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State Responsiveness to Public Security Needs: The Politics of Security Decision-Making

Synthesis of Findings and Implications for UK SSR Policy

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CONFLICT, SECURITY & DEVELOPMENT GROUP

About this study

Security sector reform (SSR) has moved rapidly up the international aid agenda during the past decade. There is growing recognition that SSR is fundamentally a political activity and that this requires a coherent response among UK development, diplomatic and defence actors.

This comparative study of Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda had two aims: firstly, to examine who makes decisions about security, the factors which influence decision-making, and the consequences for the security of people; and secondly, to suggest ways to incorporate such knowledge more effectively into UK SSR programming.

The study was conducted by the Conflict, Security and Development Group at King's College London in partnership with the Centre for Democracy and Development in Nigeria, the Social Scientists' Association in Sri Lanka, and the Centre for Basic Research in Uganda.

Dylan Hendrickson is a Senior Research Fellow in the Conflict, Security and Development Group, King's College London, and managed the Politics of Security Decision-Making research project.

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

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

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ACPP	Africa Conflict Prevention Pool
CPP	Conflict Prevention Pool
CSDG	Conflict, Security and Development Group
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DCAF	Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces
DFID	Department for International Development
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
GCPP	Global Conflict Prevention Pool
GCST	Global Consortium on Security Transformation
GFN-SSR	Global Facilitation Network for Security Sector Reform
HMG	Her Majesty's Government
ISSAT	International Security Sector Advisory Team
JLOS	justice, law and order sector
JVP	Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front)
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MPRI	Military Professional Resources Incorporated
NRM	National Resistance Movement
NRMO	National Resistance Movement Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPR	Output-to-Purpose Review
SSDAT	Security Sector Development Advisory Team
SSR	security sector reform
UK	United Kingdom

Acknowledgements

Key findings and policy messages

Background

Security sector reform (SSR) has moved rapidly up the international aid agenda during the past decade. The UK has played a leading role in developing the SSR concept, policy agenda and modalities for delivering assistance in this area. HMG currently has SSR assistance programmes in a number of countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Eastern Europe.

This comparative study of the politics of security decision-making focused on three countries where the UK currently supports SSR: Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda. The aim of the study was two-fold: firstly, to enhance understanding about who makes decisions about security, how this occurs and the consequences for the security of people; and secondly, to explore ways of incorporating this knowledge more effectively into UK SSR programming.

This was a collaborative study between the Conflict, Security and Development Group at King's College London and research institutions in Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda.[1] The research teams also interacted closely with the HMG conflict advisers in each country as well as DFID's SSR advisor in the implementation of the study.

Key findings

SSR is a politically sensitive undertaking, significantly more so than in more conventional areas of development assistance, such as health and education. This is because control of the security sector underpins political power in most countries. Politics therefore shapes security decision-making processes and needs to be systematically accounted for in UK SSR programming if such programming is to be effective. This requires a coherent response among development, diplomatic and defence actors.

Where possible, SSR programming should be underpinned by a firm evidence base. Political analysis is often inadequate and limited to the planning stage of UK SSR assistance programmes, rather than integrated throughout the programming cycle. As a consequence, UK assistance is often not sufficiently tailored to the needs, priorities and circumstances facing partner countries, or flexible enough to respond to changes in the political environment.

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1   The Centre for Democracy and Development (Nigeria), the Social Scientists' Association (Sri Lanka) and the Centre for Basic Research (Uganda).

A key objective of SSR is to support the development of state security institutions that are responsive to the security needs of people. Responsiveness – understood as *the degree to which decision-makers defer to the demands and preferences of the wider community* – is shaped by a number of factors, including citizens' ability to articulate a demand for security, the inclination of policymakers to defer to this, and the capability of state institutions to translate this intent into public policies that enhance security.

The idea of state responsiveness draws from the experience of mature Western democracies in which power and authority are centralized, there is national consensus around the idea of security and safety as a public good, citizens can assert their 'demand' for security through the political process, there are adequate administrative capacities and resources to deliver public services, and the security apparatus is responsive to – but not dominated by – the prevailing political wind.

However, these conditions rarely hold in many of the contexts where SSR is being promoted, which are often conflict-affected, as our three studies show. There are likely to be different sources of security decision-making authority with varying degrees of autonomy from the central state. The state may not be the sole or even principle provider of security services, and a plurality of legal systems may be in place. This suggests that there are real limitations to state-centric approaches to SSR.

Furthermore, the ability of citizens to articulate and exercise a 'demand' for security is influenced by a range of factors, including levels of socioeconomic development, social cohesion and civil society development, and the maturity of a political system. Where these levels are low, the public articulation of security preferences tends to revolve around narrow, parochial interests, further increasing the autonomy of government security decision-makers.

Donor actors can themselves also have contradictory impacts on responsiveness in the security domain, particularly where their priorities diverge from those of the aid recipient or there is incoherence between economic and security policies. While aid can strengthen government capacity for service delivery, it can also reduce (in cases of 'aid dependency') the need for governments to consult with their citizens about the latter's policy preferences.

The study identifies five key factors that have been important in constraining state responsiveness in Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda: political and historical legacies that have shaped the relationship between the security sector and the population; the relative autonomy of policy elites; the crisis-ridden political environment in which decision-making takes place; the prominence of particularistic agendas in the public sector; and critical shortfalls in institutional capacity.

This has a number of implications for UK SSR programming in all three countries, each of which is now at a critical political juncture: Nigeria, due to recent presidential elections; Sri Lanka, because of the dramatic escalation of its civil conflict earlier this year; and Uganda, where recent prospects of a peace settlement in the north of the country, which would give a boost to rehabilitation efforts, have been dampened due to the stalling of the Juba process. *[See the country policy notes for more detail.]*

Regarding these implications, firstly, there must be recognition that in situations of weak state responsiveness, the answer to security problems will not lie in SSR alone. This may require a broader strategy of engagement than the current focus on providing assistance

primarily through security sector institutions. Such a strategy would seek to incorporate SSR aims and concerns into wider economic and social development programming, where applicable, and address the political causes of armed conflicts.

Secondly, UK support for SSR must not only be politically sensitive, but also politically engaged. External assistance in the security sector can complicate the security situation, or at the very least arouse suspicion of donor motives. UK assistance that is not sensitive to these factors risks undermining the trust between sovereign nations that must be the foundation for SSR programming.

Thirdly, effective political engagement with SSR requires a coherent use of policy instruments available to HMG (financial assistance, technical assistance, political dialogue, conditionalities, etc.), as well as of departmental resources. Out-sourcing of SSR assistance to consultants and the private sector should be seen as an instrument to enhance rather than a substitute for coherent cross-departmental engagement.

