

A Global Survey of Security System Reform: Key Findings and the Implications for Donors

Dylan Hendrickson



About this survey

In 2002 the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) commissioned a broad survey of thinking, policies and activities that come under the heading of security system reform (SSR) or similar terms. The survey consisted of a *regional* component, which covered 1) Africa; 2) Asia-Pacific; 3) Latin America and the Caribbean; and 4) the Baltic states, the Commonwealth of Independent States and southeast Europe; and a *donor* component. The objective was to assess the status of the SSR agenda from the contrasting perspectives of the aid community, which is seeking to promote and support SSR, and the countries being encouraged to reform their security systems. While there is significant activity underway in these countries which has relevance for SSR, very few of them have comprehensive SSR programmes that conform with the OECD-DAC definition. This paper sums up the key findings of the global survey and examines three broad challenges donors face in translating the SSR concept into more effective assistance programmes.

Dylan Hendrickson is a Senior Research Fellow in the Conflict, Security and Development Group. He was the coordinator of the global survey of security system reform.

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

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

CSDG Papers

Number 2 ■ May 2005

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Summary

The regional SSR surveys covered 110 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Baltics, Southeast Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent states. The main objective of these surveys was to assess the status of the SSR policy agenda from the contrasting perspectives of these countries, which are being encouraged to reform their security systems, and the international aid community.

While there is a tremendous amount of activity under way in these countries which has relevance for SSR, very few of them have comprehensive SSR programmes that conform with the OECD-DAC definition. The survey findings suggest that the SSR concept and terminology is, for the most part, still not familiar to government officials and members of security forces, and that the primary impetus for SSR tends to be external in nature.

Nevertheless, while the SSR concept and policy agenda have thus far had limited 'buy-in' by developing and transition countries, the principles which underpin SSR are not alien to them. The individual reform activities currently being undertaken in many countries form essential entry points and building blocks for more ambitious SSR programmes. Whether or not these reforms develop over time will depend to a large degree on how the SSR concept and policy agenda is adapted to meet their needs.

There are three broad policy challenges for OECD countries:

- First, to widen 'buy-in' to the SSR policy agenda by relevant actors across the OECD foreign assistance community and partner countries.
- Second, to develop SSR policies that are well-grounded in an empirical understanding of the political and institutional context in which reforms are being promoted.
- Third, to develop more integrated development and security assistance programmes that are also consistent with the comprehensive principles that underpin the SSR concept.

Chapter 1

Introduction¹²

In 2002 the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) commissioned the Conflict, Security and Development Group at King's College London to lead a broad survey of thinking, policies and activities that come under the heading of security system reform (SSR) or similar terms.³ The survey consisted of two parts: a *regional* component, which covered 1) Africa; 2) Asia-Pacific; 3) Latin America and the Caribbean; and 4) the Baltics, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and Southeast Europe; and a *donor* component.⁴ The main objective was to assess the status of the SSR agenda from the contrasting perspectives of the aid community, which is seeking to promote and support SSR, and the countries being encouraged to reform their security systems.⁵

This report presents the findings of the regional surveys⁶. While the evolution of the SSR concept owes much to a process of rethinking security concepts underway in developing and transition countries, there is a common perception of SSR as a foreign-driven, often political process, informed primarily by Western experiences of how security institutions should be governed. Understanding the diversity of security reform challenges non-OECD countries face, as well as how they view the SSR policy agenda, is essential from the standpoint of donor efforts to strengthen the impact and relevance of their assistance programmes in the security domain.

This chapter first examines the origins of the SSR agenda and the OECD-DAC's role in supporting donor policy development efforts in this field. Drawing on the regional survey findings, the chapter then examines three broad challenges donors face in translating the SSR concept into more effective programmes of assistance. The concluding section identifies a number of factors that might lead to wider 'buy-in' to the SSR policy agenda by developing and transition countries, as well as several priorities for future research that would build upon the regional surveys.

¹ The author is indebted to Nicole Ball for comments on an early draft of this chapter.

² This paper was first published by the OECD-DAC as part of a report entitled *Security System Reform and Governance*, DAC Guidelines and Reference Series, Paris 2005.

³ The term security system reform, which has been adopted by the DAC, has the same meaning as the terms security sector reform (transformation) used by other organisations working in the field.

⁴ In this chapter, 'donors' refers specifically to development ministries and the multi-lateral development agencies (i.e. IMF, WB, UNDP). 'Donor countries' refers to DAC Member countries and includes all government ministries that play a role in the provision of security-related assistance.

⁵ Annex A explains in more detail *how* the global survey was carried out.

⁶ The findings of the four regional surveys are published in CSDG Papers Nos. 3-6.

