central European states, Argentina, Bangladesh)
- Joining military or political alliances or blocs (the new members or candidates of NATO and the European Union).

#### **Box 4: Intelligence Services**

“The role of intelligence services in the security sector should be recognised and addressed. Practically all governments find it necessary to maintain specialised forces in this area... Intelligence agencies should be included in security sector reform where their work is concerned with internal security threats. In this area, donors have been reluctant to contribute, as the need for transparency that pervades all other efforts in security sector reform is difficult to reconcile with the development of secret services. To counteract the obvious lack of transparency, the intelligence agencies must be subject to some form of civilian control. A complete detachment of such services from a general process of reform may easily undermine constructive development in other areas.”

(NUPI 1999. p. 19)

Different types of reform are implemented in various countries. The reform scenarios mentioned below usually do not fully explain the various and often overlapping path of reform:

- security institutions have partnered with civilians in transforming security institutions in a genuine effort of democratic transition (South Africa, several Central European States, Brazil)
- democratic change in many sectors of society with limited reforms in the security sector (Benin, Ghana, Mali, Chile, Indonesia)
- security sector reform is driven from above by the government with limited public participation or limited democratisation (Ethiopia, Uganda, Indonesia)
- reform rhetoric or lip service to reform mainly to please foreign governments and investors without much reform and even resistance in practice (Central Asian states)
- externally or donor driven extensive restructuring of the security sector without strong local ownership (Afghanistan, Iraq, Sierra Leone, Liberia, DR Congo, some Balkan states)
- fundamental restructuring of the security sector to meet standards of external partners (Central European countries)
- restructuring security forces, including warring groups in previous conflicts (Afghanistan, El Salvador)
- building new security forces with extensive foreign assistance (Baltic states, East Timor).



To be successful security sector reform requires both that democratic institutions are put in place and a principled acceptance of democratic politics by the government, civil servants and security actors. In terms of domestic actors, in most cases the executive branch of governments, assisted often by donors has driven reforms in the security sector. With few exceptions (most prominently South Africa), parliaments and the public at large have been relatively marginal. This is probably the reason for the often narrow focus of reforms. The executive acted on certain aspects when urgent and immediate problems required action. Typical examples are rampant crime and post-conflict reconstruction as well as economic crises, which required budget cuts.

### 2.3 Strong interest in the donor community but lack of coherence

Over the past few years, the debate on security sector reform has gathered momentum within the international donor community as well as in developing countries and countries in transition. A condition for security sector reform is local ownership. Unless this is ensured donor interventions are likely to have limited effects or might even be counter productive. In the past, external support for the security sector was often provided or withheld for strategic and political reasons (International Alert et al., 2002, p. 1). In recent years, the emphasis among donors has been that sustainable development and peace-building must be based on strengthening governance in the security sector in order to remove the barriers to the state's ability to provide security for its citizens as well as the threats to citizens' security. Compared to the high level of security sector reform needs in many countries, the resources made available are still far from sufficient. However, security sector reform has been accepted as a necessary condition for democratisation and development. In the absence of democratic, civilian control security forces are able to act with impunity in all the four areas mentioned above, with negative consequences for both human development and security.

In 2001 the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published a Conceptual Framework with six broad categories of recommendations for members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) to develop security sector reform policies and more integrated approaches to security and development (OECD/DAC, 2001). In these six categories the OECD suggested

- to recognise the developmental importance of security issues
- to conceptualise a comprehensive security system reform that outlines the appropriate roles for actors
- to identify the required capacity and institutional reforms in donor countries
- to develop an effective division of labour amongst development and other relevant international actors
- to work towards the integration of security systems concerns in overall foreign and trade policy and
- to provide assistance to enhance domestic ownership of and commitment to reform processes.

The efforts of the OECD and its member states emphasise the need for a holistic and integrated approach and stress the governance dimension of security sector reform. There are significant differences in donor approaches and terminology. While some donors have developed a stand-alone programme, promoted the concept and undertook the internal institutional reforms to present a coherent policy, many governments are still grappling with the concept, terminology and its integration into their overall policies. The difficulties are mirrored in the complicated relations between development, defence, security and foreign policy actors in many OECD countries.