Policy recommendations

1. *Situating SSR assistance within a coherent political framework (pp. 40–42)*

Recommendation 1: *UK support for SSR should be provided within a clear strategic policy framework that spells out what the UK hopes to achieve by assistance in this area, the instruments and resources that it will draw upon, and the roles and responsibilities of different departments. The current SSR strategy is not binding upon departments, nor does it offer targets for departments to work towards in developing capacity to support SSR. [This is consistent with a recommendation made in the recently completed GCPP Review[2].]*

Recommendation 2: *DFID, FCO and MOD desk officers in London, as well as members of the SSDAT and the relevant advisory cadre in the UK missions overseas who have a responsibility for SSR programming, need to ensure that assistance is grounded in a solid political analysis that is regularly updated. FCO has a clear role to play in leading political dialogue around SSR with partner countries; this should be reflected in the job objectives for FCO staff.*

Recommendation 3: *Responsibility for delivering a significant portion of UK assistance for SSR is now out-sourced to the private sector. Consultants also need to demonstrate an understanding of how politics will affect their activities, and this should be reflected in the work plans of consultants and consulting firms to which HMG subcontracts the management of SSR assistance. HMG should push for a set of 'industry' standards that apply to private sector actors working on SSR.*

Recommendation 4: *The merger of the Africa and Global Conflict Prevention Pools offers an opportunity for cross-regional analysis and learning, as well as the development of a common departmental voice on SSR. The new Conflict Prevention Pool (CPP) should not simply be seen*

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2   N. Ball and L. van de Goor, 'Promoting Conflict Prevention Through Security Sector Reform: Review of Spending on Security Sector Reform Through the Global Conflict Prevention Pool', April 2008. URL: http://www.ssrnetwork.net/

as a mechanism for co-ordinating SSR spending, but should also be tasked with assessing the coherence of approaches and the impact of broader policies that may not fall under SSR programming, but can impact upon it (defence relations, counter-terrorism activities, arms sales, etc.). A key aim of the CPP Security and Small Arms Control Strategy should be to add value over and above the activities it funds.

2. Integrating political analysis into programming (pp. 42–46)

Recommendation 5: *To be effective, SSR country assistance strategies must be context-driven. There should be involvement by local analysts in the various programming stages, including the preliminary assessment phase of an SSR programme, monitoring and evaluations. Programming should be informed by a thorough assessment of all major factors that will affect its outcome.*

Recommendation 6: *Political analysis should be a central component of SSR programming. The timing of analysis should respond not simply to administrative requirements, but should be carried out at strategic programming points. Programming, in turn, should be flexible enough to respond to emerging research, rather than waiting until the next annual review or phase of the programme to incorporate findings.*

Recommendation 7: *Detailed plans for the monitoring and evaluation of SSR programmes, as well as risk identification and management, should be included in SSR programme documents to ensure that adequate provision is made for financing and managing the process. This may help to safeguard research and evaluation activities, particularly if substantive changes to the programme are made after its inception.*

Recommendation 8: *Criteria and guidelines for incorporating analysis into SSR programming, determining the nature and level of involvement by local analysts in setting research agendas and evaluating SSR programmes, and establishing and maintaining a programme log on SSR issues should be developed by the Security and Small Arms Control Strategy.*

3. Developing common departmental and donor analytical frameworks (pp. 46–47)

Recommendation 9: *Given that SSR plays a key part in HMG's international assistance programmes, there is a strong case for DFID to designate the specific skill sets and experience required for SSR advisory posts. This would be the best way of ensuring that the right people are selected for the right postings in countries where SSR is being supported. [See the GCPP Review.]*

Recommendation 10: *Joint donor programmes of support for SSR are in most contexts desirable in order to maximize the impact of donor assistance and avoid duplication. The development of common analytical frameworks offers a basis for harmonizing donor views and policy, and should be encouraged by HMG.*

4. Fostering national, research-led debates on SSR (pp. 49–50)

Recommendation 11: *Genuine national ownership of SSR programmes cannot be achieved unless there is meaningful capacity among national stakeholders to analyse and lead the debate*

on SSR issues.[3] The UK should make it a priority to foster the development of an SSR research community in the countries where it is engaged in supporting SSR. While this aim can be promoted centrally through support for (cross-) regional research initiatives such as the GFN-SSR and the new Global Consortium on Security Transformation (GCST), this should not take the place of nationally targeted support, where there is an entry point and need for this.

5. *Strengthening in-country SSR advisory capacity*

Recommendation 12: *HMG should ensure that it has adequate advisory capacity within country offices to manage SSR programmes before it engages. Management should not be seen purely as an administrative task, but also involves SSR expertise, country knowledge, and adequate time and incentives to engage with national SSR actors. Where capacity does not exist, the SSDAT should be capacitated to deal with the political, development and conflict issues that may arise. [See the GCPP Review.]*

Recommendation 13: *The drive to cut administrative costs within the UK's aid programme may make it more difficult for HMG to ensure sufficient, well-trained human resources in its overseas SSR programmes. HMG needs to assess how the out-sourcing of SSR programme management to consultancy firms will impact upon overall programme effectiveness and, in particular, the ability to ensure that technical assistance is provided in a politically sensitive manner.* ■

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3   L. Nathan, 2007. *No Ownership, No Commitment: A Guide to Local Ownership of Security Sector Reform.* Global Facilitation Network for Security Sector Reform, University of Birmingham. URL: http://www.ssrnework.net/.

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 The purpose of the paper

This paper discusses the findings and policy implications of a three-country comparative study of the politics of security decision-making, which focused on Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda. This study was carried out during 2006–07 and was funded through the UK Government's Africa and Global Conflict Prevention Pools (ACPP/GCPP). The overall aim of the study was to provide a stronger knowledge base for security sector reform (SSR) policy and assistance activities. Although the analysis and recommendations contained in this paper are specifically targeted at the UK government, they also have relevance for other donor countries and agencies.

The study was conducted by the Conflict, Security and Development Group (CSDG) at King's College London, in partnership with the Centre for Democracy and Development in Nigeria, the Social Scientists' Association in Sri Lanka and the Centre for Basic Research in Uganda. These research partnerships were integral to the study aims and methodology. Part II of this paper examines in more detail how we conducted the study, sought to feed the findings into the UK SSR policy and programming processes, and managed the institutional partnerships.[4]

1.2 Project rationale and aims

This project originated from a debate within CSDG about the limitations of the donor SSR policy agenda, particularly its lack of a sound empirical base. CSDG was established in 1999, with a three-year grant from the UK Department for International Development (DFID) to support its work on SSR.[5] Its initial activities catered almost exclusively to DFID's policy concerns, and included policy advice, training, research, evaluations and support for the development of UK SSR assistance programmes in a number of countries. With few exceptions, CSDG was not asked to conduct longer-term empirical research on SSR issues, reflecting a

4   Bastian and Hendrickson, 'State Responsiveness to Public Security Needs, Review of Methodology'.

5   CSDG was inaugurated by the then secretary for international development, Clare Short, on the same occasion that she launched DFID's Policy Statement on Poverty and the Security Sector at a meeting convened at King's College London in March 1999. When the DFID grant came to an end in 2002, CSDG diversified its research portfolio and sources of funding, although it continues to work closely with UK government departments.

