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A Review of Security-Sector Reform

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Contents

Introduction 7

Chapter 1 **Poverty and the security sector** **9**
1.1 Linking research and policy 11

Chapter 2 **Renewed interest in the security sector** **15**
2.1 Reversing the Cold War legacy 15
2.2 Security as a development objective 17

Chapter 3 **Key issues in security-sector reform** **20**
3.1 The changing security context 20
3.2 Reform approaches and objectives 24
3.3 The role of development assistance 29

Chapter 4 **Dilemmas of adopting the new agenda** **35**
4.1 Restrictive and conflicting mandates 35
4.2 Programming in a ‘policy vacuum’ 39

Chapter 5 **Conclusions** **43**

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A Review of Security-Sector Reform

Introduction[1]

This paper draws on a broad survey of thinking in both the development and the security fields. It does not seek to provide an exhaustive review of donor efforts to address security-sector issues or to articulate a particular approach.[2] Consensus is lacking among donors on what the long-term objectives of reform should be, and how best these goals can be promoted. Instead, the intention is to highlight the immense challenges facing the international community in dealing with security-sector problems, and to offer some alternative ways of thinking about their causes and potential responses.

The scope of the task becomes evident through broader reading of the literature on developing-country issues. The poorest nations of the world, which will be encouraged most strongly to reform their security sectors, and which are the focus of this report, are located in Africa, South and South-east Asia and Central America.[3] These nations share a variety of characteristics, which will shape and condition the nature and effectiveness of international responses to their security problems:

- they are largely dependent on aid;
- they are gripped by armed conflict or protracted security problems;
- they have weak and unstable governments; and
- they lack any real strategic significance for the industrialised states.

Chapter one of this report looks at how the British Department for International Development (DFID) is approaching the challenge of security-sector reform, and the role of research in shaping the new agenda. Chapter two begins by examining the reasons behind the growing interest of development agencies in the security sector. The third chapter examines three challenges that policymakers will need to acknowledge when it comes to addressing security-sector problems:

- the rapidly changing security context in the developing world;
- the limits of externally driven reform processes; and
- the need to identify a role for development assistance that more accurately reflects these factors.

Finally, chapter four assesses some practical dilemmas of working in the security sector stemming from the different – and, at times, conflicting – mandates of donors, and the difficulty of adopting a comprehensive approach.

Introduction Endnotes

[1] I am grateful to Richard Jones, Chris Smith, Phil Wilkinson and Susan Woodward for comments on an earlier draft of this paper.
[2] For a more comprehensive look at security-sector activities within the British government, including those of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence, see Ball, N., *Spreading good practices in security sector reform: Policy options for the British Government*, (London: Saferworld, December 1998). This report makes a strong case for a comprehensive international approach to addressing security-sector problems and identifies a broad range of areas where development agencies can make a useful contribution.
[3] The experiences of the 'transition' countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics are not examined, although the issues raised here will have some relevance to how the international community addresses their unique set of security-sector problems.

Chapter 1
Poverty and the security sector

In March 1999, DFID announced its intention to begin addressing security-sector problems in the context of its aid programmes, the central focus of which is poverty alleviation.[4] Growing concern about the impact on development of security forces – including military, paramilitary and police units, as well as the intelligence services – influenced this shift. Their role in the public life of the world's poorest countries significantly shapes and conditions, often with negative consequences, national prospects for social and economic progress. Although this problem has long been recognised, the development community has not addressed it in a direct manner until recently.

The rationale for focusing on security-sector issues – as specified in DFID's policy statement – is sound, uncontroversial and widely appreciated. Recognition is growing that unprofessional or poorly regulated security forces often compound rather than mitigate security problems. Excessive security spending may also absorb scarce public resources that would be better used in other sectors contributing to poverty alleviation. Because security-sector problems tend to be a symptom of the broader social, political and economic challenges facing poorer societies, there is a strong argument for adopting a more holistic approach to development that incorporates security-sector concerns.

What is more open to debate, and will be carefully scrutinised, is how development agencies approach the task of security-sector reform. Any form of involvement with security forces is sensitive and requires special caution. DFID has committed itself to a transparent and case-by-case approach in line with the different needs and circumstances of each country. The department stresses that the demand for change must come from within countries and that assistance will only be provided through 'legitimate civilian authorities with the capacity to control the security forces'.[5] Where these conditions are not in place, DFID will explore whether progress can be made through alternative channels, such as civil society, or by focusing on the external dimensions of security-sector problems.

The most difficult challenge DFID faces will be to ensure that its backing for security-sector reform is translated into meaningful and lasting benefits for the poor. The question of what approach to take is critical, but just as important in determining the success of reforms will be whether the international community supports them over the long term. One of the key issues that has to be addressed by development agencies, therefore, is how international assistance can best be co-ordinated and aligned with local conditions, needs and priorities.

Recognising the need for a comprehensive approach to security-sector

reform, DFID is looking to support a broad range of initiatives, including:

- increasing the capacity of civilian bodies, including parliaments, to monitor and to manage the security sector;
- strengthening financial systems and mechanisms for monitoring security spending;
- demobilising former combatants and reintegrating them into civilian life;
- de-mining;
- training security services in human rights, international humanitarian law and democratic accountability; and
- improving the effectiveness of peacekeeping forces.

DFID is also trying to forge greater policy coherence among other UK government departments that are pursuing complementary activities in the security-sector domain. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)'s Assistance to Support Stability with In-Service Training (ASSIST) programmes are designed to promote, within overseas military and police forces, respect for civilian democratic government and practices, and international human-rights standards. The Ministry of Defence (MoD)'s Defence Diplomacy missions – in addition to its more traditional military assistance and training programmes – are also intended to promote modern, democratically accountable security forces in developing countries.

There is a particularly strong case for harmonisation between DFID, the FCO and the MoD because of potential conflicts of interest. The FCO policy of 'promoting national interests abroad', which includes selling British weapons, may conflict with DFID's efforts to reduce poverty and to address the causes of insecurity. There is also an interest in ensuring that MoD-sponsored military-training programmes are carefully tailored so as not to undermine DFID's objective of encouraging civil supremacy in security policymaking.

Finally, at the international level, DFID will seek to incorporate a security-sector-reform perspective into the thinking of other donors and multilateral development institutions, including the European Union (EU) and the international financial institutions (IFIs). According to the British Secretary of State for International Development, Clare Short, the broad goal will be to 'support and encourage a strengthening of democratic accountability and transparency in the security sector, and to reshape the security sectors so that they complement our poverty reduction objectives'.[6] As a particular area of focus, DFID has highlighted the problems posed by 'excessive or inappropriate military expenditures' in developing countries and 'unproductive sales' of arms by members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Despite the growing interest in security-sector issues, there are still more questions than answers regarding how the new agenda can be linked to poverty-alleviation strategies. Donors are just starting to grapple with the difficult political

implications of addressing security-sector problems. What will be required are new ways of thinking about development challenges and new policy instruments. In order to strengthen its internal capacity to analyse security issues and to implement effective programmes, DFID has contracted the Centre for Defence Studies (CDS) at King's College, University of London to offer advice and research on all aspects of security-sector work.

1.1 Linking research and policy

The question of research and the kinds of knowledge necessary to promote the new security-sector-reform agenda are a central theme of this paper. Informed observers of security problems in developing countries are becoming increasingly concerned that current international responses are not simply inadequate, but the assumptions on which they are based may no longer be compatible with the reality on the ground. A key problem highlighted is the tendency by development agencies to see developing-country situations in terms of what they believe they 'ought to be' rather than what they 'actually are'.[7]

A growing number of analysts have emphasised the following factors:

- the increasing diffusion of political authority across societies;
- the growing political influence of non-state actors;
- the emergence of transnational economic networks linking élites in poorer countries with those in richer states;
- the fragmentation and divided loyalties of armed groups; and
- the entrenchment of protracted crisis and insecurity in many parts of the developing world.

One veteran UN official suggests that the policies that the international community is pursuing with regard to Africa and the assumptions on which these policies are based, do not even indirectly take into account many of these profound social, economic and political transitions.[8]

Awareness is growing, for instance, that the primary agents of change on which development interventions tend to be based – a functioning, bureaucratic state and a coherent civil society – often do not operate along Western lines in the way that the aid community would like to believe. The limits of aid as an instrument for addressing security-sector problems will be particularly apparent when it comes to reforming military institutions that have remained poorly understood and are largely immune to external influence.[9] The crucial issue, therefore, is to what degree research is reinforcing or challenging conventional stereotypes concerning how developing societies function.

There are three interrelated issues that will impact on the quality and utility of security-sector analysis. First is the general tendency to apply universal concepts to

understand and to respond to security challenges in developing countries. The recent decline in international development assistance to poorer states has been used to justify broad-brushed, 'hands off' approaches to their problems. These approaches are often based on free-market solutions and concepts like democratisation that mask the differences between developing states, their histories and their unique circumstances.

