

## **The Challenges of Security Sector Reform**

Dylan Hendrickson and Andrzej Karkoszka

## About this study

The international community is seeking to respond in a more integrated manner to the violent conflicts and security problems facing partner states. This study, commissioned by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), examines how the security sector reform agenda has been conceptualized and implemented by international actors. Although security sector reform has moved rapidly up on the international agenda, there is still no consensus on how to define the concept or on what the objectives and the priorities for international assistance should be. Most actors are just starting to grapple with the political sensitivities of security sector work, and few have developed the policy instruments required to work in an integrated way with their partners. As a consequence, there are different levels of acceptance among international actors, many of whom remain wary of how security sector reform will impinge on traditional institutional mandates or foreign policy objectives.

**Dylan Hendrickson** is a Senior Research Fellow in the Conflict, Security and Development Group.

**Andrzej Karkoszka** is Head of the Think Tank at the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF).

The **Conflict, Security and Development Group** is a leading international resource for research, analysis, training and expert policy advice on issues at the intersection of security and development. CSDG was established at King's College London in 1999 with the aim of bridging the academic and policy communities. Its core mandate is to deepen understanding about the development challenges confronting societies in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and to help translate this knowledge into practical agendas for change at local, national, regional and international levels.

CSDG's **Governance and Security** programme is concerned with how international assistance in the security domain (notably the SSR agenda) can be better tailored to the political context and the needs of aid recipients.

Conflict, Security and Development Group  
School of Social Science and Public Policy  
King's College London  
Strand, London  
WC2R 2LS, UK

Tel: +44(0)20 7848 1984  
Fax: +44(0)20 7848 2748  
[www.securityanddevelopment.org](http://www.securityanddevelopment.org)

# CSDG Papers

Number 1 ■ January 2002

## The Challenges of Security Sector Reform

Dylan Hendrickson and Andrzej Karkoszka

# Contents

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	3
<b>Chapter 2: The policy agenda</b>	6
Defining the security sector	8
Defining security sector reform	10
Approaches to security sector reform	11
<b>Chapter 3: Relevance to international security</b>	13
Instruments of security sector reform	14
<i>Donor countries</i>	14
<i>Multilateral development actors</i>	15
<i>Regional security organizations</i>	16
The implications of 11 September 2001	17
<b>Chapter 4: Security sector reform in a regional context</b>	20
Africa	20
Asia	22
Eastern Europe	24
Latin America	25
<b>Chapter 5: Challenges to security sector reform</b>	27
Operationalising concepts	28
Unfavourable environments	29
Conflicting objectives	30
Integrated programmes	32
<b>Chapter 6: Conclusions</b>	35

# Chapter 1

## Introduction<sup>12</sup>

The end of the cold war gave new impetus to pressures for political and economic liberalization around the globe. States aspiring to democratic governance and strong economies require capable administrative and political structures. A key element is a well-governed security sector, which comprises the civil, political and security institutions responsible for protecting the state and the communities within it. Reform or transformation of the security sector is now seen as an integral part of the transition from one-party to pluralist political systems, from centrally planned to market economies, and from armed conflict to peace, and is a growing focus of international assistance.<sup>3</sup>

International interventions under the auspices of the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or powerful individual states carried out since the early 1990s to resolve violent conflicts and assist these transitions have shown immense limitations. External forces have often supplanted the local security apparatus or, in some cases, explicitly sought to dismantle it where it was considered to be a part of the security problem. However, without adequate efforts to restore a viable national capacity in the security domain, external interventions offer at best temporary solutions to security problems and may, in some cases, aggravate the situation.

---

<sup>1</sup>This article was first published under a similar title in: *SIPRI Yearbook 2002: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2002), pp. 175-201.

<sup>2</sup> The authors are indebted to Nicole Ball for comments on an early draft of this chapter.

<sup>3</sup> The terms 'reform' and 'transformation' are used interchangeably in this chapter, although 'reform' is the term of choice because it is most commonly used by those working in the field. 'Transformation' implies a more fundamental change than reform and is emerging as the preferred term in some circles involved in security sector work. For arguments in favour of the use of the term 'transformation' see, e.g., Williams, R., 'African armed forces and the challenges of security sector transformation', *Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, vol. 23, no. 2 (Nov. 2001), pp. 1-34.

Security sector reform aims to help states enhance the security of their citizens. The shift from state- and military-centric notions of security to a greater emphasis on human security has underscored the importance of governance issues and civilian input into policy making. The kinds of security policies that governments adopt, the instruments used to implement these policies and the interests served by these policies are critical factors.

The security sector reform agenda therefore encompasses—but is far broader than—the traditional civil–military relations approach to addressing security problems. Security sector reform has potentially wide-ranging implications for how state security establishments are organized and, by extension, for how international security and development assistance is delivered. These implications are only just starting to be understood and translated into policy and are eliciting mixed reactions from both the international actors that provide security assistance and the recipients of aid.

Developing countries have been cautious about embracing security sector reform. They are wary of the conditions attached to external assistance and the promotion of ‘one size fits all’ solutions to their problems, such as the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s. Past security assistance programmes were often ill-conceived and poorly implemented, and resulted in outcomes that were not supportive of either citizen security or development goals.<sup>4</sup> The Central and East European (CEE) states<sup>5</sup> have responded more favourably to the reform agenda, which is seen as complementing the wider economic and political reforms in which many of them are engaged. Crucially, the prospect of integration into NATO and ‘the West’ has provided a powerful, additional incentive for CEE states to reform their security sectors.

Despite the fact that security sector reform is moving up on the international agenda, it remains a new area of activity. There is still no consensus on how to define the concept of security sector reform or on what the objectives and the priorities for international assistance should be.<sup>6</sup> Most actors are just starting to grapple with the political sensitivities of security sector work, and few have developed the policy instruments required to work in an integrated way with their partners.<sup>7</sup> As a consequence, there are different levels of acceptance

---

<sup>4</sup> Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), *Demilitarizing Public Order: The International Community, Police Reform and Human Rights in Central America and Haiti*, Nov. 1995, available from WOLA, URL <<http://www.wola.org/pubs.html>>.

<sup>5</sup> These states are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Yugoslavia.

<sup>6</sup> Hendrickson, D., *A Review of Security-Sector Reform*, Working Paper no. 1 (Conflict, Security and Development Group, Centre for Defence Studies, King’s College London: London, Sep. 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Development Assistance Committee (DAC), ‘Security issues and development co-operation: a conceptual framework for enhancing policy coherence’, *DAC Journal*, vol. 2, no. 3 (2001), section II, pp. 31–71.

among international actors, many of whom remain wary of how security sector reform will impinge on traditional institutional mandates or foreign policy objectives.

While the general principles that underpin security sector reform have relevance for all countries, this chapter is principally concerned with how the agenda has been conceptualized and implemented by international actors in the context of developing countries and the CEE states. Section II outlines the background to this policy agenda and some of its key features. Section III examines the relevance of security sector reform to international security, particularly in light of the new 'war on terrorism'. Section IV then looks in more detail at the context for security sector reform in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the CEE states, where the level and nature of international involvement vary significantly. Finally, drawing on recent lessons, section V highlights a number of key challenges for external assistance.

# Chapter 2

## The policy agenda

The end of the cold war set in motion a profound rethinking of the notion of security and of strategies for international assistance in this domain. The militarized notions of security that emerged during the cold war gave rise to a narrow stress on territorial integrity and security through armaments that has been difficult to change.<sup>8</sup>

Before 1989, aid to the Third World—including development, humanitarian and security assistance—was closely linked to the dynamics of the cold war. Security became synonymous with the stability of the international system and regime stability—the protection of client regimes from external and internal threats. Assistance programmes paid little attention to democratic civil–military relations, to effective legislative and executive oversight over the various security branches, or to the creation of a professional ethos within security services that was consistent with the dictates of a modern democracy. No real attempt was made to include important civilian sectors (e.g., the foreign policy and finance sectors) in the formulation of security policy.