> **Definition of SSR**
>
> Although the UK does not have a formal SSR policy, its approach as outlined in the new Conflict Prevention Pool Security and Small Arms Control programme is consistent with the approach of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-DAC), which the UK government has endorsed. The OECD-DAC's *Security System Reform and Governance – DAC Guidelines* defines the overall objective of international support for SSR as being to 'increase the ability of partner countries to meet the range of security and justice challenges they face, in a manner consistent with democratic norms and sound principles of governance and the rule of law'. Within the UK, work on the security and justice components of SSR has generally been informed by a number of different policy frameworks and strategies, including the Strategy on Safety, Security and Access to Justice (2000) and its Security Sector Reform Policy Brief (2003).

broader trend among donors to prioritize rapid engagement in SSR assistance programmes over developing the evidence base for these activities.[6]

As a consequence, many of the core assumptions underpinning DFID's new policy agenda did not receive careful scrutiny, nor was there a systematic analysis of the different political contexts in which SSR assistance was being delivered. Much of CSDG's work under the DFID contract focused on the modalities for delivering assistance, rather than on understanding the obstacles to change. The policy documents that resulted from this were often misleadingly optimistic about the prospects for achieving meaningful reform within the two-to-three-year time frames that are generally standard for SSR programmes. Most countries that have undertaken SSR have had difficulty meeting the elevated benchmarks being set by donors due to institutional and political constraints.

Following some of the first evaluations of donor SSR activities, it became more evident that there was a serious SSR knowledge 'gap'. This also raised questions within the SSR research community about its role in implementing the donor SSR agenda. There were concerns among some researchers that the focus of SSR research was being overly determined by donors, and that there may be a conflict between the two. The risk, as some saw it, was that SSR research institutions – some of which in the UK depend heavily on donor funds – were becoming instruments for carrying out donor policy. The independent, scientific analysis needed to determine whether SSR actually works was in the process of being overlooked at the expense of donor priorities.

Recognizing the importance of strengthening the evidence base for UK SSR programming, HMG agreed in 2005 to support a study by CSDG on security decision-making processes, with two specific aims. The first was to get beyond the formal, state decision-making structures that are usually the first point of contact for outside analysts, and to increase understanding of how history, power relations and other structural features of the way in which societies are organized affect security policy processes. In particular, we wanted to see how a deeper understanding of the politics of security decision-making processes might affect the way we think about state responsiveness to public security needs and priorities for SSR programming.[7]

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6   In recent years, governments in Canada, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands and the United States have also increasingly turned to institutions in the academic and policy world to advise them on their SSR policies.

7   See Bastian and Hendrickson, 'State Responsiveness to Public Security Needs, Review of Methodology'.

This was not a study of SSR per se, but rather a study about how those with security decision-making authority define 'security' and how this shapes state policy processes. The distinction is important, because SSR is a policy agenda that seeks to encourage states to develop people-centred approaches to security that are consistent with democratic norms and human development goals. Understanding how states *actually* make decisions about security and the reasons why members of the general public often do not figure highly in the security calculations of government decision-makers (as our three country studies confirm is the case) is the starting point for better informed international SSR policy.

The second aim of this project was more functional in nature – to explore ways of transmitting our research findings in a more direct manner to those responsible for UK SSR programming in Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda so that they could benefit from the project findings in a timely way. Through a 'partnership-based' approach, we sought to integrate locally generated knowledge into SSR programming processes. The aim was not simply to gain a richer analysis of security issues, but to get local researchers more involved in the UK SSR programming cycle, from the stage of agenda-setting through the development, implementation and evaluation stages.

This paper demonstrate in this paper how greater sensitivity to the politics of security decision-making can provide a stronger foundation for donor SSR interventions. Even though there is currently a growing awareness within the donor SSR community of the need for longer-term approaches,[8] SSR programmes are still not sufficiently tailored to the local context and do not make adequate allowance for political obstacles that may arise. A stronger knowledge base will allow programme managers to better understand the nature of the problems that SSR is addressing, to develop strategies that address this and to anticipate potential obstacles. Analysis produced in an interactive manner with local researchers, furthermore, may also result in greater receptiveness by partner governments to external SSR initiatives.

It was not an explicit aim of this research project to review the UK SSR programmes in Nigeria, Sri Lanka or Uganda, or to come up with specific policy recommendations for the respective country offices. Rather, the project has sought to identify some key features of the decision-making environment in these countries that external actors need to be aware of before intervening, and to propose ways in which an enhanced political understanding might inform UK policy in each country.[9]

1.3 The structure of the paper

The paper is structured as follows:

■ Section 2 summarizes the main limitations of policy-driven SSR research. It makes a case for a more balanced partnership between the SSR research and policy communities, developing the idea of partnership-based research.

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8   This is a central theme in the new OECD-DAC *Handbook on Security System Reform*.
9   An HMG-specific policy note for each country is included in a separate document: see CSDG, 'HMG SSR Policy Briefing'.

■ Section 3 discusses how this idea has informed our methodology. It first discusses the value of a comparative SSR research approach and briefly outlines how we implemented this in practice. The section then goes on to examine what we have learned about security decision-making dynamics from Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda,[10] and the implications of this for state responsiveness to insecurity.[11]

■ Section 4 examines the policy implications of our research. It first explains why the research findings have broad applicability in contexts where donors are engaged in SSR. It then considers the implications of our findings from Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda for how external actors engage in these and other countries. Finally, it proposes some generic guidelines for integrating political analysis into SSR policy and programming processes.

■ By way of conclusion, Section 5 sounds a note of caution about the impact that more research will have on SSR policy in the absence of a better synergy between the production of knowledge and its potential use by donors. ■

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10   The three country studies were authored by Okechukwu Ibeanu and Abubakar Momoh (Nigeria), Sunil Bastian and Jayadeva Uyangoda (Sri Lanka), and Sabiiti Mutengesa and Dylan Hendrickson (Uganda); full details are given in the bibliography.