The World Bank for example is rather reserved about working too closely with the military. With particular reference to its own tasks and mandate, the World Bank emphasises transparency and management in the security sector, as well as the potentials of donor organisations and countries. It expressly identified, already in 1999, the development of civilian expertise for assessing security needs and security threats; setting security policy; effectively managing and overseeing the security sector; training for civil servants in developing control and accounting systems for budgets and expenditure planning; support for democratically elected parliaments to assess security issues; reform of the judicial, legal and penal systems; and strengthening the capacity of civil society to monitor these reforms. The World Bank suggests that the donor community should provide support for such programmes (World Bank 1999, p. 12).

**Box 5: Areas for Development Assistance in security sector reform**

**A. Enhancing state capacity and policy coherence**

- a) Security sector reviews
- b) Management of security expenditure
- c) Civilian expertise on security issues
- d) Regional confidence-building and peace-keeping capacity

**B. Reform and training of security forces**

- a) Military and police reforms
- b) Training assistance

**C. Demilitarisation and peace-building**

- a) Conversion of security resources to civilian use
- b) Demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants
- c) Regulation of small arms
- d) Child soldiers

**D. Strengthening democratic governance and the rule of law**

- a) Justice systems
- b) Civil society

**E. Building research capacity in developing countries**

Source: DAC/OECD 2000, p. 21 – 26.

Most donors are quick to embrace the paradigm of security sector reform but slow to implement it. In contrast, many have quickly promoted the US ‘war on terrorism’ notion. This is best illustrated by the enormous difference in financial resources available to the two policies. Resources for security sector reform projects are still scarce among most donors. While for a number of states the anti-terror campaign pays a dividend, security sector reform is primarily seen as a penalty. The US anti-terror campaign has suddenly greatly increased available resources (and interest by the US government) for key developing and transitional countries (Pakistan and Uzbekistan are among the most prominent examples, but also countries like Indonesia and the Philippines). The campaign has also disregarded civil rights and the liberal values of a democratic society. Another consequence of the US focus on global terror and on Iraq, has been the reduction of the importance of Latin America in the US agenda.

Direct donor engagement in security sector reform is still relatively rare. The United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) has taken the lead in Sierra Leone, Uganda and Indonesia, and UNDP in the development in Mali. Political willingness, commitment

and responsiveness of the government in the recipient countries have strongly determined the donor impact. In some countries with a strong domestic ownership of the programme (as in South Africa) assistance has come from several donors. Since non-state actors (crime, terrorism, warlordism, armed gangs, armed insurgencies, etc.) are increasingly a security problem in many developing and transitional countries, some donor assistance in security issues is directed against these activities. Assistance in fighting terrorism is mainly concentrated in the military realm. Police and judiciary reforms have been favoured by donors in addition to deploying civilian police as a major component to international post-conflict reconstruction.

The divergent views, policies and projects can be exemplified by four of the largest donors. First, the UK government combines the knowledge and resources of the Ministry of Defence (MOD), the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). In this 'joined-up government' initiative the departments concerned are encouraged to integrate their policy making and programme delivery and pool their resources in a Global Conflict Prevention Pool and another pool focussing on Africa (DFID, 2003). Second, U.S. involvement in security sector reform has been conducted through several agencies including the Department of Defence, the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Department of Justice, and the Department of State. Yet this is not a government-wide concept, since their programmes frequently compete with each other, with little co-ordination, and tend to take a narrow view of foreign assistance. Third, the response in Germany is a strong emphasis on promoting civilian oversight of security sector institutions (Kloke-Lesch and Steinke, 2002). Support for justice and internal security and police reform is widely accepted. However, there is only limited engagement in working directly with the military. The generally positive response to security sector reform has not materialised in a comprehensive programme but is directed at pilot projects (GTZ, 2003). Four, France, although having traditionally strong ties to many security sector agencies in Franco-phone developing countries, has so far not explicitly taken on board the security sector reform paradigm.

Security sector reform has become, for a number of donors, a catchall phrase. There is a tendency today to include all economic co-operation projects pursued to date which might 'somehow' fit under the heading 'security sector reform': poverty reduction, crisis prevention, peacekeeping, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, de-mining, assistance to strengthen human rights etc. Traditional military and police assistance, which usually were implemented in the context of ideological conflict, and involved the supply of modern weapons or other equipment, are sometimes simply included under the new heading. Similarly, technocratic and apolitical notions derived from previous, and often unsuccessful, projects in public sector reform (with, for example, arbitrary limits of a certain percentage of GDP for military expenditures). They are bound to fail as long as the power relations in society and the legitimate use of the state monopoly of force are not addressed.