In many developing countries and CEE states, the provision of basic services such as security, employment and social welfare has sharply eroded since the end of the cold war. These problems have focused critical attention on how state security establishments shape and condition the processes of economic and political change.

In this environment, organizations involved in development assistance have been cautious about entering the arena of security sector reform but they have gradually realized that they cannot avoid it. International financial institutions (IFIs)<sup>9</sup> play a key role in setting the economic framework in which

---

<sup>8</sup> Baldwin, D. A., 'Security studies and the end of the cold war', *World Politics*, vol. 18 (Oct. 1995), pp. 117–41.

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., URL <<http://www.wellesley.edu/Economics/IFI>>.

the major donors engage in developing countries and in CEE countries. The IFIs have a clear impact on the outcome of security sector reforms by virtue of their involvement in macroeconomic adjustment and stabilization programmes, though their direct involvement has to date been limited to a concern with the issue of military expenditure.<sup>10</sup> Both the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have traditionally been cautious about becoming involved in security-related matters because of the differing views of their board members on this issue as well as the ingrained conservatism of these institutions. Nevertheless, there is growing recognition that security sector reform should be a concern.<sup>11</sup>

The World Bank, in particular, is increasingly recognizing the need to set its support for demobilization programmes and the strengthening of public expenditure management systems within a broader framework of security sector reform. This is forcing the organization to reconsider the role of the traditional instruments of economic conditionality that it has often wielded, together with the IMF, in an attempt to obtain the adherence of the borrowing countries to military expenditure limits.

For similar reasons, recognition of the need for a broader approach to security has emerged from the debates on civil–military relations, particularly in relation to the CEE states where Western defence establishments have been active.<sup>12</sup> In Africa, Asia and Latin America, a parallel process of rethinking security concepts has also been under way and has influenced the security sector reform agenda.<sup>13</sup> Many countries were engaged in security sector reform activities long before this concept gained international prominence.<sup>14</sup>

The new security thinking is set apart from past approaches because it recognizes that: (a) ensuring the safety of citizens should rank alongside national defence as the primary goal of state security policy; (b) greater emphasis needs to be placed on the role of civilian actors in both formulating and managing security policy (the critical role of governance was largely overlooked by cold war security assistance programmes, and development actors avoided for the most part engagement in activities related to the security sector); and (c) different

---

<sup>10</sup> Ball, N., 'Transforming security sectors: the IMF and World Bank approaches', *Journal of Conflict, Security and Development*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2001), pp. 45–66.

<sup>11</sup> World Bank, *Security, Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development: Challenges for the New Millennium* (World Bank: Washington, DC, Sep. 1999).

<sup>12</sup> Edmunds, T., 'Defining security sector reform', *Civil–Military Relations in Central and Eastern Europe Network Newsletter*, no. 3 (Oct. 2001), pp. 3–6, available at URL <<http://civil-military.dsd.kcl.ac.uk>>.

<sup>13</sup> Cawthra, G., *Securing South Africa's Democracy: Defence, Development and Security in Transition* (Macmillan: London, 1997), pp. 7–26.

<sup>14</sup> Ball, N. *et al.*, *Governance in the Security Sector*, Occasional Paper (Centre for Democracy and Development: London, forthcoming).

means of achieving security objectives must be acknowledged. The traditional reliance on primarily military instruments of force should be complemented more effectively with diplomatic, economic, legal, political and social mechanisms, and greater preventive action.

The need for a broad approach to security is underscored by the experiences of developing countries and the CEE states, where political and state-building processes are now seen as the foundation for efforts to enhance the security of states and their citizens.<sup>15</sup> In these contexts, state and regime legitimacy is constantly being challenged, and demands for economic redistribution and political participation are creating major overloads on weak administrative and political systems. Unmet social and political needs run the risk of provoking popular unrest and opposition to governments, ultimately making them more vulnerable to internal and external threats.

### **Defining the security sector**

Because the actors involved in delivering security services and the relationships between them vary from country to country, there is not a universally applicable definition of the security sector. A narrow focus on the conventional Western security actors such as armed forces, police and intelligence services, for instance, does not capture the diversity of security actors in other countries. In Africa, formations such as presidential guards and militia forces are common, while a whole range of 'private' security actors are emerging because of the collapse of state security structures.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, in the CEE states there is a wide range of internal security forces, often linked to interior ministries, which rival the military in terms of numbers and influence.

In addition, it is also clear that the management of security policy in all countries, including the industrialized states, is influenced by a range of informal norms and practices that are closely shaped by national political, cultural and social circumstances. This is a reason for the complex array of institutions and interactions that affect the relationship between the organizations authorized by states to use force and those mandated to regulate these organizations and formulate security policy. The security sector consists of the following elements.

---

<sup>15</sup> Ayoob, M., *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System* (Lynne Rienner: London, 1995).

<sup>16</sup> Williams, R., 'Africa and the challenges of security sector reform', eds J. Cilliers and A. Hilding-Norberg, *Building Stability in Africa: Challenges for the New Millennium*, Monograph 46 (Institute for Security Studies: Pretoria, Feb. 2000), available at URL <<http://www.iss.co.za/Pubs/Monographs/No46/Contents.html>>.

*Forces authorized to use force:* armed forces; police; paramilitary forces; presidential guards; intelligence services (including both military and civilian agencies); secret services; coast guards; border guards; customs authorities; and reserve and local security units (civil defence forces, national guards, militias, etc.).

*Security management and oversight bodies:* presidential and prime ministerial offices; national security advisory bodies; legislature and legislative select committees; ministries of defence, internal affairs, foreign affairs; customary and traditional authorities; financial management bodies (finance ministries, budget offices, financial audit and planning units); and civil society organizations (civilian review boards, public complaints commissions, etc.).

*Justice and law enforcement institutions:* judiciary; justice ministries; prisons; criminal investigation and prosecution services; human rights commissions and ombudsmen; correctional services; and customary and traditional justice systems. (Unwritten, informal norms, stemming out of the local, tribal and clan traditions, culture and beliefs, are often more powerful or obligatory than the written, formal rules and norms established by central state authorities.)

*Non-statutory security forces:* liberation armies; guerrilla armies; private bodyguard units; private security companies; and political party militias.

Strictly speaking, the security sector can be seen to comprise the first three categories, which are part of the state machinery for providing security. However, non-statutory security forces can have a significant influence on economic and political governance and need to be taken into account. In countries emerging from war, for instance, liberation or guerrilla armies will often need to be demobilized or integrated into a new national army as part of peace settlements. Similarly, private security companies and bodyguard units may also have important roles to play where state capacity in the security domain is weak, and these need to be appropriately regulated.

The level of involvement by civil society and private sector actors in security sector governance differs widely from country to country. Their direct role is usually limited, although there is increased acceptance that these actors can be important agents for change when they apply political pressure and inform reform agendas. Relevant civil society actors include professional groups (lawyers and accountants), advocacy groups (human rights bodies), research and policy think tanks, religious groups and the media. Non-state groups have a particularly important role to play in conflict-torn societies, where statutory security sector capacity is usually weak.

While the concept of the security sector provides a framework for targeting international assistance, the challenges of the transformation of this sector cannot be understood in isolation from the wider institutional, societal and

political context. The security sector cannot function effectively if the administrative and legal framework is fundamentally weak or corrupt. The security sector is also crucial to political power, both in the 'macro' sense of regime stability and in the 'micro' sense of exercising day-to-day political control and generating revenue. Security sector reform is therefore closely tied to domestic processes of political and social change.

### **Defining security sector reform**

There is an increased recognition that the security sector, like any other part of the public sector, must be subject to the principles of civil oversight, accountability and transparency. How these principles are implemented and the specific ways in which the security sector is organized will depend on the circumstances.

Strengthening the institutional framework for managing the security sector involves three broad challenges: (a) to ensure the proper location of security activities within a constitutional framework defined by law and to develop security policies and instruments to implement them; (b) to build the capacity of policy makers to effectively assess the nature of security threats and to design strategic responses supportive of wider development goals; and (c) to strengthen mechanisms for ensuring security sector accountability by enabling the state and non-state actors responsible for monitoring security policy and enforcing the law to fulfil their functions effectively.