11   For a complete list of these research outputs, see Annex A.

Chapter 2
The limitations of policy-driven SSR research

SSR has moved rapidly up the international aid agenda since the late 1990s as development actors have become more involved in post-conflict reconstruction. The generally low priority given to empirical research on security issues, which has made many donors less sensitive to the complexities of SSR, stems from a number of factors: the pressure on aid agencies to act before there is an adequate understanding of the context in which assistance is being delivered; the general lack of expertise of development actors in security matters, which has led to unrealistic expectations of what can be achieved; and the origins of SSR itself, which emerged within donor policy circles and was heavily influenced by 'good governance' thinking and a normative agenda.

This combination of factors has favoured approaches to assistance that are heavily prescriptive, technical and managerial in nature, leaving many SSR practitioners ill-equipped to understand and deal with the politics of reform processes. Until recently, most of the research that comes under the SSR heading has been driven or heavily influenced by the policy-related concerns of donor funding agencies.[12] While this policy-driven research has served the bureaucratic imperative within aid agencies to develop and administer programmes, it has not necessarily favoured good empirical analysis of the complex political and institutional dynamics that affect reform processes.

The problem has not been solely a lack of information. Insufficient effort has been made to draw upon existing knowledge relevant to the SSR debate, including academic studies on military, policing and justice issues produced in developing countries. This reflects more fundamental problems with the way in which the knowledge base for SSR policymakers has been constructed, as a result of which the information produced by the research community has often not been deemed relevant to donor concerns, scientifically based, packaged in a form that policymakers can use, or transmitted in a timely manner.

The limitations of policy-driven research have become increasingly apparent. DFID's March 1999 policy statement on SSR provided a framework for the UK's initial engagement in this area – first in Sierra Leone, closely followed by Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Uganda, among other countries. By 2002, the first evaluations of these SSR assistance programmes had been completed, highlighting the difficulties faced in implementation. Among the

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12   For a detailed discussion of the evolution of SSR research and practice in recent years, see Ball and Hendrickson, *Trends in Security Sector Reform (SSR)*.

challenges identified was a lack of buy-in to the SSR agenda by developing countries and the need for a better understanding of the context in which UK assistance was being provided. These findings were reinforced by an OECD-DAC-sponsored Global Survey of SSR, which noted:[13]

> *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.*

The lack of a strong empirical base has not only been problematic from the standpoint of ensuring that donor assistance for SSR is tailored to the specific circumstances facing developing countries, but it also has practical implications for local ownership of and commitment to SSR programmes.[14] Both are more likely to be established when local stakeholders are generating the reform programme themselves. There is a strong case, therefore, for local researchers and policymakers to be involved in setting the research agendas and generating the knowledge that informs donor assistance programmes, in order to ensure that they are compatible with local needs, priorities and circumstances.

However, the short time frame of most donor SSR programmes does not favour this type or level of local involvement.[15] Adequate allowance is rarely made in terms of the time line, resources and programme flexibility to cater for political changes or other problems that may lead to delays or require a change in direction. Short programming cycles not only serve as a disincentive for donor policymakers and programme staff to develop country-specific expertise, but also make it more difficult for donors to develop the strategic and integrated responses required to address security sector problems. This problem has been exacerbated by the tendency to link SSR with conflict reduction efforts, as a consequence of which longer-term governance issues tend to be down-played.

Developing even a basic picture of how a country's national security policy processes function, for instance, requires detailed institutional and political analysis. Taking this a step further and assessing why those policy processes are not performing in an optimal manner will likely require a deeper understanding of the value systems and priorities of policymakers. Without this political knowledge, there is a risk that donors will make unwarranted assump-

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13   The survey, carried out in 2002–03, was co-ordinated by CSDG and covered 110 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the former Soviet Union. See Hendrickson, 'Overview of Regional Survey Findings and Policy Implications for Donors'.

14   See Nathan, *No Ownership, No Commitment.*

15   UK security and justice assistance programmes vary substantially in length, ranging from three years for the support provided to the Uganda Defence Review to six years for the Security, Justice and Growth programme in Nigeria.

tions and misread the situation. Policies that outside observers consider to have 'failed', for instance, because they result in a security shortfall for certain social groups may actually have achieved their intended political aims. This may not be evident until the social and political make-up of a society is understood.

Despite the fact that there are many acknowledged gaps in donors' understanding of the societies where SSR is being promoted, there is still a tendency for assistance programmes to fail to attribute this to a simple lack of 'political will' on the part of the national stakeholder. The key point that this study makes is that a better understanding of the complex motivations and pressures that affect decision-making is a prerequisite for effective SSR programmes, particularly if the intent is to support the development of security decision-making architectures that are more responsive to citizens' security needs.

One of the key limitations of donor SSR research is that it is typically restricted to the phase of programme preparation, rather than constituting a component of the programme throughout its cycle.[16] Furthermore, there are often disincentives to conduct a thorough analysis of the factors that may affect a programme. This reflects the political pressure many aid agencies face to move quickly when providing assistance. An analysis of the political economy of reforms in the security sector, for instance, may identify difficult issues that cannot be addressed without a radical change in approach to the one envisaged. In such cases, there is a risk that research simply becomes an exercise in information-gathering, designed to facilitate implementation of an assistance programme along preconceived lines.

This can negatively impact upon SSR programmes in various ways. For a start, programmatic assumptions about the appropriateness of certain interventions and the level of political will for reform may not be warranted in the circumstances. Where donors simply accept at face value partner governments' statements that they are committed to reform, they are unlikely to attempt to anticipate – much less build into an assistance programme – strategies to mitigate the array of problems that can potentially derail a reform programme.

Secondly, donors may be more likely to rely on technical assistance to address problems that are ultimately political in nature. The issue is not the technical assistance itself, which is often a vital component of SSR programming, but the way in which it is provided. Because SSR tends to be a sensitive area of engagement both for the donor and the recipient government, technical inputs may need to be complemented with political dialogue – in some cases, political pressure – in order to be effective. Pro-reform constituencies, for instance, may not be willing or able to push through planned changes unless they receive the encouragement or backing of donor partners.

A related dimension of this problem is the growing trend among donors to subcontract the delivery of SSR programmes to consultants who are, in many cases, not based in-country full-time. This can make it more difficult to strike the right balance between technical and political inputs in SSR programming. The issue is not simply whether external consultants have sufficient local knowledge and contacts to operate effectively (for there are certainly

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16   This was a key conclusion of a study recently concluded for the Netherlands Institute of International Relations; see Ball et al., *From Project to Programme.*

many that do), but also how they are perceived by partner governments. Unless they can effectively speak on behalf of a donor government, which is unlikely unless they are embedded in the country team and closely managed by it, they may not enjoy the full confidence or co-operation of the government they are seeking to assist.