John Toye presents a persuasive critique of what he terms the 'counter-revolution' in development thinking – the emergence of a dominant neo-liberal economic orthodoxy in the early 1980s emphasising free trade, market-driven growth and reduction of state involvement in the economy.[10] He suggests that the effect of this counter-revolution, which still enjoys great influence, was to encourage or to enforce use of the same set of economic instruments and remedies employed in the industrialised world to tackle underdevelopment across the range of Third World states. The model ignored underlying social, cultural and economic differences, as well as the unique experience of colonisation, by inherently assuming that they made little difference to prospects for growth along Western lines.

The practical implication of a reliance on a universal approach to development is that it discourages analysis that might question the suitability of existing policies promoted by aid agencies. As has been noted with regard to the way conflict issues are often addressed:

"There is a danger of replicating a mistake frequently made by the aid community in general, namely that of reading only that small segment of an adjacent literature that fits easily through the established windows and frameworks of the 'host' field – in this case, development/aid policy."[11]

Understanding and confronting security-sector issues will require that researchers and policymakers consult a wider literature than they are accustomed to. What is needed in the first instance is not necessarily more research *per se*, but a better understanding of existing work across a broader range of relevant disciplines, and a willingness to challenge cherished assumptions about how developing countries function.

A second concern relates to the increasing trend for development agencies to favour a 'crisis-management' approach. Security-sector reform is a key transition issue in many post-war societies and events are moving faster than policymakers can respond to effectively. This increases the pressure on donors to act before there is an adequate understanding of the problems, not to mention what has worked and what has not worked in more conventional areas of development activity. The danger is that the urgency of instigating processes of reform may preclude the analysis needed to devise appropriate longer-term responses.

Most policymakers are sensitive to the need to devise responses to security problems that are appropriate and feasible in a given context. In practice, less emphasis is placed on asking what the necessary preconditions are for international assistance to fulfil the enormous expectations often placed on it by both providers

and recipients. It could be argued that the questions of what is 'feasible' and what is 'appropriate' would be seen in a different light if the challenges of sustaining international support for reform programmes over longer periods, increasing co-ordination between donors, and prioritising local involvement were treated more seriously.

Demobilisation and reintegration programmes offer a good example of this situation. It tends to be much easier to gain the support of donors for the task of retrenching soldiers than for ensuring that former combatants are effectively re-inserted back into peacetime society. Reintegration, where it does work, usually requires a long-term commitment to supporting local communities if the process is to run smoothly. This entails a change of approach by donors, who often find it easier to set up parallel structures to deal with ex-combatants, or who prefer to support discreet projects rather than putting money in a trust fund to allow the process to be better co-ordinated.[12]

The final issue relates to how research is linked to the practical processes of security-sector reform. The role of research is not simply to generate more and better knowledge about security problems. Development agencies will face a huge challenge in translating new knowledge into effective policies, although the more relevant question perhaps is how research will help developing-country policymakers tasked with implementing change. Research is closely linked to the process of generating the local vision and the political will necessary to sustain reform. Consequently, there is a strong case for greater involvement by local researchers and for the convening of fora where the validity of external research findings can be debated and assessed by those involved.

The security-sector-reform agenda will remain a top-down and short-term enterprise unless it is conceived in terms of how it increases the capacity of developing countries to analyse, to understand, and to debate their own security problems. This has implications for the timeframe of donor interventions, the kinds of assistance that they provide, and the nature of their partnerships with local institutions and governments undertaking reforms.

Chapter 1 Endnotes

[4] DFID's March 1999 policy statement on 'Poverty and the Security Sector' can be found on its website at http://www.dfid.gov.uk.

[5] The Overseas Development and Cooperation Act governing DFID's activities permits involvement with the security sector as long as the primary purpose is to promote development.

[6] 'Security Sector Reform and the Elimination of Poverty'. A speech made by the British Secretary of State for International Development, Clare Short, at the Centre for Defence Studies, King's College, University of London, 9 March 1999.

[7] Among others, two works that challenge conventional approaches to understanding and responding to developing-country problems are: Chabal, P. and Daloz, J.P., *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument,* (Oxford: James Currey, 1999); Duffield, M., 'Post-Modern Conflict: Warlords, Post-adjustment States and Private Protection', *Civil Wars,* Vol. 1, No. 1, (London: Frank Cass, 1998).

[8] Kent, R.C., 'Tumultuous Transition', *The World Today,* March 1999, p. 9.

[9] This report draws heavily on Robin Luckham's review of literature on the military and democratisation in Africa. This is the most comprehensive and searching study available of the challenges of reforming military institutions. Luckham, R., 'The Military, Militarization and Democratization in Africa: A Survey of Literature and Issues', *African Studies Review,* Vol. 37(2), 1994.

[10] Toye, J., *The Dilemmas of Development: Reflections on the Counter-Revolution in Development Theory and Practice,* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1993).

[11] Jones, B., 'A Security Perspective on Mark Duffield's "Aid Policy and Post-Modern Conflict"', unpublished paper, 1998.

[12] For a discussion of these issues, see Berdal, M., *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars: Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*, Adelphi Paper 303, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Chapter 2

Renewed interest in the security sector

The key contribution development thinking can make to the emerging security-sector-reform agenda is to situate analysis of, and responses to, security-sector issues in the broader context of developing-country problems. During the Cold War, the military assistance and training provided to developing countries had a political logic largely unconnected with issues of poverty or public welfare. Questions of strategic and national interest are still important in determining how aid is disbursed. But development agencies are better placed than ever before to understand and to respond to the problems facing the poorest countries of the world in a holistic manner, although the new interest in 'security' also poses new challenges.

2.1 Reversing the Cold War legacy

Although security problems have long preoccupied development researchers and theorists, the security sector represents relatively new terrain for policymakers and practitioners. The explanation lies in the deep split that emerged between the development and security communities during the Cold War. This divide was evident at both the research and policymaking levels, and manifested itself in terms of poor communication between the two groups, a superficial understanding of the other's activities, interests and motives, and, at times, mutual suspicion. This state of affairs stemmed in no small part from the strict disciplinary focus of much academic research, and the traditional reluctance of researchers to move beyond narrow fields of specialisation.

But, more importantly, it was the legacy of a Cold War political system in which development and strategic objectives were often at odds. From the post-Second World War period until the late 1980s, patterns of international assistance to the Third World – including military, humanitarian and development aid – were largely conditioned by the security concerns of the superpowers and their allies. The principle objective of the competing blocs was to ensure the viability of their respective client regimes rather than to lay the groundwork for national development. Notions of security revolved, first and foremost, around the territorial integrity of these states, and the stability of the bipolar international system, not the welfare of their populations.

Third World governments were urged by their international sponsors to arm themselves in response to both internal and external threats. More attention was paid

to ensuring that militaries were well equipped, as opposed to being technically proficient, responsible to civilian masters, or sensitised to the duty of defending the broader public interest. What was downplayed was the possibility that they might one day become part of the security problem rather than the solution if the often tenuous control exerted over these armies by weak regimes was undermined during political crises.

The Cold War effectively militarised the study of security. It has been argued that mainstream security studies:

> *"has traditionally devoted less attention to the goal of security than to the means by which it is pursued. More accurately … the field has tended to focus on* one *set of means … that is, military statecraft."*[13]

This left little opportunity to advance either broader conceptions of security more in line with the developmental needs of countries, or alternative means of achieving security. The extension of military influence in many developing countries helped to maintain and even to reinforce the idea that the armed forces had a role to play in development. This coincided with arguments in certain strands of development theory in the 1960s and 1970s that the military would serve as 'modernisers'.

During that period and well into the 1980s, the narrow focus on economic growth as the primary engine of development further masked the costs of large security sectors.[14] Rapid economic-growth rates in a small number of authoritarian countries in East Asia and Latin America also contributed to this notion. And in the large number of developing countries that were undergoing harsh, 'curative' economic reforms as part of International Monetary Fund (IMF)- and World Bank-led structural-adjustment programmes, it was often suggested that strong regimes were necessary to ensure that restive populations swallowed the 'bitter pill' of economic reform. Even where high military expenditure was seen to squeeze out social spending, Cold War geopolitics made it difficult for donors to address this issue.

At a general level it has been difficult to dispel the idea that security issues are the exclusive field of military or defence specialists. Within the development community the links between security and development have continued to be taken for granted or ignored until recently. Mainstream thinking has long promoted the idea that armed conflicts are somehow temporary and dysfunctional features of societies that will eventually fade as 'development' takes place.[15] Aid workers have looked to politicians and diplomats to solve these problems. Influenced, in part, by an increasingly vocal human-rights community, they have been quick to condemn governments when military or police forces contribute to security problems or are guilty of human-rights violations.