Chapter 2

Background to the global survey

Emergence of SSR

In the past decade, security has emerged as a vital concern for national and international policy in conflict-affected societies. The challenge of ensuring the security of states and their populations is both most urgent and most difficult in the context of societies seeking to 'rebuild' following war where there is a risk of recreating the conditions that gave rise to violence in the first place. As the limitations of military-based security arrangements become more evident, this underscores the need for new approaches to security that avoid the conflicts of the past between the security interests of states and the security interests of populations.⁷

The process of reconceptualising security has in turn led to a fundamental re-evaluation of international assistance strategies. On the security side, the narrow focus on training and equipping security forces which characterised many past (and some current) assistance programmes is now seen to reinforce militarist, state-centric security paradigms that are not consistent with protecting populations. It is also increasingly recognised that, on the development side, aid strategies which rely on 'one-size fits all' approaches and push too rapidly for liberalising economic and political reforms can fuel conflict and undermine security.⁸

These developments have resulted in growing recognition of the need for the international community to address the twin imperatives of security and development through more integrated policies and programmes. This has given rise to a range of new normative developments, policy initiatives, and operational programmes which aim to prevent and resolve violent conflicts,

⁷ For an analysis of the practical considerations which the development of new security approaches entails for societies emerging from war, see Arevalo de Leon, B., 'Democratic security in Guatemala: Reflections on building a concept of security in and for democracy', in Goucha, M. and Aravena, F. R. (eds), *Human Security, Conflict Prevention and Peace in Latin America and the Caribbean*, Santiago; UNESCO, 2003.

⁸ Lund, M., 'What kind of peace is being built? Taking stock of peacebuilding and charting next steps', IDRC Discussion Paper, Ottawa, Canada, 2002.

consolidate peace following war, and facilitate reconstruction with a view to avoiding renewed violence.⁹ SSR has its origins within these 'peace building' activities and is designed to link the development and security agendas at the policy and programming levels.

The concept of SSR was influenced by the broader 'human security' agenda which is based on two key ideas: first, that the protection of individuals is critical to both national and international security; and second, that the security conditions required by people for their development are not limited to traditional matters like national defence and law and order, but rather incorporate broader political, economic and social issues that ensure a life free from risk and concern. Within this wider agenda, SSR focuses on the challenges states face in using the instruments of force in a manner that is consistent with democratic norms and supportive of human development goals.

Adoption of a holistic, people-centred approach to security has a number of important implications for how states go about the task of providing security for their populations. First, the concepts and institutional structures that guide security provision need to be 'home-grown', and reflect local needs, priorities and circumstances. Second, security should be seen as a public policy issue, inviting greater input by both the civilian policy sectors and civil society into policy formulation processes. Third, states should move beyond a reliance on the use of force and develop more integrated policy responses to security problems that cut across all sectors of public action. Fourth, reforms should seek to address issues relating both to the operational capacity of security bodies (effectiveness) and how they are governed (accountability).

External actors seeking to encourage or support a holistic, people-centred approach to security can maximise the impact of their assistance in various ways. First, there must be a willingness to countenance a significant degree of local control in determining how security is provided, and the priorities for reform. Second, aid strategies should be based on a comprehensive assessment of the political, institutional and economic factors that influence the security environment and the functioning of the security system. Third, development and security assistance should be provided in an integrated manner that facilitates national strategic reform efforts. Fourth, sound developmental principles and governance expertise should underpin the design and execution of all aspects of SSR programming, including reform of the military.

While the term SSR is being used more frequently within both the development and security policy communities today, definitions still vary. In part this is because the thinking which underpins the DAC policy statement, *Security System Reform and Governance: Policy and Good Practice*, is relatively new and has not yet been fully integrated into donor country policy and programming. Usage of the term tends to be dictated by the concerns of particular policy communities, and policy and practice often diverge from the

⁹ Tschirgi, N., 'Peacebuilding as the link between security and development: Is the window of opportunity closing?', New York: International Peace Academy Studies in Security and Development, 2003.

concept. At present, OECD assistance strategies remain overwhelmingly focused on the reform (often operational) of traditional security agencies (i.e. the military, police, intelligence services). Efforts to broaden these strategies in line with SSR thinking, by placing greater emphasis on measures that strengthen civil oversight and governance of the overall security system, are still ‘work-in-progress’.

The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) approach

Since the late 1990s, the OECD-DAC has worked to promote greater rigour and uniformity in relation to how the SSR concept is used within aid circles by supporting efforts to develop a common definition and a common approach to donor activities in this domain.¹⁰ In 1999, the DAC commissioned work to develop a conceptual framework¹¹ on SSR to guide Members' policy development efforts. The objectives of this work were to assess the case for development actors to become more engaged in SSR, to propose practical ways in which they could begin to do this, and to enhance the coherence of their policies and those of their counterparts in OECD Governments, including defence establishments.