Thirdly, if there is not a commitment from the outset of an SSR programme to anticipate the likely obstacles and to develop mitigating strategies, then it is unlikely that donors will place a high priority on monitoring throughout the programme cycle and evaluations at key strategic points. Most donors now consider it 'good practice' to have some form of mid-term and end-of-programme evaluation. DFID, for instance, makes provisions for evaluations (such as Output-to-Purpose Reviews – OPRs) in its SSR programmes. However, these evaluations are often administrative in nature, intended to account for how donor resources were used and whether programme objectives were achieved (or not), rather than to actually learn any lessons about what went wrong and how this can be corrected in a subsequent phase of the programme.

In light of these problems, there is a strong case for ensuring that SSR engagements are better grounded in a solid knowledge base. The idea of a knowledge base in the form of objective research that will provide simple linear relationships between certain policy actions and certain security outcomes is simplistic. However, if research is relevant to policy concerns, produced in a rigorous manner and accessible to those who need it, it can provide policy-makers with a firmer basis for testing their programme assumptions. This can help to ensure that SSR strategies better reflect needs on the ground rather than shorter-term political considerations, and that they are consistent with development objectives. ■

Chapter 3
Research methodology and findings

3.1 The added value of comparative research

Before examining our methodology, a word about how comparative country analysis can benefit policymakers. The main way it can do this is by underscoring the dangers of formulaic approaches to policymaking that assume that security sectors share similar features and that there are universal solutions that can be applied in different countries or regions. These approaches are more common where the knowledge base that policymakers draw upon is narrow and shallow, where there is a heavy normative emphasis in programming, and where there are pressures to deliver assistance against tight time frames and within strict budgets.

Because every SSR programme is conditioned by political, social and constitutional structures, countries will surmount their security reform challenges in different ways. In spite of superficial resemblances – for instance, security agencies or functions that share a similar name – structures and roles may vary considerably. Analysts can develop a more nuanced understanding of how one country's security sector operates by learning from the experiences of other countries.

Comparative analysis can also help policymakers to break out of the dominant Western, normative framework of thinking about how countries should tackle their security challenges. One shortcoming of policy-driven SSR research is that it concentrates too much on Western approaches to security and is subjective in its emphasis on democratic models. It should be acknowledged that many countries' security institutions develop in different political and social frameworks from those of Western countries. These security institutions are no less significant for this reason, nor are they necessarily less effective in the particular circumstances in which they operate than Western ones would be. Equally, it should be recognized that an institutional approach may result in analysts missing out on other sources of security provision that may be more prevalent in contexts where states are weak.

Donors therefore to need to engage with security provision as it actually occurs rather than how they believe it ought to occur. This is not to say that the fundamental principles that underpin the SSR agenda cannot serve as a guide for reforms, when these are eventually undertaken, but when it comes to diagnosing the nature of the problem and assessing what kinds of solutions are desirable and possible, the frame of reference – in the first instance – should be the local political, social and institutional context.

A comparative approach, finally, may help in distinguishing more easily what is *essential* about SSR from what is *incidental* to it. In the search for practical and short-term solutions

to the security reform challenges facing countries, most attention is paid to the surface mani-festations of what are often deep-seated political, social and attitudinal problems. Without a better understanding of the preconditions for effective and responsive state institutions, which are heavily dictated by a country's stage of socioeconomic development and the maturity of its political institutions, then it is unlikely that a narrow focus on technical and organizational solutions will achieve the desired benefits. Comparative work that examines how basic prob-lems of security governance are being addressed in different countries – usually through the messy process of politics – will give policymakers a deeper grasp of SSR and what is possible in a given context.

3.2 Overview of methodology

3.2.1 Research concepts and themes

Our interest in the 'politics' of security decision-making stems from the fact that security is an extremely contested category of political thinking and practice. This is the case not just because each social group, government or donor agency has its own idea of what security entails, but because the security 'project' is inherently bound up with a range of economic, political and personal interests – as much among donor actors as aid recipients. Competition, co-operation and conflict among these diverse players characterizes this political contesta-tion for security. This in turn defines what is possible in terms of promoting policy reforms that will achieve the widest possible benefits for society in countries where international aid is provided.

For the purposes of this study, our point of departure was an expansive understanding of security taken to mean *the state of affairs in which individuals and social groups are able to exercise their legitimate rights and freedoms in a safe and just environment*. We approach security through a public policy lens rather than as the concern of traditional security actors alone, because we are interested in what weight decision-makers give to the different military and non-military dimensions of insecurity, and how they choose between the coercive and non-coercive policy options available to the state to address security problems. In particu-lar, we are interested in how decision-makers balance the security interests of states and the security interests of citizens.

The notion of responsiveness as it used in this paper is therefore a measure of how those with security decision-making authority respond when a country's population or sections thereof are confronted with security problems. Responsiveness is a function of the capacity of the citizenry to articulate their preferences, the capability of the state to process and respond in a timely manner, the form and quality of the response, and whether it reflects an attempt by government to meet the demands of the diverse groups in society equitably. The notion of responsiveness provides a means of assessing the complex interplay of factors that shape public policy processes and ultimately determine which groups in society benefit.

Responsiveness implies a relationship among those who have a responsibility for mak-ing security policy; those who are tasked with implementing it; and those who are, or should

be, the beneficiaries of public services that affect their security. The precise nature of the relationship among these actors is key, however, for the government is not necessarily a neutral arbiter in mediating conflicting social demands for security. Analysis of how policymakers, those tasked with implementing security policy and different groups in society interact – and, in particular, how much leverage different social and political groups have to exercise a 'demand' for security services – is central to understanding whose interests are secured in the policy process.

Where the relationship among these actors is weak or conflictive, or indeed the government is, by acts of commission or omission, the *cause* of its population's insecurity, then it is also essential to understand how groups that experience a security shortfall cope. Much research now highlights the existence of 'parallel' security structures, although what is less clear is how these two levels are connected and what happens to people who fall into the gap between the two or rely on their own personal strategies to protect themselves. To that extent, security decision-making by non-state actors and how that is accounted for in state security decision-making architectures is relevant to this study.

There are three interrelated factors that may be seen to have a *direct* bearing on state responsiveness in the security domain: firstly, the inclination of political elites and policymakers to adopt courses of action that address the specific needs and preferences of insecure groups; secondly, the institutional capability of the state to assess these needs, to devise appropriate policy responses and to implement this policy; and thirdly, the nature of the relationship that bind political elites and their populations, which ultimately has a bearing on whether the latter can exercise their preferences and voice their disapproval when policy does not meet their needs.

These more proximate factors, however, only provide part of the picture when seeking to understand the factors that affect state responsiveness. There are important historical, structural and external factors that shape and condition the capacity of governments to address the security problems that affect their citizens, making it necessary, we argue, to situate any assessment of state responsiveness in a broader context. Factors that tend to be underplayed by external analysts are the stage of state-building in which the country finds itself, its level of sociopolitical cohesion and economic development, and the nature of the government's relationship with external actors (whose interests may vary significantly), particularly in situations of aid dependency. All have a crucial bearing on the orientation and capacities of the state in the security domain.