Within this broad framework more specific, short-term objectives may include improving the management of security expenditure, negotiating the withdrawal of the military from a formal political role, dissociating the military from an internal security role, strengthening the effectiveness of the security forces, and demobilizing and reintegrating surplus security personnel. The growing number of issues that are becoming entwined in the security sector reform agenda include conflict prevention, democratization, human rights protection and development. The wide range of governance objectives to which international actors are giving priority can be grouped in the following seven categories.<sup>17</sup>

*Professional security forces.* Professionalization encompasses doctrinal and skill development, technical modernization and an understanding of the importance of accountability and the rule of law.

---

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., Ball, N., 'Democratic governance in the security sector', Paper presented at the United Nations Development Programme Workshop on Learning from Experience for Afghanistan, New York, 5 Feb. 2002, available at URL <<http://www.undp.org/eo/afghanistan/index.html>>.

*Capable and responsible civil authorities.* The relevant civil authorities in the executive and legislative branches of government need to have the capacity to develop security policy and to manage and oversee the security sector.

*High priority to human rights protection.* Respect for human rights must exist among civilians as well as members of the security forces.

*Capable and responsible civil society.* Civil society should have the capacity to monitor the security sector, promote change and provide input to government on security matters.

*Transparency.* Although some security matters require confidentiality, basic information about security policies, planning and resourcing should be accessible both to the civil authorities and to members of the public.

*Conformity with international and internal law.* The security sector should operate in accordance with international law and domestic constitutional law.

*Regional approaches.* Many security problems are shared by countries within a region, and the security of individual countries and individuals within those countries will benefit from regional approaches.

A specific focus on the security forces is now accepted as essential in order to build the human capacity and institutional instruments that they require to fulfil their legitimate functions.<sup>18</sup> Security forces are in a powerful position vis-à-vis other branches of government and citizens to influence governance processes. While central to preserving state sovereignty and authority, the armed forces in particular are one of the few institutions able to endanger states from the inside.<sup>19</sup> This makes it essential for appropriate incentives to be designed to win their support for reforms. Some reforms may focus on improving technical proficiency, but there is an increasing emphasis on organizational restructuring within the security sector in order to ensure adequate provision for civil oversight and direction of the security forces.

### **Approaches to security sector reform**

There are different philosophies on how best to achieve reform objectives. Security sector reform is underpinned by a number of normative assumptions about the desirability of democratization, civilian control of the armed forces, a clear division between internal and external security functions, the independence

---

<sup>18</sup> Williams, R., 'Development agencies and security-sector restructuring', *Journal of Conflict, Security and Development*, vol. 2, issue 1 (2002).

<sup>19</sup> This is borne out by the frequency of military *coups d'état* in many parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America. See, e.g., Hanneman, R. A. and Steinback, R. L., 'Military involvement and political instability: an event history analysis 1940–1980', *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, vol. 18 (summer 1990), pp. 1–23.

of the judiciary and a strong civil society role.<sup>20</sup> These are 'ideal-type' situations that no country has fully succeeded in implementing. In practice, such institutional arrangements are difficult to achieve and not always consistent with the immediate needs or priorities of reforming countries. Instead, these are now seen as goals that countries can work towards from their different starting points.

Only a limited number of countries in which international actors are engaged today are able to undertake fundamental institutional reforms. In the past, international security assistance programmes relied excessively on external templates for reform, with little regard for the social, political and institutional context in which they were being applied. This has resulted in unrealistic assumptions about how states and their security sectors function and undue sensitivity to issues of national ownership. A key concern of governments is that reforms will undermine their power base and compromise their own efforts to address security problems. There is now increased recognition that the greatest potential for security sector reform exists where it is supported from outside but driven by strong internal dynamics. In the most successful examples, there will be a clear national vision for reform and political will at the highest levels of the government.

In countries where these conditions do not exist, particularly in conflict-torn societies, the first priority is generally to restore political stability and basic capacity in the security sector before fundamental institutional problems can be tackled. Political support for reform has to be built up. The bureaucracy and the economy are generally weak. Key security sector institutions, including civilian bodies and the various branches of the security forces, tend to lack clearly defined roles and adequate skills. Consequently, it is not possible to develop a clear national vision for reform.

In these conditions, attempting to promote security sector reform may simply mobilize opposition to change. A broader focus on building basic capacity first may itself not go beyond developing skills and confidence building among security sector personnel. The fact that security sector reform is expensive means that progress will be closely tied to improvements in the economy and living conditions. This makes security sector reform a long-term endeavour. A sustained commitment to security sector reform will depend on development assistance rather than on short-term conflict resolution.

---

<sup>20</sup> Chalmers, M., 'Structural impediments to security-sector reform', Paper presented at the International Institute for Strategic Studies–Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (IISS–DCAF) Conference on Security-Sector Reform, Geneva, 23 Apr. 2001.

# Chapter 3

## Relevance to international security

The fragile security structures in developing countries and the CEE states have diverse historical roots that can be traced to the nature of state building as well as to more recent international development policies. Efforts to develop properly accountable security forces were hampered during the 1980s and 1990s by the immense pressures placed on countries to reduce public spending as a consequence of external pressures for economic liberalization. With the security forces often seen as a barrier to economic and political development, attempts were made to reduce their size and influence, and insufficient attention was paid to how the security void would be filled.

Security sector reform aims to improve governance, thereby reducing the risk of state weakness or state failure. It is often in weak or failed states that conflicts arise. Such states have contributed to a range of destabilizing transnational security problems such as population movements and trafficking in drugs, people and arms, as well as stimulating the widespread incidence of violence and disorder, including groups that carry out terrorist acts. The majority of these problems have important regional dimensions because of weakened state capacity to police borders and regulate economic activity. Insurgent groups that have traditionally relied on neighbouring countries for support and shelter are increasingly exploiting commercial opportunities linked to the expansion of the global economy to sustain their activities.

At a time when weak states facing endemic insecurity and violence have become increasingly unable to rely on the international community for assistance, their internal problems are having greater spillover effects at both the regional and the global level. The sheer scale of the crises afflicting many parts of the developing world and the CEE states has meant that there has simply not been enough international capacity to address all the problems. There has also

been a reluctance on the part of Western governments to intervene in countries no longer deemed to be of strategic interest.

Consequently, the international community has a strong self-interest in integrating security sector reform into wider conflict prevention and state-building strategies that combine developmental, legal, military and political instruments. These strategies may include the peaceful resolution of non-violent disputes, peacekeeping, post-conflict peace-building and reconstruction, political participation, reforming the criminal justice system, and strengthening governance across the public sector, specifically in the security sector.

### **Instruments of security sector reform**

This list of the instruments for promoting and implementing security sector reform is inevitably selective.

#### *Donor countries*

The main sponsors of security sector reform have been the aid donor countries, including Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. Each of these countries is at a different stage in developing its policies and operationalizing programmes of assistance, and there tends to be great variation in approaches from country to country.

The British Department for International Development (DFID) has taken the lead, in cooperation with other British government departments, in developing a comprehensive security sector reform policy.<sup>21</sup> The DFID, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Home Office and the Ministry of Defence have developed joint programmes of assistance for security sector reform in a number of countries in Africa and Asia. The Ministry of Defence's cooperation programmes in the CEE states, known as Defence Diplomacy, have been broadened to make them more supportive of security sector reform objectives. The UK has also actively pushed the security sector reform agenda at the multilateral level by seeking to encourage the further engagement of UN agencies and IFIs in this area. In the USA, security assistance is delivered by a number of government departments that focus separately on the military, the

---

<sup>19</sup> This policy is broken down into two components, administered by different departments. The security sector reform policy focuses on the defence sector and cross-cutting governance issues. The policy on safety, security and access to justice covers personal security and justice systems.

police and civilian security sector actors, with a limited coordination of activities.<sup>22</sup>

Donor countries have also become increasingly reliant on a wide range of non-state actors, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions and private security companies, to address the gaps in their expertise and capacity. These actors are playing an increasingly important role in the delivery of security assistance, although the growing number of players has also made it more difficult to achieve policy coherence and ensure accountability.