In the process, however, there has been a tendency to downplay the fact that security can be considered an essential public good, like education, health and clean

water, and that poorer states may need international assistance in order to provide security effectively. A real change in thinking on this issue only started to happen with the end of the Cold War and the dramatic social and political upheaval in many of the lesser developed countries, including those in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

2.2 Security as a development objective

The political disengagement of the superpowers from the Third World resulted in an expanded role for development agencies – particularly the non-governmental sector – in the delivery of aid and in post-war reconstruction.[16] This led to two important changes in the concept of security:

- from an exclusive stress on territorial security to a greater emphasis on human security; and
- from security through armaments to security through sustainable human development.[17]

It is now more widely accepted that state, regional and even global stability is not simply a question of relations between states. Rather, it is a function of the welfare of the people who constitute these nations.

The broadening and deepening of the concept of security has focused renewed attention on the appropriate role of the security sector in the political and economic systems of states. Bloated and poorly regulated militaries are still seen as a primary cause of severe distortions in the allocation of national resources between the security and non-security sectors. Of key concern for many donors is that development aid may, in such cases, serve as an indirect subsidy to the armed forces.

The negative developmental impact of a dysfunctional security sector is magnified in countries that have experienced a significant deterioration in their capacity to deliver services – so-called 'failing states' – and in war-torn societies. In such cases, there is an especially urgent need to restore physical security, to optimise the use of scarce public resources, and to attract sustained external support for the recovery process. The crucial issue is whether political stability can be restored and sufficient resources found for reconstruction if security-sector reforms are not made a primary component of international assistance strategies.

The security sector thus offers a valuable window through which to address a range of pressing issues that have long been ignored or tackled in an *ad hoc* manner by the international community. The disappearance of traditional threats to national security has allowed the militaries in industrialised countries to become more involved in 'operations other than war', including peacekeeping and humanitarian activities. This has resulted in a 'revolution of relations' between the armed services and aid agencies, spurring them to work more closely together in pursuit of common

goals.[18] At the same time, the challenge of making a constructive difference is growing.

But limited resources, weak political backing by donor governments, and difficult working environments, mean that there is a tendency by development agencies to compartmentalise problems and to focus on what is 'achievable'. This has resulted in a whole slew of often short-term and narrowly focused initiatives in the security-sector-reform-related areas of police reform, demobilisation, peacekeeping, light-weapons proliferation and child soldiers. The risk is that short-term political commitments to crisis situations and narrow donor institutional priorities will lead to an emphasis on stabilising situations at the expense of efforts to understand or to address underlying causes.

At the heart of the problem is disagreement on how the security of vulnerable populations can best be satisfied. The emerging concept of human security has been trumpeted as 'an alternative way of seeing the world, taking people as its point of reference, rather than focusing exclusively on the security of territory or governments'.[19] Yet as Astri Surkhe notes in her review of the new human-security agenda: 'those who promote it are still struggling to formulate an authoritative and consensual definition' with which to operationalise this new concept.[20] In the process, the trickiest dilemmas concerning 'who is going to provide the security' and 'the limits of humanitarian interventions' have been dodged.

Susan Woodward, in her analysis of the controversial international intervention in Kosovo, suggests that there can be no separation between 'the security of states and the security of persons'.[21] She argues that international interventions based on human security need to be undertaken with the understanding that, in the long term, only governments can effectively protect and guarantee the rights of their citizens. The implications are that it is not enough simply to condemn governments or to hold them accountable for how they treat their populations – as occurred with the West's action in Kosovo – but that their capacity to protect these rights needs to be strengthened. Woodward argues that, since the early 1980s, there have been 'more than enough opportunities to achieve far more in the direction of peace than did Operation Allied Force'.[22]

This issue is at the core of the dilemmas that donors will face in operationalising the new security-sector-reform agenda. The prospect of a 'peace dividend' is the principle factor explaining their interest in the security sector. Yet slashing the size of the army and of military expenditure will not automatically result in sustained increases in social spending unless profound administrative weaknesses within states are also addressed. Moreover, restoring security will often need more professional security forces, which may require, in some cases, that existing levels of security-sector spending are maintained or even increased. Reconciling these competing demands will involve a broad-based and long-term approach to security-sector reform based on a careful analysis of realities on the ground.

Chapter 2 Endnotes

[13] Baldwin, D.A., 'Security Studies and the End of the Cold War', Review Article, *International Studies Quarterly* 37, June 1993, pp. 129.
[14] Economists have long differed between those contending that military spending contributes to economic growth, and those that argue that the economic benefits are outweighed by the costs of depriving the social sectors of much needed resources. See Kaldor, M., 'The Military in Third World Development', in Graham, M., Jolly, R., and Smith, C. (eds), *Disarmament and World Development,* (London: Pergamon, 1985).
[15] Adams, M. and Bradbury, M., 'Conflict and Development: Organisational Adaptation in Conflict Situations', *Oxfam Discussion Paper,* No. 4, (Oxford: Oxfam, 1995).
[16] Duffield, M., 'Post-Modern Conflict, Aid Policy and Humanitarian Conditionality', Discussion Paper, (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, School of Public Policy, July 1997).
[17] The 1994 edition of the UN Human Development Report makes the case for a new paradigm focusing on human security.
[18] Smith, C., 'Preparing Security Forces for Their Role in Civil Society', *Brassey's Defence Yearbook*, (London: Brassey's, 1999) (forthcoming).
[19] Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy. Cited in Surkhe, A., 'Human Security and the Interests of States', *Security Dialogue,* Vol. 30(3), 1999, pp. 269.
[20] Surkhe, A., op. cit., pp. 269.
[21] Woodward, S.L., 'Should We Think Before We Leap? A Rejoinder', *Security Dialogue,* Vol. 30(3), 1999, pp. 280.
[22] Ibid., p. 279.

Chapter 3

Key issues in security-sector reform

It was suggested above that there is a danger that development agencies will frame security-sector problems in an overly narrow fashion in order to facilitate responses. By seeing the problem as one of skewed patterns of civil–military relations, unprofessional security forces or high military expenditure, the appropriate response may become support for democratisation, increased training for security forces or international pressure to reduce either military spending or the size of the security sector. The question is whether these kinds of responses are compatible with the context in which they are emerging and the ways in which societies in crisis function.

3.1 The changing security context

A common approach is to see security-sector problems as stemming from a breakdown in post-colonial states, beginning with the economic crises of the 1970s and the 1980s and culminating with the violent armed conflicts across many parts of the post-Cold War developing world. This understanding of the problem suggests that it is somehow possible to rebuild nations, to return them to their 'normal' state, and to restore their monopoly of violence. However, this approach does not pay attention to the importance of history and the broader context in which security problems are occurring.

The weakness of state monopolies of violence and the lack of 'professionalism' among security forces have been persistent features of political life in the developing world. Decalo noted, as early as 1976, that:

> *"many African armies bear little resemblance to a modern complex organisational model and are instead a coterie of armed camps owing primary clientelist allegiance to a handful of mutually competitive officers of different ranks seething with a variety of corporate, ethnic, and personal grievances. One direct corollary is that when the military assumes power it is frequently not able to provide an efficient, nationally orientated and stable administration."* [23]

In Europe, the separation of the security-providing functions of states took centuries to develop, involved a special combination of circumstances that will probably never

be repeated, and was a conflictual and fractious process.[24] It was only with the evolution of strong counterbalances like modern bureaucracies and internal police forces that it was possible to keep the military out of politics and focused on external threats to state power. The subordination of security policy to civilian control came about because armies depended on bureaucracies to mobilise the funds needed for equipment and to fight wars. This put civilians in a position where they could bargain on an equal footing with the military.

This is not to suggest that developing countries should – or ever could – follow a similar path as they reform their security forces. With specific reference to Africa, Robin Luckham highlights the pitfalls of drawing too many lessons from the European example:

> *"it is surely curious that … most analyses of the continent's states and armies pick their analogies from early modern Europe † While borrowed categories may facilitate comparative analysis, they make it harder to understand African states and military formations in African terms. Moreover, they are symptomatic of the absence of a historical perspective in the work of the great majority of the social scientists (including the present author) who have analysed contemporary African military establishments."*[25]

Armies in many developing countries were grafted on to traditional military formations by colonial powers. Particularly in Africa, these armies were formed at a time when there were few external threats to state power. The security forces were essentially designed to maintain internal security and to shore up colonial rule. To a lesser or greater extent, this was the situation in British, Belgian, French and Portuguese ruled territories. The colonial powers deployed their security forces as a buffer between the principally foreign-staffed colonial administrations and the nationalist movements that arose after the Second World War.

It was these former colonial military forces, together with nationalist armies forged in the struggle for freedom, that were swept into political prominence by the tide of independence. But the immense political skill needed to keep the military under civilian control in these newly independent states was lacking. New civilian rulers often maintained colonial strategies of ethnic-based recruitment – 'divide and rule' – and internal deployment to counter domestic political opposition. In the post-independence years, this led to the restructuring of armies as protectors of personal rule, and further enhanced the military's economic and political prominence.