We identified three broad questions that we felt would help us to generate policy-relevant insights into the factors that shape state responsiveness:

- Firstly, what are the main sources of decision-making authority in the societies that we are examining? Real power in security decision-making rarely lies where it appears, i.e. as reflected by formal organizational charts or official government pronouncements on security matters. This is all the more so in societies where there has been a decay of state institutions, and non-state actors are heavily involved in justice and security provision.

■ Secondly, what are the avenues of influence by which different groups in society exercise their 'demand' for security? SSR is a political agenda that generally requires significant alterations in power relations among different groups in society. Yet SSR assistance policy is often narrowly focused, targeting security agencies within the state without adequately accounting for who will drive the 'demand' for change, particularly if the proposed changes are resisted by the security establishment. Such an approach in effect assumes that political and security elites can reform themselves, in the process down-playing the crucial role that political pressure has to play in bringing about policy change.

■ Thirdly, how do external actors impact upon security decision-making? There has been insufficient critical reflection on the ways in which donor interventions, both in the security sector and the broader public domain, may unwittingly make it more difficult for governments to meet the security needs of their populations. Aid dependency, eco-nomic and political conditionalities, and deficit reduction objectives (imposed as part of financial stabilization packages), among others, can all impact negatively on state sovereignty in the security domain and, in particular, on governments' ability to respond when the security of their populations is threatened.

3.2.2 The organization of the research

The selection of Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda as case studies was influenced by two factors. Firstly, for the purposes of our comparison, we sought countries that shared a number of general characteristics: low-to-middle income developing countries, conflict-afflicted, sub-stantial aid recipients and with SSR programmes of one form or another that are supported by external actors. Secondly, because the study was UK-funded and a key component of our methodology was to explore ways of using research generated in partnership with local actors to influence donor SSR policy, we privileged countries where there was a UK-supported SSR initiative and the resident UK conflict adviser had expressed an interest in our research agenda.

A central aim of the research was to enhance our understanding of how state decision-makers perceive (or fail to perceive) their duties vis-à-vis their citizens, particularly in relation to state security services. Because it is difficult to examine these kinds of issues at the generic level, we anchored our analysis in six 'micro'-case studies in each country. This was in order to bring out the complex dynamics that are often more clearly discernible in the context of an actual crisis or episode where key security decisions are made. The main purpose of the micro-case studies was to generate the empirical data that would feed into the country studies in Phase Two of the project.

3.2.3 Strategies for influencing policy

The Phase Three policy and dissemination work was intended to feed our research findings into HMG's SSR policy and programming processes. The research model sought to bring about, with variable success in the three countries, regular interaction between the researchers and the UK conflict advisers. These meetings offered an opportunity for the UK advisers to both absorb some of the preliminary findings and, at the same time, provide feedback to the authors, particularly with regard to relevant HMG activities in the country.

In April 2007, an international policy workshop was convened in Dubai, the main aim of which was to discuss the preliminary drafts of the country studies and brainstorm on the policy implications. This meeting brought together the country research leaders; several micro-case study authors; relevant HMG advisers from Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Uganda and London; two members of the Security Sector Development Advisory Team (SSDAT), and a number of outside country experts and policy analysts to serve as resources persons. The discussion in Dubai resulted in a greater appreciation of the dilemmas of researching sensitive security issues and packaging the findings in a policy-relevant format.[17]

3.3 Research findings

3.3.1 The context of public insecurity

Historical and sociopolitical context

The experiences of Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda underscore why historical and structural analysis is a necessary starting point for understanding the challenges states face in meeting public security needs. All three countries share a British colonial legacy that has heavily influenced how their political systems, bureaucracies and security sectors have evolved. Although each has been confronted with an array of security challenges since independence, including violent internal conflicts, neither Nigeria, Sri Lanka nor Uganda fit the stereotype of a collapsed, failed or fragile state. Each country has followed a different development trajectory, reflecting its unique sociopolitical context and external environment.

In all three cases, the nature of the colonial administration's relationship with the local populations, mediated through different forms of political mechanisms, laid the groundwork for how the newly independent governments defined their security roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis their citizens. The differences between Sri Lanka and the African cases were quite stark, however. By independence in 1948, Sri Lanka had already experienced a process of partial democratization through constitutional reforms that introduced universal adult franchise and representative government. A strong social welfarist policy regime emerged in the 1930s and 1940s that associated the state with the notion of the main provider of 'security', both in the social and law and order sense. This ideology had its origins in the country's electoral and left-wing politics and underpinned the state's approach to security until the early 1980s, when its monopoly of violence was challenged by a host of ethnic Tamil groups.

By contrast, in both African cases, British 'indirect' rule was administered through a range of so-called 'native' or customary institutions and 'divide and rule' tactics. The nature of the colonial state, its legitimacy crisis, and its resulting preoccupation with law and order in the face of resistance to its extractive and taxation agendas resulted in a security crisis for many populations in each country. In Nigeria, divide and rule tactics found a more persuasive acceptance from the centralized caliphate system in northern Nigeria, and resistance

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17   The methodological issues covered at the workshop, together with the strategies that were developed for influencing policy, are reviewed in Bastian and Hendrickson, 'State Responsiveness to Public Security Needs, Review of Methodology'.

from western and eastern Nigeria. This reflected the British interest in using the Hausa as the core of its security formation when the colonial army was established in Nigeria.

In Uganda, a similar process of divide and rule unfolded, dictated by the colonial state's economic interests in the region. This resulted in the preferential treatment of southern communities and the systematic neglect of others, particularly in the north; uneven development; and the lopsided distribution of social services. As in Nigeria, this strategy shaped the crafting of security institutions that defended colonial interests, resulting in ethnically biased recruitment policies. This had implications not only for the security of marginalized communities in Uganda, but also the eventual viability of the post-independence state.

The nature of the British withdrawal from each country also determined the ability of the newly independent states to meet their security needs. The hasty granting of independence in 1962 and the sudden departure of the colonial officials from Uganda set the stage for the instability that characterized the post-independence era. Local politicians were left to manage a delicate ethnopolitical balance that they did not create and could not cope with, either in terms of capacity or resource availability.[18] This decapitation created a void at all levels of government, including in the civil service, the executive, the judiciary and the armed forces. The resultant fragility of successive post-independence administrations in Uganda, combined with the heightened polarization of the political classes, was the cause of much of the instability and violence that the country experienced until well into the 1990s. Under successive governments, the military has become the principle instrument for mediating political disputes.