### *Multilateral development actors*

UN work on security sector reform is spread over its specialized agencies and missions, which are engaged in a range of relevant activities, including police and justice reform, regulation of small arms transfers, and the demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) has gone furthest in defining a comprehensive framework for its involvement in security sector reform but is still developing the capacity to operationalize it. Both the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), which is the focal point within the UN for peace-building activities, and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), responsible for peacekeeping operations, have a clear interest and comparative advantage in other aspects of this agenda.<sup>23</sup>

The European Union (EU) external assistance programmes have two dimensions that are relevant to security sector reform. One is the EU assistance provided to the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries under the framework of the Cotonou Agreement of June 2000, which emphasizes the importance of good governance and entails periodic performance assessments to measure progress towards implementing political and institutional reform.<sup>24</sup> The other consists of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) programmes, which do not mention security sector reform specifically but do require that all applicant states introduce democratic oversight of the military.<sup>25</sup>

Addressing security sector reform is a priority of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC), whose Network on Conflict, Peace, and Development Cooperation carries out a range of research and policy-related activities designed to

---

<sup>22</sup> Welch, C. and Forman, J. M., *Civil–Military Relations: USAID’s Role*, Technical Publication Series (Center for Democracy and Governance, US Agency for International Development: Washington, DC, July 1998).

<sup>23</sup> For a discussion of UN conflict prevention activities see chapter 2 in this volume.

<sup>24</sup> The text of the Cotonou Agreement is available at URL <[http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/cotonou/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/cotonou/index_en.htm)>.

<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of EU conflict prevention activities see chapter 2 in this volume.

harmonize the work of its members in the conflict and security domain.<sup>26</sup> In April 2001 the OECD development ministers endorsed a supplement to the DAC Guidelines on Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation which includes measures to bring conflict prevention into the mainstream of policy formulation, to take account of the relationship between security and development, including security sector reform, and to strengthen international support for peace processes.<sup>27</sup>

### *Regional security organizations*

NATO adopted the Partnership for Peace (PFP) programme in 1994.<sup>28</sup> PFP programmes have elaborated norms and guidelines for the oversight of military institutions and the internal state security apparatus as well as the specific civil-military relations characteristic of a stable democracy. This comprehensive framework for reforming the management of the armed forces is available to nearly all of the post-communist and post-Soviet CEE states. The Membership Action Plan<sup>29</sup> and the 1995 NATO Study on Enlargement<sup>30</sup> made it clear that the application of a set of basic principles of 'democratic control over the military' is a precondition for NATO to consider any application for membership.

The role of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in security sector reform consists mainly in setting models and norms for the individual member states and the region as a whole. In 1994 the principles guiding the role of armed forces in democratic societies were further elaborated and 'operationalized' in the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security (sections VII and VIII).<sup>31</sup> The implementation of 'democratic oversight over the military' became a political obligation for all members of this organization, thus mandating their implementation in internal legal norms, regulations and procedures.

---

<sup>26</sup> OECD, DAC (note 5).

<sup>27</sup> OECD, DAC, *The DAC Guidelines on Preventing Violent Conflict*, 2001, available at URL <<http://www.oecd.org/EN/document/0,,EN-document-notheme-2-no-24-5782-0,00.htm>>.

<sup>28</sup> An account of the PFP initiative is given in Rotfeld, A. D., 'Europe: the multilateral security process', *SIPRI Yearbook 1995: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1995), pp. 275–81.

<sup>29</sup> URL <<http://www.nato.int/docu/facts/2000/nato-map.htm>>.

<sup>30</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Study on NATO Enlargement* (NATO: Brussels, Sep. 1995).

<sup>31</sup> URL <<http://www.vbs.admin.ch/internet/GST/KVR/e/e-Codeofconduct.htm>>. See also Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), 'Towards a genuine partnership in a new era', Budapest Document 1994, available at URL <<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/osce/new/budapest-summit-declaration.html>>; and *SIPRI Yearbook 1995* (note 26), pp. 309–13. According to the guidelines, the armed forces should be placed under, and used by, states' institutions having democratic legitimacy and abiding by legal norms, democratic values, neutrality in national political life, and human and civil rights, as well as by a rule of individuals' responsibility for possible orders and deeds inconsistent with the norms of domestic and international law.

Compliance with these guidelines is assessed at periodic review conferences of the OSCE states. Equally important is the experience of the OSCE in confidence- and security-building measures, which have led to an improvement of interstate relations on the European continent since the mid-1970s. Among these measures are several which relate to building regional transparency in such areas as weapons procurement, budgets and restructuring of armed forces. These transparency measures, however, remain focused on interstate relations rather than on the objective of full transparency within the security sectors of the countries concerned. Sub-regional arrangements in Europe include the Process of Good Neighborliness, Stability, Security and Cooperation of the Countries of Southeastern Europe (South East European Cooperation Process, SEECP), which provides a kind of sub-regional code of conduct for relations in the region.<sup>32</sup> The SEECP defence ministries have worked on cooperative security reform since 1997.

Outside Europe, regional and sub-regional organizations, including the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Organization of African Unity (OAU),<sup>33</sup> the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC),<sup>34</sup> have initiated various programmes linked to the transformation or better management of the security sector in their member states. However, regional and sub-regional mechanisms are not always well coordinated and their objectives may differ, even within the same state. In Africa, for instance, there are a number of conflict prevention mechanisms, including the Conference on Stability, Security, Development and Co-operation in Africa (CSSDCA) adopted by OAU leaders in 1989 and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), adopted in 2001, which have not yet been harmonized.<sup>35</sup>

### **The implications of 11 September 2001**

The 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, engineered and carried out by the al-Qaeda network, have underscored the link between state failure and international security.

---

<sup>32</sup> Information on this process is available at URL <[http://www.seecp.gov.mk/general\\_info.htm](http://www.seecp.gov.mk/general_info.htm)>.

<sup>33</sup> The OAU member states adopted the Constitutive Act of the African Union on 11 July 2000; it entered into force on 26 May 2001, formally establishing the African Union (AU), with headquarters in Addis Ababa. The AU will replace the OAU after a transitional period.

<sup>34</sup> For the members of these organizations see the glossary in this volume.

<sup>35</sup> Fayemi, K. and Hendrickson, D., 'NEPAD: the security dimension', *Democracy and Development Review, Journal of West African Affairs*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2002), p. 85.

While the 'war on terrorism' being led by the USA is being fought on many fronts, a central element of the strategy is to strengthen transnational intelligence and law-enforcement cooperation and military action. The less developed states that have joined the 'coalition against terrorism', and that are seen to harbour political elements that may be a threat to the USA and its allies, will probably receive increased support to bolster their intelligence and internal security capacity. These reforms may not be consistent with meaningful security sector reform since significant trade-offs can be expected between the initial primary focus on strengthening effectiveness and the longer-term goal of improving transparency and accountability in the security sector.<sup>36</sup>

Some of the regimes that will be in the front line in the anti-terrorism campaign are authoritarian and have security institutions that operate in a manner that is far from open and accountable. These security services enjoy substantial political influence and institutional autonomy, making them resistant to change. Moreover, it is their appreciable counter-terrorism capabilities, including powers of arrest and surveillance authority, which reform would curtail.<sup>37</sup> It is highly likely that, despite the potential costs to human rights and civil liberties, encouraging serious reforms will be given less priority than persuading political leaders that it is in their interest to use their intelligence and law-enforcement capacities to help the USA and its allies.<sup>38</sup>

From the perspective of developing and transition countries that are being strongly encouraged to support the US-led campaign, there is a clear conflict between security sector reform objectives and means. Many of these countries are aid-dependent and face significant external constraints on how they budget and manage resources, particularly in the security sector. Even as they come under persistent pressure from their key donors to reduce security spending, they are being urged to bolster their internal security and intelligence capacities. A number of leaders have also cynically used the pretext of the war against terrorism to clamp down on internal opposition figures who are deemed a threat to national security interests.