## 2.4 Peacekeeping and police reform

In addition to the donor community, peacekeepers are also increasingly concerned with security sector reform. This reform is deeply embedded in the wider issue of peacemaking. Progress on peacemaking is often linked to security sector reform, particularly the reform of police forces. In the past, peacekeepers often had to take over police functions, including the training of domestic police. In recent years, the deployment of civilian police has been added as a major component to international peacekeeping efforts (Neild 1999). The United Nations' post-conflict rehabilitation programmes in recent years have frequently included civilian police. In the 1960s, the UN in the

Congo operation deployed civilian police and they have also been a part of the UN Force in Cyprus. However, not until the end of the 1980s, did civilian police become an important component in UN programmes. As of December 2003 out of a total of 4,581 peace-keeping personnel just over 10 percent served as civilian police, contributed by 67 different countries with the largest contingents from the Jordan, USA, Germany and India. The major contingents are being deployed in Kosovo, Liberia and East Timor. Their tasks include monitoring local police, conducting investigations and providing guidance aimed at building appropriate police services.

Box: 6: UN civilian police operations as of December 2003		
UN peacekeeping mission	Since	Number of civilian police
UNMIK, Kosovo	June 1999	3,691
UNMISET, East Timor	May 2002	319
UNMIL, Liberia	September 2003	312*
UNAMSIL, Sierra Leone	October 1999	130
MONUC, DR Congo	November 1999	115
UNFICYP, Cyprus	March 1964	47
MINURSO, Western Sahara	April 1991	13
UNOMIG, Georgia	August 1993	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>4,635**</b>
Source: <a href="http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/home.shtml">www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/home.shtml</a> .		
* By October 2003 none of the authorised 1,115 civilian police was deployed.		
** The numbers given by the UN for the different missions add up to 4,637.		

### 3. Problems and Dilemmas

The problems confronting African countries have aptly been described by Lauri Nathan (2001) as “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse”: He lists authoritarian rule, weak states, socio-economic deprivation and inequity and exclusion of minorities as the structural problems haunting Africa. A similar case can be made for many countries in other parts in the world. His contention is that the international community’s programme addresses primarily the prevention of violence rather than the structural causes. He concludes that the “four horsemen of the apocalypse” are the primary causes of large-scale violence. Domestic and internal initiatives to prevent violence and to provide security have to take these structural causes into consideration. Although police and military forces and their weapons in an unreformed security sector are part of the problem, they are usually not the cause of violence but an instrument in such conflicts. Hence security sector reform is a subset of a wider political and economic reform. This is not a question of theorising while parts of the world burn. Ambitions to reform the security sector have to consider the underlying causes of violence

for such programmes to succeed. To remove these causes of violence and wars confronting many societies and laying the basis for peace and development can only be a long-term programme. Security sector reform addresses mainly the symptoms of violent conflicts and aims at short or medium term adjustments to facilitate the long-term process. This is certainly a significant objective – an objective, trying to reform the most important state instrument in the peace process. This reform is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the long-term goal of peace and development, good governance, transparency and accountability.

The security sector is a politically sensitive area. Reform processes encounter serious problems and are faced with dilemmas, which require very close attention.

### 3.1 The right partners

It cannot be taken for granted as a matter of principle that the will to reform the security sector always exists or that governments will accept external involvement or support, which is after all a form of intervention. Yet this is a precondition for sustainable and systematic reform and demarcates the limits of external support.

Security sector actors have often played dubious roles that might disqualify them. For instance, is co-operation for reform possible with the former military responsible for the genocide in Rwanda? Is the bloody history of the military in Latin America a reason to remain cautious in co-operation even today, or to turn it down? Can co-operation in the judicial sector work with Islamic fundamentalists? Must co-operation be discontinued with countries with nuclear ambitions like North Korea? And if so, what about Pakistan, India or Israel? In many cases partnership in security sector reform will be more complicated than in other fields of economic co-operation. It might even be necessary to decline co-operation, for instance with a corrupt judicial apparatus or to turn down training programmes for the armed forces where there is a risk that direct military assistance may promote or legitimate activities that endanger human security. In cases of doubt, it is therefore appropriate to avoid direct co-operation with the security forces. Nevertheless, there are usually opportunities to strengthen instead and support primarily those elements responsible for democratic control of the security sector.