A similar dynamic was apparent in Nigeria in 1960, where the newly independent country was confronted by extreme ethnic and religious heterogeneity and a structure of governance that, in the absence of any real devolution of powers, dramatically raised the stakes for control of the state. Nearly half a century later, Nigeria's extended aspiration to nationhood has been one marked by deep-seated insecurity, including a civil war lasting from 1967 to 1970 in which over one million people died. Ethnocommunal violence, religious conflicts and struggles over the equitable sharing of the proceeds from the country's natural resources, particularly petroleum resources in the Niger Delta region, have at different times brought the country to the brink of anarchy. During the long period of military rule in Nigeria, egregious human rights violations and repression of political dissension characterized the policy of ruling elites.

Although the post-colonial process of nation-state building in the post-colonial phase has not produced a state structure of power-sharing among majority and minority ethnic communities, Sri Lanka enjoyed a considerable degree of social peace for the first twenty years after independence in 1948. The country inherited a highly centralized state structure, managed by a professional bureaucracy. With the exception of the short-lived JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna or People's Liberation Front) rebellion of 1971, it was not until the 1980s

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18   Upon gaining independence on 9 October 1962, Uganda did not even have the financial resources to retire the colonial civil servants and ship them back to their home country. In order to do so, the new government had to immediately apply for its first loan grant (Nyamugasira, 'Aid Conditionality, Policy Ownership and Poverty Reduction', 1).

that the state faced a major security threat with the outbreak, firstly, of ethnic Tamil violence and, in 1987, the second JVP rebellion.

Evolution of the state security apparatus

The security sector, like other basic structures of the state apparatus, was variedly shaped by the colonial transformation in Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda. In no case did the state security apparatus – of which the defence forces have been the dominant force – evolve to face an external threat. Rather, evolution of the state security apparatus was primarily shaped by the 'law and order' demands of the colonial administration, and later, following independence, the political conflicts that emerged within the country.

Sri Lanka was generally considered a model colony, notwithstanding various challenges to the colonial administration, including the 1848 tax rebellion. As in Nigeria and Uganda, the British in at least one instance resorted to foreign forces to staff the security apparatus (in this case, Malays), due to suspicion of the local population. But generally speaking, the British colonial presence in Sri Lanka was more benign than the other two countries, as evidenced by the granting of universal suffrage. The Sinhalese political class who became the rulers after political independence initially perceived India as a threat. While an element of this stemmed from a perception of vulnerability resulting from the sheer size of the country's neighbour, it was concern about Indian support for Tamil nationalism that was a principal factor. In order to address this security 'threat', Sri Lanka signed a defence pact with the UK, although subsequent governments after 1956 felt that the country's security was best addressed by allying itself with India, and asked Britain to withdraw its troops. From this point on, the evolution of the security sector occurred generally within the same trajectory of majoritarian state formation. With the outbreak of the twin civil war in the 1980s, the armed forces were significantly expanded. This coincided with the development of a close alliance between the political leadership and the officer corps of the army, which has enabled the government to maintain effective civil control over the army even in the context of protracted civil war.

The case of Nigeria provides an interesting counterpoint to that of Sri Lanka. The dominant regional power (and the most populous country in Africa), Nigeria has never faced a significant external threat. Under colonial rule, revolts and resistance against extractive and taxation objectives were common. The colonial state's preoccupation with law and order set the context for the establishment of a diverse array of security forces (which after independence in 1960 became the Nigerian army and police). The primary role of these forces was to extend British influence into the hinterland, to protect extractive activities, and to otherwise secure the colonial government and the native administration through which it exercised its rule, rather than the public. As in Sri Lanka, there was a short-lived defence pact with the UK following independence, but this was abrogated by the government in the face of widespread criticism that this was a neo-colonial ploy by Britain to continue its control over the Nigerian state. During the 1967–70 civil war and under successive military regimes in Nigeria, the armed forces consolidated their control over security, to the detriment of civil institutions.

The Ugandan experience shares certain broad features with that of Nigeria. The foundations for Uganda's security sector were laid during the 19th century by the British, whose

principle motivation was to create an environment safe for economic exploitation. This shaped the mission and ethos of the security forces in a manner that exacerbated social and political divisions among the country's ethnic groups. Many of the policy preferences of the colonial administration, including ethnically biased recruitment practices, were accentuated under successive post-independence governments and still endure today. In the absence of a significant external threat (until the late 1990s, when tensions emerged between Uganda and Rwanda), the military became the preferred instrument of domestic policy, used principally to quell internal political dissent. These trends have endured under the National Resistance Movement government that came into power in 1986, faced with a constant succession of armed challenges to its authority. As a consequence, the military has seen its size, political role and influence, as well as its command over public expenditure, grow.

Contested political understandings of security

The incomplete and contested nature of state-building and the absence of a state monopoly of violence are features that Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda share. In all three cases, the failure of the state to protect its citizens, particularly under conditions of internal war; to ensure broad-based economic prosperity; and to institute equitable arrangements for power-sharing among different ethnic interests has degraded the authority and legitimacy of the state. Weak state responsiveness has been most manifest in the security sector itself, which has underpinned the structured exclusion of certain ethnic groups from political power and resulted in significant security shortfalls for large segments of the population.

In this context, security has become an extremely contested category of political thinking and practice in all three countries. The expansive construction of security outlined at the beginning of this paper, where the state treats its citizens with equal entitlements to safety and well-being, has not been institutionalized as a matter of policy in any of the three countries, with the exception of Sri Lanka, and then for only a brief period after independence. Rather, in all three countries, the idea of security has come to mean the security of the state, state institutions and the regime in power. In this context, the policy process has not been able to serve the multiple and conflicting demands of security, which have been defined in different ways by each social, ethnic and political constituency.

In Sri Lanka today, the political contestation of security is sharply defined between the majoritarian-statist ideas of security of the ruling Sinhalese nationalists, and the minoritarian conceptualizations of security of the Tamil and Muslim communities. The ongoing civil conflict, which in late 2007 experienced a sharp escalation, has continued to erode the claims to neutrality of the Sri Lankan state. Nevertheless, citizens and political parties continue to see the state as the supreme entity that should provide security not only in the law and order sense, but also in terms of social protection. In the context of the protracted civil war, space has also emerged for external actors – particularly the donor community – to pressurize the government to pay greater attention to human security.

In the African cases – Nigeria in particular – understandings of security are more fragmented, reflecting the highly diversified communal, ethnic and religious landscape. The failure of the post-independence state in Nigeria to develop a strong institutional framework for

security provision, combined with recurrent political crises and prolonged periods of military rule, have given rise to a culture of militarism that has been internalized by both the military and civilian elites. The failure of national decision-makers to adequately provide for the security needs of the public over the years has, in turn, led to the rising role of non-state actors in security provision in Nigeria.