The mounting influence and power of the armed forces was not accompanied by greater professionalism in the Western sense of the concept, which stresses a non-political role for the army. By 1975, militaries ruled half of the states in Africa, and similar trends were apparent, to varying degrees, in Latin America and in Asia, although there were also notable exceptions like in India. Militarisation – understood in terms of the rise of military regimes, repressive security apparatuses, and levels of

military spending and arms imports – skewed the nature of development in these regions.

This has always been an inherently international process, although studies of military establishments have frequently left out or downplayed the international dimension.[26] Moreover, the question of how personal strategies of aggrandisement among political and military élites or their security perceptions influenced militarisation has also received little attention.[27] These perceptions were, to a large degree, influenced by international Cold War sponsors who promoted a military understanding of the threats to state security and a reliance on armaments as the appropriate response.

The costs of bloated and unregulated military sectors became more evident as developing countries fell deeper into economic crisis in the late 1980s. The most graphic shortcoming of states was their inability to protect their citizens and to maintain control over their territory despite the relatively large number of soldiers under arms. In fact, security forces in many countries adopted a predatory approach towards their populations as governments found it increasingly difficult to pay military salaries. The turbulent economic and political transitions set in motion by harsh structural-adjustment programmes and the end of the Cold War culminated in a number of violent conflicts and a sharp deterioration – if not outright collapse – of state legitimacy and the government's capacity to provide public services in many areas.

At the risk of over generalisation, recent works examining protracted crises in many parts of Africa and Asia emphasise the need to set these events in a broader perspective.[28] Analyses of the state in Africa suggest the limits of approaches that attribute current problems essentially to the breakdown of formal bureaucratic structures set up by colonial powers. An alternative view – put forward most strongly by Patrick Chabol and Jean-Pascal Daloz – holds that these structures were always very weak and never served as more than a façade behind which African societies continued to conduct their politics along communal lines. The significance of the continuities in political practice between the pre- and post-colonial periods explains why Africa's political élites have never accepted the supremacy of institutions over individuals.

Indeed, as a protection strategy, many rulers have actively sought to undermine the formal state bureaucracies over which they preside. William Reno has demonstrated how political élites in Liberia and Sierra Leone have actively 'de-bureacratised' their state administrations in order to consolidate power in the face of internal opposition.[29] The gutting of public services has enabled these élites to control the resources necessary to maintain their traditional bases of political support. Another key element in this process, also highlighted by Mark Duffield[30], has been the development of linkages with the international economy, often based on lucrative agreements to extract and to export valuable natural resources, which have replaced Cold War sources of international patronage.

An alternative understanding of armed conflict that has gained attention in recent years also lends credence to this revised concept of politics, both in Africa and in other developing countries. This view suggests that war should not simply be seen as 'a breakdown in a particular system' of power, but rather as 'the emergence of another, alternative system of profit and power'.[31] Violence can be seen to serve various 'functions' and reflects the underlying political and economic organisation of societies. Behind the 'chaos' and 'disorder' are complex power relations and economic and social structures that analysts often miss. In the absence of broad-based political institutions that can mediate competition over resources and power, violence or the threat of violence fulfils this role.

The inability of states to uphold the rule of law and the general decline in the popular legitimacy of rulers across many parts of the developing world has led to a greater reliance by political élites on security forces. And just as state élites have 'de-bureacratised' in order to better consolidate power, so they have often deliberately fragmented their security forces for the same reason. Alex de Waal's analysis of the former Zaire shows how late President Mobutu Sese Seko's strategy to survive mounting political opposition was to fragment the security and armed forces when it became impossible to ensure their loyalty.[32] While the army was allowed to dwindle in size and in strength, a succession of clandestine special strike forces were formed, deployed and then dissolved – at one point Mobutu presided over no fewer than six specialised security services.

In many cases, these processes of fragmentation are being promoted behind the façade of 'democratic' government and are also serving to blur the traditional distinction between civilian and military élites. The role of state security forces has increasingly shifted from defending the public interest to protecting the interests of political leaders or warlords. In the process, a symbiosis has been created between civilian and military élites and international business interests.

A key dimension of this trend is the emergence of private security companies. In Africa, these firms are increasingly supplanting the primary responsibility of the state to provide security both for its people and for lucrative multinational and domestic business activities.[33] This shift is having a polarising effect on societies because it has effectively undermined any notion that security is a public good and that it should be provided by states. Peter Lock states that, when security is converted into a commodity, it can either be acquired from a private security company, by buying off state agents, by arming oneself, or by buying the protection of criminal elements in society.[34]

This trend towards the privatisation of security has massive implications for whether or not the state can actually recover its monopoly of violence. Mark Duffield argues that the focus on the 'nation-state' – in the Western sense – misses many dimensions of the current reality.[35] In particular, he suggests that it may be misleading to see the rise of poverty and of conflict in many parts of Africa as stemming from an overall lack of resources. Rather, it is more useful to see these

processes as a consequence of the new political projects that are emerging as political élites and warlords forge new links with the global economy in a bid to maintain often unstable power bases. He cautions that mainstream aid policy completely misses or underplays many aspects of these changes and, in so doing, may help to entrench these emerging 'illiberal' political projects.

At a general level, the emerging analysis of political power and security issues in Africa and in other regions of the world is helpful for understanding the broad challenges associated with security-sector reform. To suggest that this analysis is applicable in all developing countries would be wrong, and to use it to justify a 'universal' model of reform would be even more misguided. The key point is that any research being used to support international intervention in the security sector needs to take into account the international political and economic context in which these reforms are being promoted.

3.2 Reform approaches and objectives

A significant proportion of the security-sector reforms being undertaken in developing countries today are externally driven projects. South Africa is one notable exception, having envisaged the need for extensive change as part of the post-apartheid transition that began in the early 1990s.[36] Similarly, in many East Asian states that have undertaken significant reforms in recent years – including Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand – domestic political change has been the strongest influence together with economic conditions and changes in the regional-security context.[37] On the whole, though, these have tended to be slow and halting processes that have been subject to reversals on occasion.

In many of the other countries engaged in, or embarking on, this process, including Cambodia, El Salvador, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, the initial impetus has stemmed from heavy involvement by the international community in post-war reconstruction programmes. The broad lines of reform to be carried out have often been written into peace agreements and have typically envisaged a process commencing with disarmament and demobilisation of armed groups and ending with the establishment of new 'unified' national armies. In practice, however, obstacles often closely linked to the tenuous nature of peace in post-conflict societies and variable levels of international support have beset these processes.[38]

The reform process in Cambodia was based on an external vision of what a future security sector ought to look like rather than a careful analysis of the relationship between the factional armies and the political dynamics of the peace process. Demobilisation of the four armed factions ran into difficulty early in the effort to implement the 1991 Paris agreements. Once it became clear that these problems would not necessarily obstruct UN plans to organise elections in 1993, the demobilisation and military restructuring process was suspended setting the context for the violent collapse of the coalition government in 1997.[39]

It seems clear that reforms should not necessarily imply a return to past models of military development, which are often part of the problem being addressed. There are, however, no easy answers to the question of what type of reform should be promoted and what kinds of models, if any, are relevant to developing countries given their extreme diversity. For a start, the issue of how developing countries are dealing with the control and restructuring of their military forces and security agencies has not yet been systematically researched.[40] There is also poor understanding of how military institutions function and how states and military officials define their security interests.

Furthermore, there is inadequate understanding about the ethos imparted to Third World armies by the colonial powers and how external doctrines continue to affect military institutions in the developing world. Alex de Waal argues that military doctrine in Africa is evolving rapidly.[41] The new, innovative forms of warfare seen in many parts of the continent draw on indigenous traditions of combat, as well as on insurgency and counter-insurgency tactics developed in Europe, the US, the former communist bloc and apartheid South Africa.

As noted previously, it is also important to approach the question of security-sector reform from an international perspective. A complex web of military relations links developing countries with industrialised nations in the areas of defence policy, conflict prevention, military training and assistance, and arms sales. These ties go beyond government-to-government relations to include government-sponsored links between the private sector in industrialised countries – largely arms producers or private security firms – and developing-country governments.

In Africa, for instance, bilateral relationships exist with Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, Portugal and the US, as well as a large number of other states. The nature of these links vary widely in line with the different models of assistance being promoted, past colonial ties and current strategic interests on the continent.[42] There is reassuring evidence that new forms of military relations are more in keeping with the security needs of Africans than was the case in the past. The primary question, though, remains to what degree the international community is willing to support security-sector reform in non-strategic areas. There are a number of different trends that need to be taken into account in order to understand the full picture.

First is the general military withdrawal of the major international powers from the developing world following the end of the Cold War. The French have maintained the largest presence in Africa during the 1990s. Paris has traditionally seen its defence relationships with former colonies as contributing to regional security, providing these countries with guarantees that they will be protected against external aggression, and, in the process, enabling them to limit their military expenditure.[43] However, France has radically downsized its presence over recent years as a result of restructuring its own armed forces and dwindling political interest in maintaining a presence on the continent.