### 3.2 Donor Policy Coherence

Donor policies are often not harmonised, but in many cases diametrically opposed. Many international organisations that promote democracy as a universal norm do not necessarily adhere to these norms. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are guided by the principals of their important “Northern” shareholders while at the same time imposing structural reform programmes on recipient countries to achieve democracy and good governance. Even the United Nations is not a democratically organised body with many non-democratic members influencing their programmes.

The real litmus test in security sector reform for donors is the question of whether defence relations (especially arms export interests) are considered within their security sector reform programmes. None of the major donors seem willing to do this but pursue their arms export interest through their economic and foreign trade ministries and agencies while their foreign offices and economic co-operation agencies are pursuing the security sector reform agenda.

Thus, foreign assistance in this area is characterised by a lack of coherence among the different donors and, in addition, within many countries between the different agencies involved in

economic and development co-operation. This stands in stark contrast to the generally broad positive response to the notion that lack of human security is a fundamental obstacle to development. As a minimum, involvement in security sector reform requires a strict application of the development criteria to “do no harm”.

### 3.3 Selecting Priorities in the Light of Scarce Funds

Policy makers have to weigh different relevant objectives, like poverty reduction, improvement of health situations, improvement of water supply, and many more against the need for security sector reform. Measures to increase public security can require the allocation of large volumes of resources – resources that might be needed for other programmes. Given the scarcity of funds it will be necessary to set priorities. By setting these priorities it should be kept in mind, that the security sector has control over the ultimate means of force. Hence, it is a specially important sector of the state. However, the general and valid assumption that security is a precondition to development is too broad to be a concrete blueprint for setting such priorities.

## 4. Lessons learned

The situation in many countries urgently in need for security sector reform is not exactly an enabling environment. It has to be accepted – although difficult to tolerate on moral grounds – that violent conflict and wars can usually not be prevented or stopped in the short term. Violent conflict has remained endemic, despite intense efforts, in a number of regions. This insight is not an advice to await peace that will come when the combatants have exhausted their bloody ambitions. It is not meant to propagate the dictum put forward by the old-fashioned proponent of real politik Edward Luttwak (1999) in which he puts The Beatles song upside down and requests to “give war a chance.” On the contrary, from a humanist perspective, there is no alternative to working towards peace and development. But the realities in many countries have to be taken into consideration. And these realities often mean that there will be no peace without a reform of the security sector. To expect peace to stabilise a society without touching the security sector is wishful thinking. It is imperative that civilians drive this process and not leave it to the so-called security experts.

Many structural deficiencies and practical political barriers prevent easy and speedy reform. There are, however, also positive developments. The most illustrative example of a positive development is South Africa. Given the history and structure of the armed forces and police in that country, the conditions for reform of the security sector were not positive at the end of Apartheid. Nevertheless, within a brief period of time it was possible to carry out a thorough reform that integrated the former adversary armed forces, the various liberation forces and the Apartheid regime forces, into the new South African National Defence Forces. This process was facilitated by the engagement of many NGOs and an active role of the civil society at large in formulating and revising the Defence White Paper of 1996. Although the reform process did not end with Parliament’s acceptance of this document, it clearly and unmistakably establishes the democratic control over security (Cawthra 2003).

The engagement in security sector reform has taught some lessons to both the international community and the countries undergoing reform. Traditional military and police assistance programmes of the Cold War period have little in common with the requirements of security sector reform. Among the most important lessons learned by the international community are the need



to acknowledge that countries have legitimate security needs; the necessity of comprehensive and coherent external assistance; the need to secure the commitment of national and local leadership; the indispensability of carefully designed confidence-building measures in overcoming the suspicion between the security forces and the civilian population; and the necessity of a long-term perspective and commitment (Ball and Brzoska, 2002).