The DAC approach to SSR was first laid out in the 2001 DAC Guidelines on *Helping Prevent Violent Conflict* and subsequently developed in the DAC policy statement and paper on *Security System Reform and Governance*.¹² This approach embraces the comprehensive principles outlined above. In the policy paper, SSR is defined as ‘the transformation of the ‘security system’—which includes all the actors, their roles, responsibilities and actions—working together to manage and operate the system in a manner that is more consistent with democratic norms and sound principles of good governance’.¹³ The OECD-DAC thus approaches SSR squarely within a development cooperation lens, reflecting the view that it should be supportive of wider efforts to strengthen state capacity, to prevent violent conflict, and to promote human development.

The emphasis placed on SSR as a development cooperation issue in the 2001 Guidelines on *Helping Prevent Violent Conflict* was endorsed by OECD development ministers who further acknowledged that achieving ‘desired policy outcomes’ will require OECD countries to develop ‘more coherent government-wide responses to security problems’. To this end, the global SSR survey findings highlight three broad challenges facing donors:

¹⁰ To date, the focus of SSR policy development efforts has been primarily within development ministries and multi-lateral development agencies, though defence and other security establishments in some OECD countries are now taking on board this policy agenda.

¹¹ ‘Security issues and development cooperation: A conceptual framework for enhancing policy coherence’, *The DAC Journal*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2001, and its off-print, 2002.

¹² This policy statement and report were adopted by development ministers in Paris in April 2004. As noted in the foreword, the supporting paper, entitled ‘Security system reform and governance: Policy and good practice’, draws upon a synthesis of the SSR survey findings prepared by Dylan Hendrickson and Nicole Ball and is available on the DAC website, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/26/44/31870339.pdf>.

¹³ *Security System Reform and Governance: Policy and Good Practice*, Chapter 2, p. 16.

- First, to build greater consensus on the rationale for and objectives of SSR as a basis for widening 'buy-in' to this policy agenda by relevant actors across the OECD foreign assistance community and partner countries.
- Second, to facilitate the development of donor SSR policies and assistance programmes that are well-grounded in an empirical understanding of the political and institutional context in which reforms are being promoted.
- Third, to ensure that OECD development and security assistance programmes are designed and implemented in a coherent manner that is also consistent with the comprehensive principles that underpin the SSR concept.

The dramatic changes in the international environment which followed the events of September 11, 2001 have added a particular sense of urgency to advancing these objectives. There is a real risk that the thinking and policy pronouncements which have accompanied the new 'war on terror' may have a negative impact on the way in which the SSR policy agenda is conceived, by down-playing its governance-promotion dimension. Each of the regional studies in this report underscore that there are already grounds for concern that this is happening. Recent developments in Afghanistan and Iraq, in particular, underscore the need for careful analysis of the way in which the 'war on terror' is affecting international efforts to respond in a more integrated manner to security and development problems.

Chapter 3

Translating the SSR concept into policy and practice

Widening international 'buy-in' to the SSR policy agenda

The regional surveys indicate that a tremendous amount of activity is under way in the 110 countries examined which has relevance for SSR. These activities cut across the nine categories examined by the surveys, including wider political, policy, non-governmental and regional initiatives, as well as traditional security agencies such as the military, intelligence and police, the justice sector, civil oversight and management bodies. There is immense variation—both within and across regions—in the factors driving change in these areas, the objectives being pursued, and the approaches. This varied landscape makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions about the degree of 'buy-in' to the SSR policy agenda, though a number of key points can be made.

First, very few countries have comprehensive SSR programmes that conform with the definition in the OECD-DAC policy statement and paper on security system reform. More often than not, security reform activities remain narrowly focused on traditional security agencies, such as the military and police, and are carried out in an ad hoc and piecemeal manner. Reforms are rarely governed by an overarching strategic framework, informed by a wide-ranging and integrating public security concept, or effectively linked to wider government planning and budgeting processes in ways that help to strengthen governance or ensure state security action is supportive of wider development objectives. While the stated objectives are in some cases to improve governance of the security system, the focus tends to be on strengthening the operational capabilities of security agencies. Indeed, sometimes reform objectives run directly counter to the objective of improving accountability within in the security system.