On another level there has been renewed military involvement in the developing world by industrialised countries. This has largely occurred through peacekeeping operations, humanitarian missions and military-training programmes. According to Benjamin Schwarz, this re-engagement can be understood in terms of the search by military establishments for new tasks and duties after the end of the Cold War removed the West's main adversary in the Third World: the Soviet Union.[44] US proponents of 'peacetime engagement' have argued strongly that instability in the Third World constitutes a major threat to American interests.

A similar trend can be identified in the UK where the military has become actively involved, over the past decade, in 'operations other than war', and has sought to find new roles to justify its existence. New relations being developed with foreign militaries tend to be couched in terms of initiatives to promote 'good governance' and human rights and to improve defence resource management. Thus far, these efforts are largely based on the transfer of expertise through training programmes rather than on political initiatives that tackle the more difficult question of bringing security forces under democratic control.

Whether this involvement represents a new, genuine and sustained commitment to security in the Third World will impact on the long-term success of security reforms. But there are reasons to be pessimistic. For instance, the new US African Crisis Response Initiative – providing support to African peacekeeping forces – is seen by some to reflect a desire by the US administration to disengage from the continent.[45] This view is supported, more generally, by a 1998 report on international backing for African peacekeeping:

> *"Despite the protestations of France, the United Kingdom and the United States, their programmes to develop African peacekeeping capabilities are indeed motivated by a recognition that African security is not a priority concern and a desire to avoid direct involvement in African conflicts. Western programmes are simply not the 'engagement' policies that their architects would have the world believe. Moreover, the Western-driven Security Council will continue to disengage from Africa, notwithstanding its responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security."*[46]

The expanded role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in responding to humanitarian disasters and in conflict resolution-related activities is a reflection of the growing political vacuum in many of the countries that have been worst hit by crisis. In keeping with this trend, there are now an increasing number of groups, like the US-based NGO, the National Democratic Initiative (NDI), which are setting up programmes on civil–military relations or on other security-related issues. The NDI approach is to offer a range of international alternatives for comparison rather than to push the US model. The critical issue remains, nonetheless, how quickly these new ideas will take root.

The idea of justice, for example, is complex and not easily transposable. The cases of Japan and Germany following the end of the Second World War are among the few examples of where an outside model of policing has been applied effectively in a different country. But this was only made possible by the particularly demanding terms of the post-war settlements, and came at a huge cost to the US in terms of money, time and commitment. It is very unlikely that America or any other industrialised country will be willing to shoulder such a burden again.

Conversely, the US attempt, starting in the 1960s, to strengthen public security forces in Central America often failed spectacularly.[47] At least initially there was little interest in promoting a separation of internal-security and military functions. The approach later changed in accordance with evolving counter-insurgency thought, which stressed the importance of maintaining public confidence in police forces and ensuring that they treated the local populations humanely in order to win their support. These principles were not conditions for US assistance, however, and aid was provided to various governments that were later implicated in serious human-rights abuses.

In addition, there is often a tendency to downplay the fact that the ability of the military to remain immune to outside pressure has to do with its close links to civilian rulers and its role in guaranteeing élite-dominated political and economic systems.[48] Robin Luckham cautions that there is a danger of simplifying the nature of civil–military relations at the expense of a broader focus on authoritarian rule and the ensemble of repressive state apparatuses.[49] What risks being overlooked is that, in many developing countries, civilian leaders have been just as repressive as military rulers. It is important, therefore, not to over-estimate the success of recent experiments with democratisation in the developing world or to assume that these will automatically lead to a reduction in military influence.

Samuel Huntington takes the view that, overall, democratisation has resulted in improved civil–military relations, although he recognises that economic development is also a key factor.[50] His view is based on limitations to the involvement of the armed forces in politics, restructuring the army toward military missions, cuts in size and enhanced professionalism. However, Luckham warns that what is vital in evaluating military disengagement from politics is not simply civilian authority over government, but the quality of this control.[51] He argues that democratisation requires a systematic reduction of the military's 'professional and political prerogatives'. If this does not happen, the danger is that democracy may mask a continuing military role in politics.

According to Fareed Zakaria, there has been a rise in 'illiberal democracies' in recent years as multiparty elections have swept the developing world.[52] He contends that substantive democracy – what he terms 'constitutional liberalism' – is not about procedures for electing governments, but rather about the goals of an administration. In the Western tradition, a primary objective has always been to protect individuals against coercion from whatever source – state, church or society – by emphasising a system of checks and balances in order to enforce the rule of law. Without a tradition

of constitutional liberalism, democracy tends to lead to centralisation of power and to legitimisation of one-party rule.

Nevertheless, many analysts see the extension of civilian rule over the military as an important element of security-sector reform.[53] It is not enough to stop there, though, as Jendayi Frazer cautions, for there are no guarantees that militaries will quickly internalise the values of civilian supremacy. Because the degree to which this has occurred is even harder to assess behind the shell of democracy, institutional barriers that establish counterweights to military power and influence are needed if reforms are to be sustained and if military re-intervention in politics is to be prevented.[54] African countries that have successfully remained under civilian rule offer many examples of such counterweights, although whether or not they can be 'crafted' through reform is less clear.

Goldsworthy has made an inventory of these counterweights, including:

- legal and constitutional restraints;
- manipulation of the ethnic composition of the armed forces;
- restricting the military's mission to external defence;
- establishing paramilitary units to counter military influence;
- strengthening internal forces of law and order;
- providing material and professional pay-offs to the military;
- offering privileged access to rent-seeking opportunities, such as land and government contracts;
- co-opting officers into government positions; and
- introducing a range of procedures for promoting democratic accountability, like the strengthening of parliament's role in security policymaking.[55]

One problem with such inventories, Luckham notes, is that there might well be as many mechanisms of control as there are civilian governments.[56] Not only does the explanation for civilian control tend to be 'over-determined', but it is also hard to guard against re-intervention by military regimes.

Goldsworthy's categorisation can be broken down into two groups:

- long established systems of personal rule, such as in Botswana, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Malawi or Senegal; and
- post-revolutionary regimes in which party and army interpenetrate – the former controlling the latter through political control mechanisms inside the armed forces.

The irony is that those civilian regimes enjoying the greatest longevity have not always relied on mechanisms that blend well with Western approaches.

A good example is Ghana's experience with military reform. The political stability achieved in Ghana in recent years, together with the relative success of its

economic reforms, has received considerable attention from the international community. However, Eboe Hutchful states that there were significant costs incurred by President Jerry Rawlings' success in getting the army to accept a constitutional role.[57] These costs included suppression of public debate, the relative marginalisation of parliament, and the militarisation of civilian institutions of law and order. More generally, Ghana's case confirms that political and security reforms in developing countries are less likely to follow a linear path as is often assumed by outsiders than to represent the outcome of conflicts of interest between domestic factions.[58]

3.3 The role of development assistance

How can development assistance, the logic of which tends to be based on the transfer of expertise or external models of reform, be reconciled with the need for a locally inspired vision of reform and the political momentum to sustain it? The record shows that the success of development assistance in promoting institutional change, particularly in divisive political contexts, is mixed.[59] Such reforms depend mainly on domestic political and social factors that are hard for outsiders to influence. In the absence of sufficient internal political will, no amount of technical assistance or expertise is likely to show benefits. This is not to suggest that there is no role for training or dissemination of knowledge, but that this needs to be done in ways that help to create space so that political and popular support for change can be mobilised.

Consistent with the need for a broader approach would be to see the security sector as comprising those bodies that are responsible for, or should be responsible for, protecting the state and the communities within it. This would include three key pillars:

- groups with a mandate to wield instruments of violence – military, paramilitaries and police forces;
- institutions with a role in managing and monitoring the security sector – civilian ministries, parliaments and non-governmental organisations; and
- bodies responsible for guaranteeing the rule of law – the judiciary, the penal system, human-rights ombudsmen and, where these bodies are particularly weak, the international community.

Viewing the security sector in this broader sense makes it apparent that security-sector problems are not fundamentally about the military, but about questions of governance more generally within states. This suggests, for instance, that a narrow focus on professionalising the armed forces at the expense of efforts to strengthen the rule of law and the role of civilians in managing and monitoring the security sector would be counter-productive and potentially dangerous. Reform approaches based on

extending democratic control over the security sector will ultimately require a more even diffusion of power between these three pillars, although by no means will all countries choose or be able to follow such a path.

However, there may be openings for the international community to encourage countries to undertake reforms. First by supporting greater debate and efforts to build consensus about what 'national security' means in a particular context, the appropriate role of both civilians and security forces in defending national security, and what the long-term objective of reform should be. If this process is to be genuinely inclusive, it should at some stage make provision for a broad-based national consultation involving the full range of actors from the governmental and non-governmental sectors that have an interest in security-sector reform. This would essentially be a consultative, information-gathering and confidence-building process that the international community could do much to support without running the risk of excessive interference.