International and national actors do not always prioritise the same goals in security sector reform. To make security sector reform a success, it is important to consider the specific circumstances of a country, without losing sight of the overall principles and goals of security sector reform and the even wider goal of removing the causes for structural violence. It is important to constantly question what appears to be established wisdom, both specifically with regard to security sector reform as well as international assistance more generally:

1. The role of the military. While numerous examples of arbitrary action, despotism and political intervention by the military can be quoted from many parts of the world, there are also occasions when the military has intervened due to the incompetence, nepotism or corruption of the political elite. Thus, the role of the military needs to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Examples from African and Latin American countries illustrate that a weak and politically controlled military is by no means a guarantee for development. Moreover, ‘irregular’ forces, such as paramilitaries, which have no clearly defined role and operate outside of the main lines of command, are sometimes overlooked in reform processes.
2. Appropriate civilian control and professional security actors. The broad debate on civilian-military relations also has implications for security sector reform (Bland 1999). A first problem is described as the praetorian problem: the need to limit the political power of the military. A second problem is the need for disciplined armed forces, since an undisciplined mob of armed individuals can be ruinous for society. Thirdly there is a problem of mutual control: the military must be subject to civil control, yet at the same time the military must also be protected against politicians who might misuse them for personal or party political reasons. Fourthly, all governments face the problem associated with “modern” armed forces: the level of expertise of civil control bodies. How can a civilian government, which often lacks professional military or security expertise and experience, manage a professional military apparatus?
3. Political conditionality. Democracy, good governance and human rights have been presented as a condition (not always in a strict formal sense) for economic assistance. Good governance, often in conjunction with other conditions (such as the implementation of structural adjustment programmes), has become a core value of international assistance programmes. Particularly where social, economic, political and administrative development is weak, and is further weakened through globalisation, conflicts can be compounded by well-intentioned but ill-designed conditionalities. Every intervention by a foreign actor is based on a set of assumptions – explicit or implicit, theoretically valid or invalid. If the causes of insecurity are misperceived, then programmes or suggested remedies might be inefficient or even counterproductive.
4. Strengthening and professionalising civil controls and civil society. Security sector reform can be most successful where legitimate civil institutions possess the capacity and the expertise to control the security forces. The provision of support and training to government agencies, parliament, the civil service, non-governmental organisations and the press etc. must be a part of effective reform (strengthening of the legislative and executive capacities and of civil society in general).
5. Reservations of the development community. It is recognised in development co-operation that security issues can no longer be excluded, as was the case for a long time. This recognition has

- not led to embracing this theoretical knowledge in practical programmes. Reservations about co-operation with security sector actors remain (often for good reasons). In cases of doubt, it is appropriate to avoid direct co-operation with security forces, and instead to strengthen and support civil society enabling it to exercise more control of the security sector.
6. Selectivity. While the need for humanitarian intervention in cases such as the genocide in Rwanda or ethnic cleansing in the Balkans is understandable, the international community still grapples with the selectivity of its interventions. This applies to security sector reform as well: why does the international community intervene in some cases but not in others?
  7. Incoherence of donor policy. While development ministries argue for a reduction in military expenditure commensurate with development needs, ministries of economic affairs and trade lobby for the arms industry. Similarly, while negotiations are under way on debt-cancellation programmes, arms imports are increasing foreign indebtedness. Donors should practice what they preach.
  8. Re-labelling of traditional programmes. The present popularity of security sector reform concepts can lead to an undifferentiated strategy encompassing almost all areas of economic assistance, amounting in the end to nothing more than a re-labelling of traditional programmes under the guise of security sector reform.
  9. Turf wars. Although co-operation among donors is a key concept in development co-operation, the reality often looks different. Competition between different international organisations, governments and NGOs, rather than joint efforts, make their imprint on programmes.
  10. Dilemmas of security sector reform. A number of dilemmas have been mentioned above, namely to co-operate with the right partners, setting the right priorities and donor coherence. In addition, given the economic, political and social constraints in most of the developing and transitional countries a full-fledged security sector reform programme can mean overkill. A gradual approach, finding a compromise to fully engage local authorities and improvements in transparency that can be properly monitored would be more realistic. However, experience has also shown that when problems in the security sector are approached in a piecemeal fashion, security and governance are usually not improved significantly (Hutchful 2003).