There are nonetheless a range of exceptions: in Africa, for instance, South Africa's post-1994 security reform programme stands out because of the comprehensiveness of reforms undertaken, the highly participatory nature of the

process, and the low level of external involvement. There are other instances which could be considered SSR, though these have been limited to countries emerging from conflict where donors have been actively involved such as Sierra Leone and East Timor. In quite a few other countries including Uganda, Mozambique, Serbia, and El Salvador, there have been discrete initiatives focused on one element or another of the security system which have been influenced by SSR principles, but fall short of a fully-fledged SSR programme. In the case of Afghanistan, despite recognition early on in the reconstruction process that a comprehensive SSR programme would be required, the international vision, resources and coordination required have not materialised.¹⁴

The case of the former-Eastern bloc countries deserves special attention. While there has been an extensive range of activity in the security domain, often referred to as SSR, much of this does not conform with the OECD-DAC definition. Because the primary impetus for reforms has been the desire for integration into the European Union and NATO, reform activities have tended to be shaped by narrower objectives relating to strengthening border security, regional stability and civil-military relations. Furthermore, the primary emphasis often has been on the transfer of Western norms and values about how the security system should be governed, resulting in 'cosmetic' reforms, rather than on concrete initiatives to strengthen governance, particularly through the creation of a public and political environment conducive to meaningful SSR.

A second key finding is that the SSR concept and terminology is still not familiar to government officials and members of security forces, or is used differently than by donors. As to be expected, those cases where the term and concept are most used tend to be those countries where donors are heavily engaged. However, the survey of the former Eastern bloc countries cautions that while political jargon is rich with imported donor phrases such as SSR, it 'does not signify genuine local ownership of declared reform programmes'. Moreover, there are many cases where 'security sector' is part of the vocabulary but has a different meaning. In Uganda, for instance, it is understood to refer to the intelligence and defence bodies.

Third, the surveys indicate that the impetus for SSR programmes tends to be external in nature. This is not to say that there are not internal constituencies or pressures for change, for this is increasingly the case today in many countries. Reform is occurring in response to growing pressures for democratisation and a desire to enhance human rights; the need to develop more effective responses to security problems, including crime; fiscal reforms, intended to either reduce budget deficits or to channel more public resources for development; or as part of power-sharing agreements following the conclusions of war. The key issue, however, is that indigenous responses to security challenges have tended to be formulated in quite different ways than the donor SSR policy agenda.

¹⁴ Bhatia, M., Lanigan, K. and Wilkinson, P., 'Minimal investments, minimal results: The failure of security policy in Afghanistan', report prepared for the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, Kabul, June 2004.

From the perspective of many aid recipients, SSR has become associated with cuts in security expenditures, efforts to emasculate the security forces, and external meddling in political matters—all of which can create resistance to donor approaches. Furthermore, in some cases, such as South Africa, indigenous concepts and approaches have been devised which, as the Africa survey suggests, may even be more far-reaching than the DAC SSR concept. In most other cases where SSR could be said to be taking place, reforms tend to be much less ambitious than what donors would like to see taking place. This may be due as much to a lack of resources and a weak national vision for reform as it is to the fact that national needs and priorities differ from those of donors.

The more general lesson from the survey, however, is that the way in which countries define and approach security reforms is usually shaped and conditioned by historical experience and national circumstances which determine what is possible at any given time. This underscores that, even though the SSR concept and policy agenda—as defined by donors—has had limited ‘buy-in’ in developing and transition states, the principles which underpin SSR are not alien to these countries. As the Africa survey notes, the individual activities that are currently being undertaken in many countries ‘form essential entry-points and building blocks for more ambitious SSR programmes’. Whether or not these reforms develop over time will require an enabling *internal* as well as *external* environment.

SSR implies a profound paradigmatic shift in the way in which not only developing and transition states conceptualise security, but the aid community as well. Despite growing usage of the term, many actors within both the development and security assistance communities have simply re-named existing security-related work as SSR without adequate consideration of what is distinctive and new about this agenda from a conceptual and policy perspective. A determining factor in whether non-OECD countries embrace SSR will be the extent to which donor countries and organisations themselves embrace the new security thinking and adopt a more integrated, holistic and principle-based approach to the provision of development and security assistance.

Strengthening the empirical base of SSR policies

The global survey suggests that SSR policies are, in many cases, being formulated by donors without reference to a strong empirical base. Donors often lack adequate understanding of the context in which they are engaging, in particular relating to how countries perceive and define security threats, how security institutions function, and the concerns of reforming governments. The programming rhetoric which permeates many policy documents is often very prescriptive in nature and there should be concern that this may substitute for sound analysis of what is actually happening on the ground. This makes it more difficult for donors to assess what is feasible in a given context or to tailor support appropriately to the needs of developing and transition countries.

There are three key reasons for this gap between research-based evidence and policymaking. The first reason has to do with the relatively rapid pace with which the SSR policy agenda has emerged within the aid community over the past five years. Because SSR is a key transition issue in war-affected societies, there has been immense pressure on donors to develop concepts and policy frameworks enabling them to engage in a domain which was extremely sensitive and theretofore unknown to them. Combined with this urgency to act was the fact that there were very few experiences of integrated international assistance programmes, bringing together development and security actors, that could be used to inform policy or programming.