A second element would involve supporting the development of a national strategy to deal with security reforms that takes into account the political and financial obstacles. What are the priorities? What is feasible? This stage would probably require greater technical input from the international community in order to help to:

- restructure security forces;
- design appropriate mechanisms for allocating and monitoring public expenditure;
- redefine lines of authority between security forces and parliaments; and
- enact appropriate legislation to guide and to guarantee that these reforms are sustained.

All of these changes would entail certain costs for political and social groups that would tend to obstruct reform processes. Consequently, they would need to be anticipated as far as possible in advance.

A third issue to be addressed would be the task of building pro-change constituencies – in effect, 'buying' people into reforms. This would be the most difficult initiative for outsiders to back since it involves transforming commitments made by various actors into practical policies that will result in new patterns of civil–military relations. As a rule, it will require changes in attitude and skills for all actors, not just for the military. While security forces need a greater appreciation of human rights and democratic accountability, official civilian bodies, like parliaments and ministries of defence and finance, need a better understanding of security policymaking in order to exercise effective control over the military.

These are long-term challenges that may not show real benefits until parliaments are functioning satisfactorily, or it is accepted by the civilian and military élite that there will be greater checks and balances on their activities. A key issue for

donors, therefore, will be whether they are able to envisage and to commit to the kind of long-term support required so that countries can initiate and sustain reform processes. Until a local capacity for this develops, perhaps through civil-society groups, the international community has a particularly important role to play in monitoring change.

There are, nonetheless, good reasons for caution when it comes to placing too great a responsibility on civil society. The inter-penetration of the state and civil society in many developing countries suggests that the Western interpretation of civil society exists only on a limited scale.[60] Often it is the product of foreign funding and employs strategies that may at times be counter-productive to what is needed to promote reform successfully. Many human-rights groups, for instance, focus narrowly on issues of governmental accountability, rather than on how administrations can be made more effective. The practice of denunciating without making practical suggestions for reform may undermine the processes of debate that generate support.

Another important issue relates to the use of outside pressure – through conditionality – to encourage reform. There are many different views on whether or not, and to what degree, political leverage should play a role in the promotion of security-sector reform. This is likely to be a hotly debated issue in the future.[61] However, it is unlikely that punitive approaches to 'good governance' will show much success when it comes to promoting policy change.[62] Consequently, there will probably be greater emphasis in the future on incentive-based institution-building approaches. The question is whether donors will have enough patience to see through complex reforms.

In practice, given the urgent need for concrete 'results', most donors will likely continue to use aid as a bargaining chip to affect the nature, direction and pace of security-sector reform, although most will choose to do this quietly, rather than overtly. Moreover, the good-governance agenda is full of inconsistencies that will dilute its impact.[63] On the one hand, governments that continue to commit human-rights abuses, or refuse to embark on needed reforms, often continue to receive international assistance. On the other hand, some of the donor nations most active in promoting 'good' government, such as the US and the UK, have been among the largest suppliers of military equipment to the developing world.

The conflict between good intentions and political realities will remain a persistent feature of the new security-sector-reform agenda, impacting in particular on the effectiveness of donor co-ordination. The impact of international support will be further undermined when donors adopt different approaches in their relations with countries initiating change. Ultimately, these mixed messages allow leaders of nations who are only reluctantly undertaking reforms not to uphold their commitments.

The way that donors deal with the question of military expenditure will be indicative of the approach that they take to security-sector reform more generally. One view, espoused by the IMF in the early 1990s, is that appropriate levels of

military spending should be determined arbitrarily by external donors.[64] In effect, this would not take into account the particular national and international context of a country. Instead, focusing on the *process* by which spending decisions are made is likely to be more beneficial if the long-term objective is to help states to manage military expenditure effectively.

The reasoning behind this approach is not only that military spending should be determined by countries themselves – based on careful analysis of their needs and circumstances – but that strengthening the capacity of societies to make such decisions is the foundation for sustainable development and should be the objective of international assistance. Many of the perceived distortions brought about by high military spending, including fiscal imbalances, which are of particular interest to the IMF and to the World Bank, mask welfare payments to soldiers and their families. As a result, it is not immediately clear what is 'unproductive' or 'excessive' spending. Security-sector reforms may, therefore, have a huge social cost if they are not approached carefully.

At the same time, greater recognition is needed of the fact that the pursuit of security and development involves difficult trade-offs for poorer, aid-dependent countries. While some allocation of resources to the security sector is clearly necessary and desirable to create and to maintain peace and stability, a balance must be struck between achieving this objective and avoiding a build-up of the armed forces that threatens development goals or erodes security.[65] Military-security objectives will always conflict with other security goals, which are better achieved through spending in the economic and social sectors. The opportunity costs of promoting one form of security over another are difficult to assess when the threats to stability come from many different directions.

Despite growing consensus that the pursuit of military security cannot dominate a state's other public-policy goals, there is no automatic link between a reduction in unproductive military expenditure and an increase in social spending. If security-sector reform is to make a genuine contribution to poverty alleviation, the focus must be on more than achieving changes in resource allocation. The quality of public spending is as important as the quantity. The dilemma is that, in those countries where international resources are most needed, the institutional capacity to use these resources effectively is often lacking. In their haste to disburse aid, donors often by-pass weak government structures and, in so doing, exacerbate the problem.[66]

Development agencies have much to bring to the area of security-sector reform, although Chris Smith cautions that working in partnership with military actors will entail new challenges and risks.[67] While a genuine commitment to reform will raise the international standing of countries with large and poorly regulated security sectors, it will not always be easy to assess the sincerity of requests for assistance or to evaluate the impact of reform. This may leave development agencies vulnerable to attack on various fronts.

Perhaps the greatest danger is that, as Smith notes, training and education programmes for military groups may be used as a smokescreen for more fundamental changes in their relations with civilian governmental bodies. Obversely, Western governments may use security-sector-reform programmes, or implicit evidence of change, to render the sale of certain types of military equipment less controversial. Neither of these risks individually constitutes sufficient reason for development agencies to avoid providing support for security-sector reform. However, the dangers underline the need for a broad-based, long-term and transparent approach.

Chapter 3 Endnotes

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[66] These points are argued strongly in some of the case studies, including one on Cambodia, in Forman, S. and Patrick, S. (eds), *Good Intentions: Pledges of Aid for Post-Conflict Recovery,* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999).
[67] Smith, C., op. cit.

Chapter 4

Dilemmas of adopting the new agenda

Few development actors – including UN agencies, the EU, the IFIs, bilateral donors and the NGO community – have a formal mandate for involvement in security-sector-related activities. This is evident not simply from the wording of their charters, which tend to be rather vague on the subject, but from the general reluctance at many levels of these organisations to broach sensitive security-related issues. In practice, agencies are beginning to broaden their approaches to development in ways that allow them to account more directly for the role played by the security sector. The absence of a strong political commitment by the international community and the conflicting interests of donors, however, make it difficult to adopt a comprehensive approach.

4.1 Restrictive and conflicting mandates

Development organisations are grappling with how best to reconcile the interventionist spirit implied by a focus on the security sector with the need to align international assistance with local needs and priorities and respect for the sovereignty of governments. The dilemmas can be seen with regard to the UN Development Programme (UNDP), which in many ways has been at the forefront of efforts to broaden the notion of security and to advocate a more integrated international response to security problems. The case for this was laid out in the 1994 Human Development Report,[68] although this wider notion of security has been slow to percolate down into UNDP programming and to affect the nature of its relations with aid recipients.

In keeping with its charter and its position as an impartial international organisation, UNDP conducts most of its activities in line with National Plans of Action agreed with governments. The main actors that it deals with are government bodies, civil society and, increasingly, the corporate sector. While security forces clearly fall under the heading of government, there is little direct reference to them in UNDP general policy documents[69], or in much of the general literature that it publishes concerning governance issues.[70] Nevertheless, UNDP is increasingly active in security-sector-related activities.

Its Emergency Response Division, for instance, is closely involved in supporting de-mining efforts and demobilisation and reintegration programmes. Police reform is also a new area of focus for UNDP. But the lack of a formal mandate

to address security-sector issues means that this work often strains relations within the organisation where there is a lack of consensus on the rationale for UNDP engagement in this field. The same is true with regard to the relationship between UNDP and its aid recipients and major funders, the latter of which also constitute the UNDP's membership.[71] Much of the discourse on governance issues within UNDP is devoid of reference to the role of the security sector. The practical implication of this is a difficulty in operationalising the focus on security issues.

Directorate VIII (DG8) of the European Commission is similarly hamstrung by legislation governing its activities. DG8 is responsible for channelling development assistance to Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, and, in absolute terms, disburses more development assistance than any other body in the world. Its aid programmes are based on the principles outlined in the Lomé Agreement, which are rather vague when it comes to questions of governance. General references are made to the need for recipients to uphold democracy and to respect human rights. Under this regime, the provision of aid is largely based on 'needs', as defined by countries, and there is currently no mechanism to link assistance to improvements in democracy and human rights.