These developments raise the spectre of a return to cold war security thinking, which revolved around regime security. A growing number of states are finding it necessary to curtail individual rights, including the right to privacy

---

<sup>36</sup> Stevenson, J., 'Counter-terrorism and the role of the international financial institutions', *Journal of Conflict, Security and Development*, vol. 1, no. 3 (2001), pp. 153–59.

<sup>37</sup> Stevenson (note 34).

<sup>38</sup> This is a particular issue of concern in Afghanistan, where the desire to limit the exposure of international forces to combat with Taliban forces has resulted in the hasty training and arming of factional forces by the USA and its allies. However, limited attention has thus far been devoted to the question of how to integrate these forces into a national army with appropriate management and oversight structures. See, e.g., Graham, B. and Loeb, V., 'US special forces to train recruits for Afghan army', *Washington Post*, 26 Mar. 2002.

in the areas of communications and personal data. Cross-border traffic has become more tightly controlled, with new restrictions pending in a number of countries. Even as international cooperation in intelligence gathering and joint action against terrorist cells are increasing, there are corresponding demands for less scrutiny by elected officials over the plans, budgets and operations of states' security organs. Increasingly 'centralized' and strengthened security sectors cannot help but exert commensurably greater influence on states' security policy and budgetary decisions.

The problems are already apparent not only in a number of developing countries but also in the USA itself. In the wake of 11 September, the US Government has tried to evade congressional oversight on defence spending related to the war on terrorism. Requests made for \$10 billion to cover unspecified Department of Defense 'anti-terrorism efforts', as part of a \$48 billion overall increase in the defence budget, would, if granted, mean the loss of some of Congress' 'power of the purse'.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Larenz, R., 'Top legislator wary of contingency fund', *Defense Week*, 11 Feb. 2002, p. 1, available at URL <<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Feb2002/e20020211top.htm>>. See also appendix 6E in this volume.

# Chapter 4

## Security sector reform in a regional context

The countries of Africa, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, and Latin America face diverse security challenges. Among the countries undertaking security sector reforms are those that are (a) emerging from war, (b) shifting from communist to pluralist systems, (c) authoritarian regimes and (d) functioning democracies. While the nature and potential of reforms under way in these countries depend largely on their specific circumstances, there are also regional variations that influence reform processes. This is the case most notably with regard to the nature of external involvement and the forms of assistance and incentives on offer from region to region.

### Africa

Of the 24 major conflicts that took place worldwide in 2001, seven were in Africa.<sup>40</sup> These were driven by a complex interplay of internal, regional and global factors and meant that about one-fifth of the people living in Africa were directly affected by armed conflict. Such a state of affairs has contributed to the rapid militarization of the continent. After decreasing during the early 1990s, military spending in Africa has been rising steadily since 1996.<sup>41</sup>

The issue of military spending has been the primary entry point for international actors interested in security sector reform in Sub-Saharan Africa, but there is increasing recognition that military spending issues are only a symptom of more fundamental governance problems.<sup>42</sup> The problems of security in some African countries arise as much from an under-investment in the security sector,

---

<sup>40</sup> See chapter 1 and appendix 1A in this volume.

<sup>41</sup> See chapter 6 in this volume.

<sup>42</sup> Ball *et al.* (note 12).

both in financial and in human resource terms, as from weak state structures and mechanisms of civil oversight. The persistence of an environment of political instability and weak rule of law has placed immense demands on African security forces, which are already undergoing a profound institutional crisis.

The armed opposition faced by some governments in Africa is in part a consequence of the severe reduction in public services that occurred throughout the 1980s as a result of economic stagnation and externally imposed economic structural adjustment and stabilization measures.<sup>43</sup> It also stems from the rejection of non-performing African states by citizens who have resorted to a reliance on non-state sources of protection, including ethnic and religious affiliations. In the context of economic and political uncertainty and dwindling salaries, state security forces themselves have increasingly been less able to resist their manipulation by political elites.

The elementary demand for security by citizens, states and corporations has increased the trend towards the 'privatization' of security. While meeting the security needs of the privileged classes, some governments have invested less in law-and-order measures that benefit the general population. This breakdown in confidence in the rule of law has led commercial security companies and traditional militias to take on roles once fulfilled by the public sector. At the individual level, populations in many countries have resorted to arming themselves. Criminals have sometimes been lynched. Political leaders have exploited militia groups that have arisen in places such as in Nigeria's Niger Delta for their own purposes.

Military influence over the political process, either direct or indirect, is still a reality in many African states. In some countries in which the military has formally withdrawn from politics, it remains well placed to influence power owing in large part to the fact that some civilian rulers no longer enjoy a popular mandate to remain in power and thus rely on the state security apparatus. Commercial involvement by the military in many countries has further reinforced its autonomy and expanded its influence over vital issues of national governance.

International donor agencies have seen Africa as the testing ground for the security sector reform policy agenda. There are currently externally supported initiatives in Botswana, Ghana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda. With the exception of Sierra Leone, where international actors, led by the UK, have embarked on a

---

<sup>43</sup> Hutchful, E., Draft report of the African Leadership Forum Expert Group on Demilitarisation, Security and Development, African Security Dialogue and Research, Accra, Ghana, Jan. 2002, information available at URL <<http://www.africansecurity.org/publications.html>>.

comprehensive programme to rebuild the security sector, the initial international engagement in Africa has been partial and specific.

With the exception of South Africa after the transition to majority rule in 1994, there have been few examples of comprehensive and sustained, internally driven reform processes led by states. Nevertheless, African states are pursuing a range of initiatives to address security sector reform, which the international community is increasingly coming to understand and support. The most prominent of these is the NEPAD, launched in October 2001, which is a wide-ranging vision for promoting better government and ending Africa's wars.<sup>44</sup> The security dimension of NEPAD is currently being developed under the direction of South Africa.

## Asia

Nine of the 24 major conflicts in 2001 were in Asia.<sup>45</sup> There has been limited external support for security sector reform in Asia, with the exception of a few high-profile cases including Cambodia,<sup>46</sup> East Timor<sup>47</sup> and, currently, Afghanistan. The relative neglect of Asia is notable given that the region's security sectors are, to a greater or lesser degree, afflicted with the same problems that security sector reform seeks to remedy in other parts of the developing world. The donor countries and the multilateral development actors have less influence in this region than in Africa. As a result, there have been fewer external incentives and pressures for reform, including international assistance and economic conditionality.

Nevertheless, domestic economic, social and political change, resulting in the growth of civil society and democratization, has driven significant restructuring of states' security sectors in parts of Asia. The results in South-East Asia, for instance, are compatible with the reform agendas of international actors,<sup>48</sup> although progress has been limited. While only Myanmar (Burma) remains under direct military rule, in Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand and

---

<sup>44</sup> The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Framework document issued in Abuja, Nigeria, Oct. 2001, available at URL <<http://www.dfa.gov.za/events/nepad.pdf>>.

<sup>45</sup> See chapter 1 and appendix 1A in this volume.

<sup>46</sup> See, e.g., Hendrickson, D., 'Cambodia's security sector reforms: limits of a down-sizing strategy', *Journal of Conflict, Security and Development*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2001), pp. 67–82.

<sup>47</sup> Rees, E., 'Security-sector reform and transitional administrations', *Journal of Conflict, Security and Development*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2002), pp. 151–55.

<sup>48</sup> Huxley, T., *Reforming Southeast Asia's Security Sectors*, Working Paper no. 4 (Conflict, Security and Development Group, Centre for Defence Studies, King's College London: London, Apr. 2001).