A second reason stems from the lack of access by donor policymakers to information on SSR issues. Part of the problem stems from a simple dearth of data. The regional surveys show a highly variable picture on information availability: information on security reform matters is most readily available in the former Eastern bloc countries, least available in the case of Africa, with Asia and Latin America falling somewhere in between. This corresponds roughly with the general ranking of these regions in developmental terms, though perhaps a more telling indicator is the level of strategic engagement by OECD countries in the security domain of countries in these regions. This is naturally higher in the former-Eastern bloc countries for reasons which have to do with concerns about regional political stability and integration into NATO and the European Union. And accordingly, the information available on SSR issues tends to refer to externally-driven reform initiatives.

But another part of the answer lies in the lag between evidence-based research and policy processes, a problem exacerbated by the predominantly academic nature of research generated to date on security issues which has traditionally been of little interest to policymakers. This problem has been recognised by some donors, particularly by the UK which has developed partnerships with researchers in various regions around the world in view of harnessing their expertise for policy development initiatives (this OECD-DAC survey marks another positive step in this direction).¹⁵ Nevertheless, the primary focus of donor policy efforts to date has been on defining the broad goals of SSR and a set of policy prescriptions. Less emphasis has been placed on understanding the political and economic conditions that facilitate efforts to provide security, or how the interests of national and external actors in security reform programmes may differ.

Third, the SSR policy agenda has been based on a normative Western template of how security systems should operate which has been heavily influenced by theories of democratisation, 'human security' thinking, and more technocratic approaches to public sector reform. Strong emphasis is often placed on the desirability of civil control of the armed forces, a clear division between

¹⁵ *Security System Reform and Governance: Policy and Good Practice*, see Chapter 3, Box 3.5: 'Good practice: supporting and linking regional networks' that describes the Global Facilitation Network for Security Sector Reform (GFN-SSR).

internal and external security functions, and a strong civil society role in the formulation and monitoring of security policy.¹⁶ Accompanying this is a strong preference, particularly within the development community, that resources should be redirected away from the institutions that give rise to militarism, towards the social and economic sectors and other areas of human development.¹⁷

Yet these are 'ideal-type' situations that no country, including OECD countries, has fully succeeded in implementing. While the desirability of these institutional arrangements from the point of view of enhancing security sector governance is generally accepted, even in many cases by government officials and members of the security forces in reforming countries, there is legitimate scope for different views on how these objectives can be achieved, and the pace at which change should occur. An over-reliance by donors on a normative framework to design policy may reduce incentives to invest in more basic research along the lines identified above and could result in the application of 'one-size-fits-all' approaches to countries facing very dissimilar circumstances.

Outsiders frequently underestimate the complexity and long-term nature of SSR in developing and transition states, in the process attributing the lack of reform to a failure of political will when other considerations may equally be at play¹⁸. The obstacles are often structural in nature, and may include: the persistence of authoritarian, militarist approaches to security; the weakness of national vision and capacity to formulate reform programmes; resource constraints; conflicting donor policies in the security domain; and political instability and tensions with neighbouring states. All of these factors serve to reinforce existing military-based security arrangements, particularly in post-conflict societies where SSR is both most needed and most difficult to carry out.

A better understanding of the context in which SSR is being promoted would provide a stronger empirical basis for donor policy development efforts and, crucially, would make the policy agenda more inviting to developing and transition societies.¹⁹ The issue, though, is not simply about the need for more information, but also about who produces it. The surveys suggest that the advent of the internet as well as deepening processes of political liberalisation have dramatically increased the availability and transparency of security-related information in recent years. As to be expected, however, much of this information comes from international sources, including international

¹⁶ Chalmers, M., 'Structural impediments to security-sector reform,' Paper presented at the International Institute for Strategic Studies-Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (IISS-DCAF) Conference on Security Sector Reform, Geneva, 23 April 2001.

¹⁷ See for instance, Jolly, Richard, 'Military spending and development', *Insights Development Research*, June 2004, <http://www.id21.org/insights/insights50/insights-iss50-art00.html>.

¹⁸ Nathan, Laurie, 'Obstacles to security sector reform in new democracies', prepared for the *Berghof Handbook on Security Sector Reform*, 2004.

¹⁹ This collection of case studies on security sector transformation in transitional democracies and countries emerging from war conveys the complexity of these processes and the need for area expertise to deal with them: Cawthra, G. and Luckham, R. (eds), *Governing Insecurity: Democratic Control of Military and Security Establishments in Transitional Societies*, London and New York: Zed Books, 2003.

publications and websites hosted by organisations external to the region in question, and is produced by international consultants.