As a result, few tools are available to address directly problems relating to security or to the allocation of resources between the security and non-security sectors. The EU aid programme largely takes a project-based approach, meaning that aid disbursements tend to consist of discrete funding packages in a wide range of areas, including judicial reform, human-rights training and support for the organisation and holding of elections. These programmes largely revolve around the provision of technical assistance or financing with much less emphasis placed on using political pressure to affect the policy environment.

The charter of the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) is also ambiguous on security-sector reform. While it prevents IADB political involvement in the countries to which it extends loans, the charter does envisage a role for the bank in promoting socio-economic development. Consequently, the IADB has gradually moved into security-sector-related work, although the focus has been more on tackling domestic and social violence than it has been on addressing core issues of governance within the security sector or questions of civil–military relations.[72]

Military expenditure does not fall within the IADB mandate, and, in any case, is seen to be less of a problem in Latin America than in other parts of the world. Because the IADB provides virtually all of its funding to countries in the form of loans, as opposed to grants, it has less leverage in terms of influencing how the money is used.[73] While funding requests tend to come from governments in response to their perceived needs, the IADB is conducting more research on security-related activities, particularly policing, that will allow it to play a greater role in supporting reforms.

The World Bank and the IMF will increasingly have an impact on security-sector reform that needs to be better understood. They disburse the largest amount of development finance, and thus have considerable political leverage. Unlike many

other development actors, IFI assistance is programme oriented, meaning that it is closely linked to bringing about changes in national policy environments.[74] The influence of the IFIs on security issues, though, is perhaps less a consequence of their direct involvement in security-sector reform than of their support for macro-economic stabilisation measures.

Both organisations' fundamental concern with bringing government spending into line with available revenue means that they have an obvious interest in military expenditure. From the outside, the World Bank and the IMF have long seemed oblivious to this issue. But it has been a real concern for them since the 1980s, when it became increasingly evident that high military spending was 'crowding out' social expenditure in many of the countries that they were supporting. The problem was first broached openly in the World Bank in 1989; the guidelines produced in 1991 have not subsequently been modified.

The Bank has never felt comfortable adopting an explicit military-expenditure target or making reduced military spending a formal criterion of lending.[75] This would have been in clear contravention of its Articles and would have left it vulnerable to accusations of political interference. The World Bank's official mandate, therefore, remains fixed on poverty alleviation and one principle means of achieving it: economic growth. As the standard separation between economic and political issues has become increasingly difficult to sustain in recent years, the Bank, nonetheless, has been forced to focus on wider issues like corruption. The good-governance platform has allowed the Bank to scrutinise financial-management systems and to question what it deems excessive corruption or problems of accountability. In turn, this offers the Bank an opportunity during its meetings with recipient governments to comment on issues relating to military expenditure and procurement.

Because these are not areas of formal World Bank competence it has generally been reluctant to address them publicly. In those cases where military expenditure is increasing, the Bank has tried to demonstrate through dialogue with governments the negative impact on the budget and the economy. Behind the scenes, it has also actively sought to put pressure on a number of administrations – such as those of Argentina and Uganda – in order to reduce military spending.[76] As military expenditure and security-sector reform move up the donor agenda, the World Bank will likely begin to broach these issues in a more open manner.

At the same time, the Bank is becoming involved in a range of other security-sector-related activities through the Post-Conflict Unit, which it formed in 1997. This move was an attempt to respond more effectively to the unique challenges faced by war-torn countries. The focus of the Unit, which is primarily policy oriented, is to address the causes of conflict, to re-establish security, and to find sufficient resources to enable the reconstruction of societies. While the creation of the Post-Conflict Unit has allowed the Bank to become more involved in areas like de-mining and demobilisation, it must first demonstrate that these activities are preconditions for the success of its own economic programmes.

In other words, these initiatives are closely linked to more traditional concerns with the quality of public spending and with a desire to promote macro-economic stability. Demobilisation programmes, for instance, offer one way for the World Bank to help governments to bring public spending into line with available revenue. While the retrenchment of soldiers will, in principle, make more resources available for the social sectors, the key question is whether governments will then be committed to changing their allocation priorities. If not, there is always a danger that, with reduced levels of government expenditure, there will be a further squeeze on social spending.

The problems posed by unwarranted political intervention in the budgetary process, corruption, and administrative weakness collectively work against the optimal allocation of resources between the security and non-security sectors. Addressing these institutional weaknesses requires a different set of tools and enhanced co-operation between the full range of donor agencies that interact with a particular government. The World Bank recognises this fact in Cambodia, for instance, where it is currently supporting the demobilisation process. Nonetheless, there is currently a risk in Cambodia that financial stabilisation measures will take precedence over institution-building initiatives and the attainment of other development goals.

At the same time, there is also a danger that demobilisation will be de-linked from broader processes of security-sector reform that might involve restructuring and strengthening the military and the police. These kinds of reform are absolutely necessary if long-term security is to be restored and if the development process is to be jump-started and sustained. But these types of programmes do not fall within the World Bank's mandate. The issue that needs to be addressed is whether or not the Bank's narrow approach to demobilisation is compatible with the efforts of other donors to support broader processes of security-sector reform.

The same kinds of concerns will apply to the IMF, which tends to be less flexible than the World Bank in its relations with countries receiving its assistance, and more orthodox in its approach to economic reform. The Fund provides financial help to promote macro-economic stability. Like the World Bank, it officially limits its involvement in governance to the economic dimension.[77] The IMF holds that ultimate responsibility for governance lies with national authorities. As a result, it has tended to concentrate more on keeping overall government spending down than questioning how public expenditure can be allocated more effectively to achieve social development goals.

Again, the main concern is that there may be conflict between the kinds of economic stabilisation programmes the IMF promotes and other peace- and development-related objectives.[78] Political stability, for example, may be undermined by an aggressive programme to retrench civil servants or military personnel, particularly where adequate long-term arrangements for their reintegration into peacetime society have not be foreseen. In the cases of both the Bank and the Fund,

security-sector reforms are approached in a round about way. This is due to the constraints imposed by their mandates, and, more importantly, to the fact that security-sector reform is not their central activity or concern.

Among bilateral donors, including the UK and the US, there is a growing desire to promote security-sector reform more directly. The UK, as already noted, is taking steps to achieve policy coherence between relevant departments. DFID has much more flexibility in this new domain than the US Agency for International Development (USAID), which is bound by its governing regulations to interact only with civilians. This restriction applies, by extension, to all of the NGOs receiving USAID funds. Because its resources cannot even be used to support reforms within ministries of defence or the police services, these responsibilities fall to other agencies, such as the US Department of Defense (DoD).

The DoD is actively involved in various programmes that seek to educate both civilians and the military on issues like defence resource management, civilian control of the military, respect for human rights, as well as more traditional military assistance and training programmes.[79] Police training issues – which DoD is prohibited from addressing – are the responsibility of the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) at the Department of Justice. This fragmentation of efforts makes it more difficult to address security needs as part of a broader development strategy.[80] This problem is also apparent within the UK DFID, where the section responsible for security-sector reform does not deal with policing issues.

4.2 Programming in a 'policy vacuum'

The practical effect of programming in a 'policy vacuum' is that donor activities tend to involve discrete, short-term funding packages and to rely on the transfer of skills through training or the secondment of an international 'expert' to assist with the technical dimension of reform. Receiving less attention are attempts to influence the institutional and policy environment in which reforms take place. The focus on the 'unholy' trinity – light weapons, anti-personnel landmines and child soldiers – is symptomatic. While this has alerted international opinion to the human tragedies associated with countries in crisis, it has also deflected attention away from looking for the comprehensive solutions required if the capacity of states to provide security is to be restored.

Security-sector reform will ultimately entail changes in bureaucratic cultures that are less dependent on the acquisition of new skills than on changes in attitude and patterns of interaction between civilian and military actors. In turn, this requires that development agencies find ways to stimulate local initiative and to build consensus among relevant actors on the rationale for change. This is a long-term process that is undermined when donors do not adopt a united stance on reforms that are politically sensitive. This does not necessarily suggest the need to make aid

conditional on specific policy changes, but rather that, unless donors work closely and in a sustained fashion with the institutions that they are trying to 'reform', the desired changes are unlikely to happen.

The UNDP's work with police training is a good example of the challenges faced by donors. [81] Its move into this area was motivated by the need to address the 'security gap' apparent in many post-peacekeeping situations when international support is withdrawn before there is adequate local capacity to preserve the peace. So far, UNDP has been involved in police-reform initiatives in El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Mozambique and Somalia. Its work with civilian police is considered to be one of the five pillars necessary for the reestablishment of security in war-torn societies – the others being justice reform, penal reform, strengthening of the rule of law, and the creation of human-rights ombudsmen.