Viet Nam the military and secret services continue to exert strong influence over governance despite significant democratic advances.<sup>49</sup>

In Indonesia, the former dual function of the military, which provided it with a role in security and politics, has nominally been replaced by a single function, focused on national defence. However, in reality the disengagement from politics and internal security has been superficial. While officially the police now have sole responsibility for internal security and maintaining law and order, in practice they lack the appropriate training and resources and continue to rely on the military for back-up.<sup>50</sup> The military continues to enjoy most of its prerogatives, including extensive involvement in commercial activity that provides the bulk of the funding for its statutory activities. Across South-East Asia civil institutions dealing with security issues and the political structures supporting such institutions remain weak<sup>51</sup> and permeated by representatives from the military and other security organs. Where economic conditions have worsened in the region, widespread social unrest and economic hardship have made it all the more difficult to introduce systematic and purposeful security sector reforms.

The opportunity for external support to reverse this trend has presented itself most clearly in the context of countries emerging from war, such as Cambodia. Here, the international focus has been on reducing the size of the army and military spending and primarily on instruments of economic conditionality wielded by the IMF and the World Bank. The failure to set demobilization within a wider framework for security sector reform has made it difficult for international actors to specifically target the problems that give rise to high military expenditure and weak military accountability.<sup>52</sup>

In the aftermath of 11 September 2001, the USA is bolstering its military presence across Asia, seeking levels of military cooperation not seen since the end of the cold war.<sup>53</sup> A central thrust of US policy is on conducting intelligence work with its national counterparts and tackling transnational security problems, such as drug and human trafficking and money laundering, which are considered to be linked with terrorist groups. While US engagement is welcomed by many of its regional allies, the narrow focus on 'anti-terrorism' activities and on stabilizing flashpoints like the India–Pakistan conflict may divert attention from broader security sector reform objectives.

---

<sup>49</sup> In Thailand alone, e.g., there have been 16 coups in the past 70 years. Richardson, M., 'In jittery Southeast Asia, fears of military backlash', *International Herald Tribune*, 2 Jan. 2001.

<sup>50</sup> McCulloch, L., 'Police reform in Indonesia', *Conflict, Security and Development Group Bulletin*, no. 10 (Mar./Apr. 2001).

<sup>51</sup> Huxley (note 46).

<sup>52</sup> Hendrickson (note 44).

<sup>53</sup> Hiebert, M. and Lawrence, S., 'Hands across the ocean', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, vol. 165 (14 Mar. 2002).

In the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, where the military presence of the USA has increased the most, enhancing the capacity of civilian oversight mechanisms is a central challenge. The security sector retains key characteristics of the Soviet-era security apparatus: heavily armed forces that are entirely inadequate to meet new security needs, powerful secret services modelled on the former Committee of State Security (Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti, KGB), police forces that are closely linked to the state political authority, and a very weak civil society.<sup>54</sup>

### **Eastern Europe**

There have been significant Western attempts to promote the development of civil–military relations in the East European states over the past decade. Progress has been rapid in terms of building political support for the goals of democratic and civilian control over the armed forces. Concerns about regional political stability and integration into both NATO and the EU have provided powerful incentives for East European states to reform their security sector. Nevertheless, the accompanying institutional and attitudinal changes required to entrench change have been slow and the central thrust of reform efforts has been on the armed forces.

In contrast to those of Central Europe, the majority of the post-communist states of Eastern Europe remain heavily militarized and only partially integrated into the global economy. The armed forces are heavily oriented to offensive tasks and, in most countries, are complemented by equal numbers of internal police and secret security services which look to different ministries, chains of command and mechanisms for civilian control. In Russia, for instance, there are 10 different state security services with a combined workforce of several hundred thousand.<sup>55</sup>

Despite growing impetus for modernization as part of wider processes of economic liberalization, reform has largely been superficial. State elites often retain a strong, albeit unofficial, affiliation with the old political system as well as strong links to the secret security services. This creates a powerful conservative bloc, ill-disposed to far-reaching reforms.

With the vast bulk of the population in Eastern Europe preoccupied by low living standards and unemployment, civil society for its part remains poorly organized or motivated to pressure for security sector reform. The legacy of repressive behaviour by the security institutions continues to instil fear in the

---

<sup>54</sup> ‘Where Stalin lives on’, *International Herald Tribune*, 20 Aug. 2001; and ‘Trouble in Central Asia’, *International Herald Tribune*, 17 Aug. 2001.

<sup>55</sup> [‘Russian Special Services’], *Biuletyn Osrodka Studiow Wschodnich* [*Bulletin of the East Studies Center*] no. 5 (20), (June 1997) (in Polish).

population, with the result that there is limited public debate on security reform issues. However, this legacy also means that the task of building political support for security sector reform has been relatively easier in the East European states than in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

## **Latin America**

Two of the major armed conflicts in 2001 took place in Latin America.<sup>56</sup> The countries of this region can be broken down into three categories with regard to their readiness for security-related reforms: (a) the Central American countries engaged in transitions from cold war-era armed conflicts to peace; (b) the Andean countries, including Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela, which are currently involved in armed conflicts or face the very real prospect of an outbreak of violence or military intervention in politics; and (c) the countries of the Southern Cone, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay, which have a long legacy of military regimes and only recently embarked on processes of democratization.

In the changing political and strategic landscape facing the Latin American countries, there is an urgent need for technical as well as doctrinal modernization, in particular to reform national security doctrines that mandate the military to protect the state from both internal and external enemies. However, despite the constant exhortation on these societies and their militaries to modernize their security sectors,<sup>57</sup> there has been limited external assistance for reforms of a substantive nature. Internally driven reforms have also been limited, tending to focus on bringing the security forces to account for human rights abuses and on strategies to enhance public or 'citizen' security.

Comprehensive and integrated reform of civil and security institutions has still not caught on in the region.<sup>58</sup> The few countries in which security sector reform has been attempted include Panama, following the US intervention in 1989, and El Salvador, Guatemala and Haiti, during the 1990s under the auspices of UN missions supporting post-war reconstruction processes. For the most part, the UN initiatives have placed greatest emphasis on the rule of law and judicial assistance as well as on facilitating war-to-peace transitions with support for the demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants.

---

<sup>56</sup> See chapter 1 and appendix 1A in this volume.

<sup>57</sup> Nunn, F. M., 'Latin American military-civilian relations between World War II and the New World Order', *University of South Africa (UNISA) Latin American Report*, vol. 13, no. 1 (Jan./June 1997); and the Internet site of the Partnership for Democratic Governance and Security, URL <<http://www.pdgs.org>>.

<sup>58</sup> Neild, R., Washington Office on Latin America, Washington, DC, personal communication with the authors.

On the military side, multilateral involvement has largely been around efforts to control military expenditure and to extend civilian control over the military. However, there have been some mixed messages when attempts to limit military roles have been contradicted by exhortations from the US Department of Defense for the military to find new roles, including policing, staunching migration and tackling drug trafficking.

The US anti-narcotics agenda has generally held sway over other agendas supported by civil society, the IFIs and European countries owing to generous US funding and US prominence in the region. The drive to stamp out narcotics in the Andean region has resulted in packages of military assistance that have caused the Colombian military to be strengthened as they take on more of a law enforcement role.<sup>59</sup> Paramilitary groups have also benefited from US assistance. At the same time, they are not placed within any framework of accountability. This has come at a time when the USA has been vocal about the importance of restoring civilian authority over the military.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> Human Rights Watch (HRW), 'The ties that bind: Colombia and military-paramilitary links', *HRW Report*, vol. 12, no. 1 (Feb. 2000), available at URL <<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/colombia>>; and HRW, 'Colombia: paramilitary groups closely tied to army, police: US funding military unit implicated in serious abuses', *HRW World Report 2001: Colombia*, available at URL <<http://www.hrw.org/press/2001/10/sixthdivision.htm>>.

<sup>60</sup> This, e.g., is the focus of the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies at the National Defense University in Washington, DC. Information on its programme is available at URL <<http://www.ciponline.org/facts/chds.htm>>.

# Chapter 5

## Challenges to security sector reform

The lack of a shared definition of security sector reform makes it difficult to make a clear overall statement on current progress and remaining challenges. International support for security sector reform has to date been relatively limited and of an ad hoc nature. Apart from the CEE states, where the focus has been predominantly on issues relating to military reform and border security, the most notable programmes have been in developing countries emerging from war. At this more specific programme level there is only a cursory understanding of what international assistance has achieved. In part, this is because international actors have been slow to develop tools for assessing the effectiveness of their policies.