The issue then is not simply that outsiders may not have the full picture about how things actually work in the security domain, but that national ownership of the very reform processes that donors are trying to support can be undermined because of weak linkages between research and policymaking processes. The generation and exchange of information on security matters by 'reformers' themselves is the strongest basis for forging a national vision for reform and creating pro-reform constituencies. Yet many donor assistance programmes fail to explicitly address the fact that the capacity for knowledge generation and assimilation among policymakers and security personnel is often very weak.²⁰

Developing more integrated international approaches to SSR

From the perspective of developing and transition states, 'buy-in' to the SSR agenda by the OECD aid community is itself still weak and has been primarily limited thus far to the development community where this agenda has received most attention. As has been noted, since September 11 prospects for an integrated security and development agenda have been undermined, resulting in a rapid return by numerous OECD countries 'to state-centric conceptions of security with human security, conflict prevention and peacebuilding moving to the back of the international agenda'.²¹ From the standpoint of donor efforts to develop more coherent, 'whole-of-government' approaches to SSR, the regional surveys suggest that there are a range of closely inter-linked political, policy and programming challenges.

Challenges

Political challenges

Each of the regional surveys draws attention to the potentially negative impact of the new 'war on terror' on the way that 'security' is being conceptualized and understood both among donor countries and their partner states. The Africa survey notes, for instance, the risks of 'down-playing issues of governance, shifting the emphasis back from 'soft' (or 'human') security to traditional (or 'hard') security; reviving cold-war partnerships with dictatorial regimes; suppressing local opposition and undermining legitimate local struggles for group rights by dubbing them as 'terrorist.' The growing trend to include a new

²⁰ The Clingendael Institute has developed an institutional assessment framework which provides a framework for dialogue between donors and reforming governments about priorities and requirements for assistance. The document, entitled 'Enhancing democratic governance of the security sector: An institutional assessment framework' (2003) is available from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

²¹ Tschirgi, N., 'Peacebuilding as the link between security and development: Is the window of opportunity closing?', New York: International Peace Academy Studies in Security and Development, 2003.

anti-terror dimension in more traditional development and security assistance programmes appears to be changing the way in which SSR is approached to some extent.

Reform efforts being promoted by some OECD countries in developing and transition states under the heading of the 'war on terrorism' have led to the bolstering of intelligence and internal security capacity of partner states. The short-term emphasis on strengthening operational effectiveness may compromise longer-term goals of improving transparency and accountability in the security system, and has also had some immediate consequences. As has been noted, during 2003 'international human rights standards continued to be flouted in the name of the 'war on terror', by both OECD and non-OECD countries'.²² This underscores the risks of approaching security reforms as a separate activity somehow removed from development of the wider governance environment in a country.²³

The renewed emphasis on traditional approaches to security is also resulting in changes in the way in which OECD countries prioritise the countries which receive assistance, and the way in which this assistance is provided. This is of concern because, despite the growing internal impetus for SSR in most countries around the world, it is apparent that the receptivity of different societies to the SSR policy agenda is heavily influenced by the external environment and the incentives on offer to facilitate and support reform. In cases where domestic constituencies are weak, and institutional capacity and resources are lacking, the nature of external engagement and the incentives on offer for reform are particularly determining in terms of the nature of progress that can be expected.

The surveys suggest, for instance, that international strategies to promote SSR vary considerably between the four regions examined. In Central-Eastern Europe, for instance, there have been significant Western attempts to promote SSR over the past decade driven by concerns about regional political stability. The prospect of integration into both NATO and the European Union have provided powerful *positive* inducements for these countries to reform their security system. The provision of significant levels of financial and technical assistance to fulfil the conditions to do so, as well as the narrower cultural gap between this region and the West, may also explain the more rapid progress in terms of building political support for SSR.

The situation of African, Asia and Latin American countries is much less clear-cut. Their lack of strategic significance to the Western countries may explain the relatively limited positive incentives on offer for SSR, and the reliance in many cases by donors on *negative* inducements—or conditionalities—to promote reform. These approaches have not tended to show lasting results. There is also a significant conflict between fiscal and security objectives in many

²² Amnesty International report, 2004, London.

²³ 'Kayode Fayemi, J., 'Governing insecurity in post-conflict states: The case of Sierra Leone and Liberia', in Bryden, A. and Hanggi, H. *Reform and Reconstruction of the Security Sector*, Lit Verlag (forthcoming).

donor-supported SSR programmes, highlighted in particular by the Africa and Latin America surveys. This is the case despite growing recognition within the aid community that a narrow focus on reducing security expenditure can be counter-productive in terms of improving governance in the security system.²⁴

Furthermore, the focus on spreading Western norms and practices to inform how security institutions should be governed often comes at the expense of a sustained injection of technical and financial support to help these countries address the many barriers to change. Following 9/11, there is a concern that international security assistance programmes may become overly terrorism-driven and result in militaries being encouraged to assume old patterns of behaviour that have been increasingly discredited in recent years.²⁵ The reliance on military means to tackle the symptoms of terrorism has in turn reduced the resources available to tackle root causes of the problem, including assistance for education, economic development and governance reforms.