In practice, progress in these areas has been uneven. Involvement in police reform remains controversial for many UN member states, which perceive this as an undue violation of sovereignty. Some people within UNDP feel that the organisation should focus on more conventional development activities. Consequently, it has been a very *ad hoc* process by which candidates for reform have been selected, funding has been provided and programmes have been designed.

Notwithstanding the recognised urgency to address the lack of security in countries emerging from war, donor involvement in police reform is still often planned in terms of an 'exit strategy'. Where the priority is to 'get out', training and recruitment take place without an attempt to build a genuine local vision of the role of the police in a democratic society, or to anticipate the institutional requirements needed for success. As a result, police reforms are often approached by donors in a very technical manner and rely predominantly on the use of police 'experts'. Programmes focus narrowly on the transfer of expertise and ignore the need for civilian oversight and monitoring.

This is because governments are often more interested in crime reduction and law enforcement than on crime prevention. Less attention is paid to deepening democracy, redefining the nature of relations between security forces and the public, or understanding the kinds of skills which civilians need to play an effective part. The historical dominance of the military in Latin America, for instance, has left the region without civilian policymakers to design and to implement reform.

Another consequence of this urgency to 'get out' is that police reforms have been implemented in quick succession in countries that are significantly different in context.[82] Insufficient time has been taken to understand what works and what does not work. There has been a willingness to draw too many lessons from too few examples. This suggests that there is a tendency to favour an external model of reform over the development of a local capacity to analyse the security situation and to propose more appropriate frameworks and strategies. As a result, current donor approaches often overlook the crucial need to 'buy' people into reforms before major institutional change can be undertaken.

In countries where demobilisation is occurring, for instance, recognition is growing that this issue must be raised as part of a national dialogue – which may also cover reconciliation, prevention of future conflict, disarmament and public security.[83] Nonetheless, the development community has not formulated a coherent strategy for dealing with demobilisation as part of a wider programme of democratic reform. Peacekeeping forces often handle the mechanical aspects of demobilisation while reintegration issues fall to humanitarian agencies. In practice, the short-term dimensions of the process receive the most international support in terms of funding and technical aid, while the difficult question of integrating former soldiers into political and social life receives less attention.

The need to link the security aspect of reform with the sustainable-development dimension is the greatest challenge facing the development community. In the area of light-weapons proliferation, there are various initiatives that have generated interest. Until recently, efforts to address the problem have largely focused on supply-side issues. On the demand side, though, internationally supported programmes are underway in places like Albania, Mali and southern Africa. One of the most promising initiatives has been the UNDP-led experiment in peace-building in Mali, which attracted the broad participation of donors and relevant local actors in the early 1990s. The project was launched following the end of military rule and a long period of fighting between the government and rebel movements.

This initiative – which is described in a detailed study published by the UN – has combined innovative programmes of military reform and disarmament, and brought together civil-society actors, opposing armed groups and the government.[84] The process culminated in a major constitutional reform that has helped to redefine the role that the military plays in public life. While work has taken place on a code of conduct for civil–military relations, there is recognition that the success of this initiative will rest on efforts to strengthen both the parliament, whose responsibility it is to legislate on defence and security matters, and the armed forces. In the absence of sufficient funding and training, it will be hard for the military to remain a politically neutral establishment that is respected by civil society and, at the same time, able to fulfil its duties.

The early successes of this project have been somewhat encouraging, and it is being replicated in other areas of West Africa. For example, the Programme of Co-ordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) is an attempt to support the Moratorium on the Import, Export and Manufacture of Light Weapons declared by the Economic Community of West African States in 1998. Underpinning the approach is the 'security-first' initiative, which recognises that a secure environment is needed for development before problems like the widespread availability of light weapons can be addressed effectively. Both programmes, however, depend significantly on outside support and inspiration to maintain their current momentum.

Chapter 4 Endnotes

[68] *Human Development Report*, (New York: UN Development Programme, 1994).
[69] *La Gouvernance en Faveur du Développement Humain Durable,* Document de Politique Générale du PNUD, (New York: UN Development Programme, 1997).
[70] For example, see UN Development Programme, *Compendium of Africa Governance Programmes: Accountability and Transparency,* Volumes 1 and 2, Second African Governance Forum, 25–26 June 1998, Accra, Ghana.
[71] This observation is based on conversations with UNDP personnel in various departments.
[72] Buvinic, M., Morrison, A. and Shifter, M., 'Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Framework for Action', *Technical Study,* Social Development Division, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, D.C., 1999.
[73] Similar constraints are faced by the IADB's sister banks: the Asian Development Bank in Manila and the African Development Bank in Côte d'Ivoire.
[74] The shift from project to programme funding by the IFIs – which started in the 1970s – became associated with structural-adjustment programmes. These were intended, through the use of strict conditionalities, to align the economic systems of developing countries with the neo-liberal model that gained ascendancy in many industrialised states, particularly in the US and in the UK.
[75] Stevens, M. and Gnanaselvam, G., 'The World Bank and Governance', *Institute for Development Studies Bulletin,* Vol. 26(2), (Brighton: University of Sussex, Institute for Development Studies, April 1995).
[76] Smith, C., op. cit.
[77] International Monetary Fund, *Good governance: the IMF's role*, Washington, D.C., 1997. In practice, the IMF requests information on military expenditure from governments in order to evaluate fiscal performance, although it cannot make lending conditional on changes in spending levels.
[78] See, for instance, a study by Joseph Hanlon on the IMF's involvement in Mozambique. Hanlon, J., *Peace Without Profit: How the IMF Blocks Rebuilding in Mozambique,* (Oxford: James Currey, 1996).
[79] These programmes fall under the Extended International Military Education and Training Program (EIMET), which are well funded compared with USAID efforts.
[80] Another consequence of the dominant role played by the DoD in training civilians in defence policy is that efforts to extend civilian control over the military receive less attention. For an extensive examination of these issues see Welch, C. and Forman, J.C., 'Civil–Military Relations: USAID's Role', *Technical Publication Series,* (Vermont: Associations in Rural Development, Inc., July 1998).
[81] The following observations on police reform were shared by James Lemoyne of the UN Development Programme, New York, and Rachel Neild of the Washington Office on Latin America.
[82] Washington Office on Latin America, *Demilitarizing the Public Order: The International Community, Police Reform and Human Rights in Central America and Haiti*, (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Office on Latin America, 1995).
[83] Welch, C. and Forman, J.M., op. cit.
[84] Poulton, R.E. and Youssouf, I., *A Peace of Timbuktu: Democratic Governance, Development and African Peacemaking*, (Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 1998).

Chapter 5
Conclusions

Development agencies still lack the instruments to support security-sector reforms effectively. But positive changes are underway which will help to increase international coherence. Understanding is growing concerning the rationale for security-sector reform as a development issue and the need for an integrated response. This change is contributing to a gradual redefinition of mandates. More often than not it is a question of interpretation – that is, what feels comfortable to governing boards and senior management. The policies of the IMF and the World Bank, for instance, are largely determined by the priorities of their governing boards, which are heavily weighted in favour of the industrialised countries.

This suggests that the IFIs will become more closely involved in security-sector reform as the issue moves up the development agenda, although politics will continue to influence how they approach the task. Nonetheless, it seems clear that the reticence of many development agencies to adopt the security-sector-reform initiative stems, to a large extent, from an absence of compelling arguments. Clearer information of both a conceptual and empirical nature is the first step to achieving changes in 'mindsets'. The key challenge is to demonstrate the 'value-added' to regular development activities of integrating a security-sector-reform perspective.

Advocating the notion of a division of labour in the area of security-sector reform may also pay huge dividends. There is a need to define an international approach to security-sector issues that will allow agencies to maximise their comparative advantage and to pursue their institutional agendas. Bilateral assistance programmes, for instance, have much more latitude to deal with sensitive issues surrounding military reform. As a result, there is more scope for DFID to do the initial diagnostic work on various aspects of security-sector reform, such as defence resource management, as a prelude to greater involvement by the World Bank, for example, in financing a reform programme.

Any such attempt at co-ordination, though, must recognise up front that donors have very different reasons for becoming involved in security-sector reform. Despite the progress that has been achieved in many areas it would be wrong to suggest that security-sector reform is firmly on the development agenda. Even among the 'like-minded' agencies there are few commonly held views regarding the objectives of security-sector reform. Even more remote is consensus on the direction in which policy needs to move and how resources can be used most effectively to address the problems posed by security sectors.

The greatest challenge will be for development agencies to come to terms with the fact that achieving and sustaining increased social spending – the magic 'peace

dividend' – requires a broad-based and long-term approach. They will need to lay aside their institutional priorities at times and to think more strategically about how long-term goals can best be accomplished. At the same time, it will be important for development agencies to assess realistically whether they are taking on more than they can deliver in the area of security-sector reform. There is currently a huge gap between the stated aims of many donors and the kinds of resources, analysis and political will on offer to address this problem.