## 5. Conclusions

The dilemmas show something of the problems of moving forward in this field. In order to overcome these problems and engage the right people in a meaningful way then we need to use an approach which is aware of these problems but nevertheless makes use of the opportunities that have opened up through the debate on security sector reform. This needs to be an engaged, but gradual approach and is not an “either/or” position. Security sector reform will achieve little without a broader process of transformation of the society. But the reverse is also true. The political reform process will get stalled without a thorough transformation of the security sector. It is a process that goes beyond the civil control of the armed forces; it needs to be a process of democratic control.

While the reform process is still ongoing in many countries it can be concluded that countries have performed unevenly in security sector reform, ranging from fundamental and solid progress toward democratic societies including the security system, to single issue or half-hearted reforms. Sometimes security agencies are excluded from the reform process and the executive routinely deploys police or armed forces and a judiciary under its control against political opponents. Security sector reform, so far, has also a mixed record in post-conflict societies because the

externally brokered and assisted reform has primarily addressed the warring parties with the most direct involvement in violence, rather than the forces advocating peace. Such a short-term focus was often necessary to secure the end of hostilities. Nevertheless, it seems that fundamental changes in society, like a regime change or the end of war, are a solid ground for far-reaching reforms, while relatively stable societies are slow to seriously implement security sector reforms. An important conclusion is that the reform of the security sector is not regime-dependent and democratisation is not by itself a guarantee of reform.

Of course, there remain formidable barriers to comprehensive reforms of the security sector: lack of the most basic civil institutions capable of carrying out reforms; continued authoritarianism; continued strife, criminality, ethnic cleavage, warlordisms and other legacies in post-conflict situations; lack of political will and commitment in recipient countries; and last but not least, budgetary constraints. Key shortcomings of programmes are lack of domestic ownership, shortage of resources, ad-hoc and piecemeal rather than holistic or comprehensive programmes, lack of co-ordination among donors, even reluctance among donors to engage in the security sector and weak linkage to regional initiatives.

Donors have expanded and deepened their engagement in security sector reform during the last years which is evident from the numbers and kind of activities in which they are engaged and their policy formulations. Nonetheless, it is not always clear if the assistance that is being provided works towards a holistic and integrated approach to security.

The US-led anti-terror campaign has had negative impacts on accountability and transparency and ignores genuine security sector reform and good governance objectives. Rather, the aims are the strengthening of the operational effectiveness of uniformed security services and intelligence in a narrow technical sense. Here the cleavage between concepts of ‘human’ and ‘hard’ security doctrines (the latter based primarily on military or police force) becomes most obvious. The experience so far has shown that the military, due to its structure and traditional war fighting capability, has only a limited potential to fight terrorism. The enlightened military officers are ready to admit this and discuss this in their various journals (Wulf 2002). Often it is politicians who for the sake of public consumption over-emphasise the function of the military in anti-terrorism programmes. With this experience in mind it is advisable to engage with the military in a dialogue about their capabilities and limitations. Again, this process is laborious, since anti-terrorism has become the new enemy image and serves a similar ideological function as anti-communism during the Cold War. But as history has shown enemy images can be transcended.

Interestingly and paradoxically, while much of the international political and academic debate has addressed concepts of wider security (with a non-military or defensive focus), many governments, both in developing and transitional countries as well as in developed countries, have become concerned with ‘hard’ security. This is largely due to pressing local and international problems like organised crime, internal wars and gross human rights violations which seem to call for an immediate domestic or international military or police response rather than a long-term reform concept. In part this is a response to a feeling that security sector reform in a broad sense does not necessarily address the immediate security needs. It is therefore worthwhile to take up this debate with the security planners.

In general, the international community has been not very forthcoming to promote security sector reform, although a few donors and recipient countries have propagated ambitious governance-related programmes. In practice, security sector reform initiatives have often been partial and selective. Despite some critical observations and shortcomings of reform programmes,

on balance it can be considered a progressive development that security sector reform and security problems are no longer exclusively in the realm of 'hard' security advocates but play an important part in development discussion and assistance. At the same time, it has to be clear to the advocates of security sector reform that this approach addresses an important part, but only a certain part of the problem. The underlying structural causes of inter- and especially intra-state crises cannot be resolved through quick fixes. Security sector reform does not end with the cessation of the most obvious gross violence and warfare. It is a medium-range reform programme, which has to be embedded in a long-term process of peace-peacebuilding.

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