Policy challenges

While political backing for SSR by OECD governments is crucial, aid actors face other challenges in making SSR a policy priority. These stem from weaknesses of institutional capacity, the political sensitivities (for development actors) of working on security issues, and a lack of conviction among many quarters within both the development and security policy communities that the issues encompassed by SSR fall within the agenda which concerns them. Underlying this problem is the fact that the concept of SSR is still used in a loose way within the aid community which reflects a tendency by actors to approach SSR in line with differing institutional mandates, organisational priorities and administrative or political constraints. Differences in approach are as apparent between government departments in the same country, as between countries.

The donor survey²⁶ indicates that few donor countries have formal coordination mechanisms aimed at developing government-wide responses to security-related issues in developing and transition states. Most inter-departmental collaboration is of an ad hoc nature and is not grounded in policy frameworks, either explicitly for SSR or integrated into policies for related issues such as conflict prevention. In consequence, opportunities for being strategic about the work OECD countries engage in are missed and there are significant risks that donor government departments will work at cross-purposes.

These factors highlight the need for more thought on how to achieve a synergy both between developmental and security inputs, and between short-term and longer-term assistance, in view of achieving a secure environment for states and their populations.

²⁴ See, for instance, the proceedings from an international symposium sponsored by the UK Department for International Development in June 2000: Security Sector Reform and the Management of Military Expenditure: High Risks for Donors, High Returns for Development.

²⁵ See, for instance articles in the following papers: *The Guardian* (<http://www.nrguardiannews.com>) and *This Day* (<http://www.thisdayonline.com>) on 27 May 2004 with the same title.

²⁶ See the Annex (p. 49) in the 'DAC policy paper on security system reform'.

The surveys suggest, for instance, that there is a need for donor SSR programmes to more effectively accommodate both governance and operational perspectives. This message has come out most clearly in the African context where the authors of the survey report note that a desire for security in its 'physical' sense is often more of a priority for local populations than other aspects of the 'human security' agenda which is being actively promoted by development actors. This highlights a potential tension, which is particularly difficult to resolve in conflict-affected societies, between the longer-term (structural) objective of building more accountable security institutions and shorter-term measures designed to improve security by strengthening the operational capability of security forces.

In the case of Uganda, for instance, the Government has sought for a number of years to significantly increase defence spending in order to more effectively address the threat posed by insurgents of the Lord's Resistance Army. Donors have generally resisted this increase in defence spending, citing doubts about whether it can be justified in light of the huge needs in the social sectors. There have also been real concerns that additional spending on defence would not achieve the desired objectives given the army's past record of financial mismanagement.²⁷ The Government, for its part, has argued consistently that it cannot afford to invest more resources or attention in carrying out institutional reforms that would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the army until the war in the North has been won.²⁸

Programming challenges

The OECD-DAC approach to SSR emphasises the long-term structural changes required to achieve more efficient and effective security institutions. In practice, however, as the surveys demonstrate, donor assistance programmes tend to place greatest emphasis on the short-term measures needed to stabilise the security environment. In the post-war context, for instance, this often includes support for the demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants, measures to deal with the proliferation of small arms, and training to enhance the operational capacity of police services, which tend to be marginalised in times of conflict. While all of these measures can lead to vital improvements in public security which benefit the general population, they do not necessarily help to 'reform' security institutions or to create a political and institutional environment that is more conducive to the effective management of security policy.

Unless SSR programmes take into account structural issues (such as power relations) that undermine security-system governance, there is a risk that external assistance may inadvertently help to recreate the conditions that gave rise to violence and insecurity in the first place. In the post-war context, consideration of the need for new frameworks for state security action that avoid

²⁷ 'Donors reject Uganda's budget', *Monitor*, 14 May 2004.

²⁸ In 2002-03 the Government of Uganda carried out a comprehensive Defence Review which was intended to provide a framework for a more rational debate on the country's defence spending requirements.

the conflicts of the past between the security interests of political regimes and the security interests of populations is a matter of particular importance. Resolving such conflicts will involve transforming the military-based security arrangements that predominate when wars come to an end into a broader set of institutional arrangements for managing security that functions according to democratic norms and principles.