Nevertheless, it is increasingly apparent that the receptivity of different societies to the security sector reform agenda varies greatly depending on their internal circumstances and the external incentives for reform. In cases in which the domestic constituencies, institutional capacity and incentives for reform are weak, a sharp reduction of the impact of external assistance should be expected. This underscores the limits of current international efforts to support security sector reform, which have to date focused primarily on spreading Western norms and practices to inform how the security sector of aid recipients should operate.

Substantive progress in building consensus around standards of security sector governance across Europe is apparent, although the extent to which these goals have been institutionalized in the working of the security sector has been variable.<sup>61</sup> At one level, 'first generation' institutional issues such as the creation

---

<sup>61</sup> Forster, A., 'Civil-military relations and security sector reform: West looking East', Paper presented at the 4th International Security Forum Conference on Civil-Military Relations and Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Geneva, 15-17 Nov. 2000, available at URL <[http://www.dcaf.ch/publications/papers/ISF\\_WS\\_III-4\\_Forster.pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/publications/papers/ISF_WS_III-4_Forster.pdf)>.

of constitutional frameworks and mechanisms for civil oversight have been successful. However, a 'second generation' of issues that relate to the acquisition of shared norms and values by civilians and the military has not yet made a significant impact.

The African, Asian and Latin American experiences are much less clear-cut. For the most part, the conditions for reform have not been as favourable as in Europe owing to the institutional fragility of states, political instability, resource constraints and the limited nature of external incentives on offer. The lack of strategic significance to the Western countries of those countries most in need has also played a considerable role. The larger cultural gap between these societies and the West has also underscored the need for international actors to reflect more carefully on what aspects of their national experiences have relevance to developing countries and on how to more effectively facilitate the development of a national vision and domestic constituencies to sustain reform processes.

### **Operationalizing concepts**

International actors have been slow to develop a holistic and long-term approach to providing international assistance. Efforts to ensure that different national and international programmes fit together effectively on the ground have not been successful. This has led to a tendency on the part of many actors to rebrand long-standing activities as security sector reform without evaluating the needs of aid recipients or adapting policies to make them relevant to new circumstances.<sup>62</sup> Thus there continues to be a narrow focus, in many cases, on direct military and police training and on efforts to address the proliferation of light weapons, to demobilize and reintegrate ex-combatants, or to provide human rights training to members of the security forces. While all of these are important aspects of security sector reform, they will be of limited long-term utility unless they are carried out in such a way as to support the wider agenda of strengthening the institutional framework for managing the security sector.

The question of the sequencing of international assistance has also come to the fore as members of the development and security communities have begun to work together more closely in the context of multifunctional international assistance programmes. While the broad objective of strengthening management and oversight of the security sector is generally shared, within this framework international actors in the development and security communities often

---

<sup>62</sup> Forster (note 59).

prioritize different goals that may not be compatible. For example, military assistance provided to foreign armies to increase their effectiveness may undermine efforts by other external actors to limit the political influence of the military and strengthen civilian capacities.

There are differences in national approaches to security sector reform. While there is an increased recognition that reforms cannot and should not be imposed from the outside, international actors have been constrained from helping to build local ownership by short programming cycles, poor understanding of the countries in which they work and the sensitivities of engaging with governments that are not seen as committed to reform. The prescriptive approach of the US Department of Defense contrasts with the greater British emphasis on facilitating reform—though there is evidence that the United States is changing its approach.<sup>63</sup>

### **Unfavourable environments**

Implementing security sector reform in conflict-torn societies presents the greatest challenges. The lack in most cases of a strong national vision and capacity coupled with the urgency of reform results in an overwhelming emphasis on an external timetable and model. This is despite the fact that international actors rarely have a clear understanding of the situation on the ground, of what preceded a war or of how the new power dynamics are arranged. Persisting tensions, along with the enhanced role of security forces in political matters, constitute major barriers to reform.

The value placed on institutional and political stability by post-war governments is often not fully appreciated by international actors. Government reluctance to embark on a reform process tends to be confused with a weak commitment to a peace process or to democratization rather than with a lack of the instruments, resources and support needed to push through difficult changes. Civilian oversight mechanisms such as legislative select committees and financial auditing bodies, if they exist at all, are difficult to reactivate because of the centralization of security policy making by the executive branches of government.

---

<sup>63</sup> The US African Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS) provides senior African military and civilian leaders with academic training in civil–military relations, national security strategy and defence economics. The initial emphasis of the ACSS programme when it was launched in 1998 was on the wholesale transfer of the US model of civil–military relations into the African socio-cultural context. The initial opposition to this approach from African participants at the first regional seminars hosted by the ACSS has resulted in a greater effort to engage Africans in shaping the programme. See URL <<http://www.africacenter.org>>.

Overcoming these barriers poses significant challenges for external actors seeking to support reforms. In most cases, there is a huge gap between the stated objectives of reform processes and the starting point, which is very hard to bridge owing to the inadequacy of local and external resources. In these contexts, critical issues such as national ownership, civilian capacity building and strategic planning in the security sector are given lower priority than other aspects of post-war reconstruction in the social and economic domains. For external actors concerned with the restoration of a national capacity in the security domain, this has required rethinking strategies of engagement.

The top priority in most conflict-torn societies is to prepare the political terrain for more fundamental institutional reforms. Greater priority should be given to small, strategic interventions designed to build relationships and trust and to setting out policy options for countries undertaking national strategic reforms in order to facilitate these efforts. This will often require international actors to become engaged in helping to create a 'comfort zone' in which disparate groups that have never spoken with each other before can begin to shape a mutually acceptable reform vision.

Building a national vision for reform is also a priority in the CEE states although, with the exception of post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), a relatively strong institutional framework for debate and policy planning is already in place. This is not the case in countries such as Sierra Leone and Uganda, which require more 'root and branch' reforms and where the international community has helped to organize seminars which have served to stimulate dialogue between the military, the police, politicians, members of parliament, civilian policy sectors and civil society groups. This move away from a narrow reliance on technical assistance is positive, although it has also brought international actors into a sensitive domestic arena, which has traditionally, both in their own countries and in aid recipients, been out of bounds to foreigners.

### **Conflicting objectives**

As international actors from diverse policy communities have become involved in joint assistance programmes, it has become readily apparent that security sector reforms involve conflicting objectives. Even where public investments in the security sector absorb the lion's share of state resources, they may be insufficient to meet national needs. A number of countries, including Rwanda and Uganda, have come under intense pressure from aid donors to reduce military spending at a time when they face significant external threats to national peace and stability.

Unsustainably high levels of military spending are a legitimate cause for concern in view of the impact on macroeconomic stability and poverty reduction objectives. However, the failure of international actors to anchor efforts to manage military expenditure within a broader reform programme designed to enhance the security of states and their citizens can result in a number of unintended consequences.

Two specific problems have become apparent where donors and the IFIs have relied on economic conditionality to encourage countries to reduce military spending rapidly without reference to the quality of governance in the security sector.<sup>64</sup> First, this strategy avoids addressing the underlying political conflicts and institutional and human-resource weaknesses, of which high levels of military spending are only one manifestation. Second, it creates a perverse incentive for governments to resort to creative accounting in order to conceal portions of their expenditure.

While the off-budget problem is difficult to detect, there are good reasons to suspect that it is relatively common where security sector governance is weak. Addressing the problem involves creating incentives for both militaries and governments to keep military spending on budget as well as to strengthen fiscal management and the management of the defence sector. The binding constraints are often political in nature and require fundamental changes in civil–military relations that cannot be achieved fully until the civilian sectors, including defence and finance ministries and parliaments, can fulfil their mandatory oversight roles effectively.