The challenge facing conflict-affected states is not simply to demilitarise, but to develop more holistic security concepts, policies and practices that are better suited to the post-war security environment. Turning these new security concepts into clear policies endowed with the necessary instruments for policy to operate effectively will in turn require a broader approach than the current focus of many SSR programmes on security agencies devoted to traditional matters such as defence and police. Translating 'hard' security capabilities into adequate security for both states and their populations in effect requires a complementary set of 'soft' institutional capabilities that enable states to handle security and development policies as integrated areas of public action.

Helping weak states to develop such capabilities requires a nuanced understanding of how security policymaking actually works. Donor SSR programmes, which include the use of conditionalities, capacity-building initiatives, and financial assistance tend to target, and may strengthen, formal institutional processes. Yet security policymaking is also influenced by a range of informal factors which include political bargaining, perceptions of security held by actors, and a myriad of both personal and political practices that shape the degree of transparency and dialogue on security matters, and where decision-making power is concentrated. These factors can help to explain why Governments often seem to lack the 'political will' to implement policies in accordance with the stated objectives of an SSR programmes, and why the outcome may not ultimately secure the interests of a country's population.

Chapter 4

Conclusions

The SSR concept has thus far had limited 'buy-in' in developing countries, though the principles which underpin this policy agenda are not alien to them. The regional survey findings suggest they will be most receptive to SSR where it is presented as a framework to structure thinking about how to address their security problems, rather than as a template for donor assistance. In this regard, donors face a number of key challenges in translating the SSR policy concept coherently into operational approaches to security assistance that are responsive to partner countries' diverse needs, priorities and concerns:

- First, the debate on how donors can support SSR should more actively involve their defence and security counterparts if OECD countries are to develop credible and systematic 'whole-of-government' approaches to this policy issue;
- Second, donor SSR policies need to be grounded in a much stronger empirical understanding of the political and institutional factors that shape and constrain security reform processes in developing and transition states;
- Third, donors should seek to develop a principle-based approach to security-related assistance that is consistent with the same principles of transparency and accountability they are encouraging their partner countries to apply in their own security systems.

The global SSR survey provided a broad 'baseline' understanding of the kinds of security reforms currently being undertaken in developing countries. There are a number of priority areas for additional survey work that would provide a stronger empirical base for donor policy development efforts:

- The first priority is develop a better understanding of how governments in developing and transition societies actually perceive and define their security problems. Assessments of security 'problems' and 'needs' tend to

be highly subjective in nature, and where this is done exclusively through the filter of donor concepts such as 'human security' or 'SSR', there is a risk that the peculiarities of local perceptions of security will be downplayed or ignored.

- A second priority is to enhance understanding of how populations respond to security problems where the reach of the state security system is weak, or states themselves are the cause of insecurity. The SSR policy agenda has to date focused primarily on the challenge of re-centering the state in the security game. More analysis is needed of the incentives which exist for partnerships between state and non-state actors (including the private sector) in the security domain, particularly where state capacity is very weak and seems likely to remain so.
- The third priority, in view of DAC Members recent endorsement of the case for more coherent 'government-wide' responses to security problems, is to broaden any future survey work on donor assistance to include the activities of OECD defence and security establishments. At a minimum, this would help to ensure that policies are not working at cross-purposes and would also help to ensure that synergies are tapped in view of maximising the impact of international assistance in crisis situations.²⁹

Dissemination of these survey findings among both donors and their partner countries will provide a valuable opportunity to test the findings, to build consensus on the priorities for SSR work, and to refine the SSR concept and related practice further.

²⁹ This will be the theme of a Senior Forum on Development Effectiveness in Fragile States, sponsored by the OECD-DAC, the European Union, the UNDP, and the World Bank, in London, in January 2005.

Annex A

Methodology for the regional surveys

The primary objective of the regional surveys was to map out the nature and scope of security-related reforms currently being implemented in developing and transition states, and to compare where possible the approaches being used with the OECD-DAC approach.

The regions surveyed were: 1) Africa; 2) Asia-Pacific; 3) Latin America and the Caribbean; and 4) the Baltics, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Southeast Europe. All together, 110 countries across these regions were examined. The survey did not include countries in these regions which are members of the OECD.

As the regional surveys were desk-based studies, the consultants were primarily reliant on information available over the web or through published reports. Because there are few governments in the countries surveyed which think about or organize their security in terms of a cross-cutting 'system' or 'sector', information on SSR was not always easy to collect. Information was therefore gathered under nine key headings:

1. Political and policy dialogue and initiatives
2. Armed forces and intelligence
3. Justice and internal security apparatus
4. Non-state security forces
5. Civil oversight mechanisms
6. Civil management bodies
7. Civilian capacity building
8. Regional initiatives
9. Initiatives to de-militarise society.

This data was compiled in country tables. The consultants then assessed the extent to which the security reforms were informed by a holistic concept of security, included a governance dimension, and were approached in an integrated manner (i.e. addressing issues relating to both operational capacity and accountability).