Security sector reforms can also have other unintended consequences. The relationship between security sector downsizing and the enhancement of political stability or public investments in the social and economic sectors is far from straightforward. Recent examples of military restructuring in the CEE states, for instance, illustrate how reforms can increase instability. The attempts made by some countries to quickly demilitarize their economies and diminish the burden of defence budgets by drastic reductions in the size of their security forces have produced a number of undesirable outcomes. These include large numbers of untrained security personnel entering the labour market, adding to already high unemployment levels; visible disenchantment among demobilized personnel, especially in the officer corps, which has created anti-reform sentiments; and serious wastage of resources as ill-conceived reforms have had to be revoked. The decline of morale within the armed forces has also

---

<sup>64</sup> Hendrickson, D. and Ball, N., *Off-budget Military Spending and Revenue: Issues and Policy Perspectives for Donors*, Occasional Paper no. 1 (Conflict, Security and Development Group, King's College London: London, Jan. 2002).

undermined combat-readiness and military discipline, resulting in the illegal transfer of weapons into the hands of criminals.

Recent experiences also suggest that reductions in the size of the armed forces will not automatically lead to increased spending in other public sectors. African cases have clearly demonstrated that the processes of downsizing and restructuring military forces themselves require ample resources and will not save money in the short run because released personnel must be re-educated and assimilated into the economy or pensioned.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, the re-allocation of public spending from the security sector to the social sectors will only come about if there is a change in spending priorities, which usually requires tackling vested political and military interests.

However, there is increased recognition that defence cooperation arrangements that bind many developing countries and CEE states with the industrialized countries can also impede other reform processes. In the case of a number of the CEE states, including the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, the resources gained from military reductions and restructuring, which these countries had to commit themselves to undertake in order to prepare themselves for membership of NATO, have been channelled into modernization programmes for the armed forces. This has meant that the long awaited 'peace dividend', which a reduction in the size of the armed forces might bring about, can only be achieved after a longer period of sustained reforms which increase efficiency in the armed forces, usually concomitant with an overall transformation of the economy.

### **Integrated programmes**

In practice, few countries will undertake to reform the security sector as a whole, even though there is recognition of the need for a holistic view of the process. The first test case for a comprehensive international programme to rebuild and reform the security sector was Sierra Leone. This initiative, led by the British Government from early 1999, involved inputs from ministries responsible for defence, development, foreign relations and home affairs. Initial activities supported by the UK were designed to strengthen and civilianize the defence ministry, produce a new national security policy, reform the police, and train and equip 2500 soldiers for a new national army.

The resumption of hostilities between the Sierra Leonean Government and the rebel Revolutionary United Front in mid-1999 led to a pronounced shift in

---

<sup>65</sup> Marley, A. D., 'Military downsizing in the developing world: process, problems, and possibilities', *Parameters*, vol. 27, no. 4 (winter 1997/98), pp. 137-44.

the focus of the British programme from strengthening the civilian components of the security sector responsible for oversight and management to winning the war. Military training provided to the national army, including the support of the UN peacekeeping mission, paid immense dividends in terms of restoring security and government control over the national territory. However, the longer-term governance agenda, including the strengthening of key regulatory mechanisms such as the finance ministry, took a back seat during this period.

Sierra Leone's case has underscored the immense challenges facing external assistance in a context in which the security sector has been weakened by years of mismanagement at the same time as there is a need to approach security sector reform as a part of a wider reconstruction programme.<sup>66</sup> In the urgency to rehabilitate the national army, the task of integrating the defence budget into the wider public expenditure management framework was given a back seat. Such a framework is essential if security spending is to be subject to the standard fiscal controls of the finance ministry and the appropriate legislative scrutiny, neither of which have seen their capacity to fulfil this role strengthened.

International actors have tended to overlook the development of the capacities required to make a sector-wide assessment of needs, including a clear understanding of the security threats a country faces and of the options available to the state to meet these threats.<sup>67</sup>

There has been a tendency to underplay the extent to which security sector problems are exacerbated by external factors, including regional conflicts, interstate rivalry and global economic forces.<sup>68</sup> The easy availability of arms on international markets and the emergence of lucrative 'war economies' with regional and international dimensions have received the most attention from the international community.

Assistance has not been separated from the agendas of specific donors.<sup>69</sup> There has been a tendency for donor countries to concentrate on geographical areas or states where they have historical connections or strategic interests.

---

<sup>66</sup> Ero, C., *Sierra Leone's Security Complex*, Working Paper no. 3 (Conflict, Security and Development Group, Centre for Defence Studies, King's College London: London, 2000).

<sup>67</sup> As the case of Cambodia has demonstrated, this has made it difficult to develop a logical and sustainable reform plan, to effectively assess what level of security spending is affordable in relation to other public sectors, or to buy in the support of government and the security forces themselves for reform. See Hendrickson (note 44).

<sup>68</sup> OECD, DAC (note 5); and Cooper, N. and Pugh, M., *Security-Sector Transformation in Post-Conflict Societies*, Working Paper no. 5 (Conflict, Security and Development Group, Centre for Defence Studies, King's College London: London, 2002).

<sup>69</sup> E.g., the British Government approved the sale of a radar system to Tanzania in spite of opposition from a cross section of groups in Tanzania and the international community. This is important to note, in view of the leading role that the UK is playing in setting the security sector reform agenda and of the fact that Tanzania is dependent on aid for nearly 50% of its annual budget. See 'World Bank could bar \$40 million Tanzania air traffic deal', *World Bank Development News*, 21 Dec. 2001, available at URL <<http://www.worldbank.org/developmentnews>>.

Different perspectives and voices also need to be integrated into the reform process. In many of the countries that are most in need of security sector reform, non-state actors offer a strategic entry point for international actors. In Africa, donors such as Denmark, Norway and the UK have actively supported networks of NGOs working on security issues. The development of non-governmental networks, in which the atmosphere is more informal and sensitive political issues can be put aside, is particularly valuable in terms of promoting security sector reform.

Recent round table discussions on security sector reform have begun to build linkages between states (e.g., within sub-regions of Africa and on an Africa-wide basis) as well as to establish cross-regional linkages (for example, through participation by representatives from Asia and Latin America in African meetings).

# Chapter 6

## Conclusions

The internal conditions in states not only establish the security environment within them but also have an impact on regional and international security. Where states are unable to manage developments within their borders successfully, the conditions are created for disorder and violence that may spill over onto the territory of other states and ultimately perhaps require an international intervention.

Security sector reform is part of an attempt to develop a more coherent concept for reducing the risk that state weakness or state failure will lead to disorder and violence. The set of norms, laws and institutions by which the security sector is governed represents an important element of the overall effort to improve governance.

Some governments are now working with civil society and the security sector as one part of this attempt to develop a reform programme. Although security sector reform has become established on the international security agenda, there is still not a shared understanding at the international level of what this term means. This has limited the debate on the subject. Assisting in the development of such a shared understanding should be a priority objective for the research community.

Security sector reform is a new activity and neither its scope nor the manner of its organization has been fully established. A broad set of needs have been identified and a large number of mechanisms are likely to be required to address them. Many diverse actors will have to coordinate their activities to meet these needs.

Sustainable reform depends on the cooperation and participation of stakeholders in the countries concerned. However, reform processes may be generated by different factors. In some regions and countries, reforms have been initiated in

response to pressure from local or domestic actors. In other cases external forces—either states or international organizations—have actively pressed the case for reform.

The prospect of participation in European integration has provided a significant positive incentive for reform among Central European states and in certain East European states. This cannot be matched by regional and sub-regional organizations in Africa, Asia or Latin America. In these regions the primary incentive for reform has been based largely on persuasion and the use of economic assistance to encourage countries to undertake reform.

There have been few cases of sustained externally driven reforms in African states in the past. As a consequence, several new, internally generated initiatives are now under way in the framework of the New Partnership for African Development.

The response of states to the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States may slow down the development of a security sector reform agenda. Increased importance is being placed on developing cooperation with the armed forces, intelligence services and law-enforcement services of other states to identify and eliminate groups and individuals engaged in terrorist acts. There is a risk that security sector reform will become subordinate to anti-terrorism activities in countries where the development of this cooperation is seen as particularly important.