Powerful centres of security decision-making exist in Nigerian society with varying degrees of independence/autonomy from the state. This is most evident in the Delta region, where the government currently confronts a serious challenge to its authority from an array of armed groups. These include vigilantes, militias, cults and death squads (professional assassins). These irregular forces have their immediate origin in the general failure of public security decision-making. However, socioeconomic conditions and political authoritarianism, particularly military rule, set the broader context for the emergence of these alternative security decision-making structures.

In Uganda, the predominance of state-centred, militaristic notions of security and the resort to coercive means as an instrument for political change have been a feature of the country's history from its early beginnings as an independent state. The as yet incomplete process of consolidating state authority and building a strong sense of national political community is reflected in the operation of a state security apparatus that has in many instances exacerbated political division in the country rather than addressed public security needs. Recent progress in talks with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) are opening the way to significant improvements in the security landscape, although persisting armed challenges to state authority remain (for instance, in the Karamoja region). In this context, it is likely that the army will remain the government's preferred security policy instrument, despite a number of donor-driven initiatives to develop more integrated policy responses to the country's security problems.

3.3.2 Dynamics of security decision-making

Sources of decision-making authority

In all three countries, the constitution is the formal supreme law from which all authority flows. There is evidence of an attempt to embed constitutionalism as the standard means of legitimizing authority at all levels of policy management, particularly in the security domain. Legislative power over the making of decisions relating to public security lies with the parliament or the national assembly, although, in all three cases, the president remains the highest executive security decision-making official.

The presidential system forms the basis of government, and this shapes the environment in which decision-making takes place, especially in the security domain. According to the constitutions of the three countries, the president is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The president may also double as the minister of defence,[19] as was the case in Uganda for very many years, and chairs a variety of committees that have decision-making authority

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19   In Sri Lanka, this portfolio is held by the president's own brother.

for defence and security.[20] The executive branch presides over matters of state separately from the legislature, to which it is not primarily accountable and which cannot, in normal circumstances, dismiss it. The president is essentially an elected monarchy to whom ministers are accountable. He/she has the exclusive and even patronage powers to appoint and dismiss them. The president is him-/herself accountable to the people through a periodic election. The presidential system gives pre-eminence to the presidency in decision-making.

In Sri Lanka, the constitution requires the executive to co-operate with the legislature on key aspects of security policy management. The president can declare a state of emergency, but must obtain legislature approval within ten days of the declaration. States of emergency have to be renewed every month, and only by means of a parliamentary vote. This bears close parallels with Nigeria, where the National Assembly has the power to approve any executive decision with respect to the declaration of a state of emergency, declaration of war and deployment of the armed forces.

One of the key factors that limit citizens' ability to influence policy elites is the failure of the elite to develop consensus among themselves on key aspects of national policy. Lack of elite consensus stifles receptivity to proposals on policy from other segments of society. The studies note how shortfalls in intra-elite consensus lead to a high level of politicization of security issues, allowing, as in the case of Sri Lanka, for successive regimes to adopt radically divergent security policies from those of their predecessors. Extreme contestation of decision-making can arise even where the constitution empowers the president to declare a state of emergency, for example, when the security of the country is under serious threat, leading to paralysis in the policy cycle.

Deficiencies in strategic consensus among the elite is further reinforced by a lack of socio-political integration, as illustrated by the cases of Sri Lanka and Nigeria, where the defence of communal interests by minority parties against the encroachments of the central state often threatens to undermine broader security. Separatist demands are an extreme manifestation of this phenomenon, as in the case of Sri Lanka's Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and Nigeria's Movement for the Actualization of a Sovereign State of Biafra. The former currently controls parts of Sri Lanka that exist as a state within a state. The crystallization of such separatist demands is testimony to the search by sections of the citizenry to radically reorientate the configuration of authority structures. At stake in those instances is not just decision-making per se, but first-order issues relating to the embodiment of authority and the very existence of the state.

The assessment of the Nigeria micro-case studies makes reference to powerful centres of security decision-making in varying degrees of autonomy from the central state, resulting in a dispersal of authority in the security domain. Unlike in Uganda, where, with the exception of the Karamoja region, the wide range of militia forces remain substantively under the control of the central state, the militias and irregular forces in Nigeria swing back and

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20   In Nigeria, the president chairs the Council of State, which advises on public order; the National Security Council, which advises the president on public security; and the National Defense Council, which advises the president on matters relating to the defence and sovereignty of Nigeria's territorial integrity. Members of all those bodies serve in their capacities at the president's pleasure.

forth between being allies of the central state – when they provide physical safety to local communities – and insurgents.

Avenues of policy influence

All three countries show that there are limited channels through which citizens can influence policy at the most critical phases of the policy cycle. Equally, there is a paucity of organized interest structures and groups to exploit such channels if they existed. All these factors combine to give political elites a considerable amount of autonomy in decision-making. Although there are regular elections to determine the occupants of public office, security issues are never debated to any great depth. Office seekers tend to amplify broader political issues that may have security implications in order to whip up policy controversies for purposes of making electoral gains. The case studies demonstrate that the fractious nature of electoral contests and the ethnicization of state and community security in the context of chronic civil conflict only serve to further narrow the channels through which the general populace can influence policy processes. Groups are then compelled to resort to civil society organizations and international humanitarian agencies as a conduit for their concerns, more so given the fact that most issues of security concern are raised in the context of crisis. Recurrent crisis and the rural character of the populations in Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda leave little room for popular demands to be channelled to the policy machinery at the legislation stage.

In Uganda and Nigeria, the localized nature of security problems – which often have a communal or criminal dimension – has tended to preclude national policy perspectives, unlike in Sri Lanka, where the LTTE pose a direct threat to the continued existence of the country as a single jurisdiction. Because of the low level of socioeconomic development, coupled with limited functional integration among different regions of the country, it becomes possible for life in one region to grind to a halt due to insecurity without the rest of the country being affected. Geographical regions are also the communal base of homogeneous ethnic or linguistic groups. A combination of this factor with the remoteness and inaccessibility of key population centres, limited information and low levels of literacy further limits the crystallization and articulation of the kind of preferences that can strike a national chord.

All the case studies tend to show that demands for the provision of physical safety are locally oriented, a factor that has tended to increase the prominence of local notables, traditional rulers, ethnic lobbies and community mobilization networks as potential loci for aggregating local interests and conveying such interests to central state authorities. The lack of national appeal arises from the particularistic and emotive terms in which concerns tend to be couched. Particularistic claims in turn become targets of easy dismissal or are drowned in a complex web of intergroup competition, especially when social groups that are affected by insecurity may be historically identified with the insecurity of other groups. Sri Lanka typifies this fragmentation and lack of integration.

The role of external actors

There are key similarities in the manner in which external actors exert influence over security decision-making in Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda. All three studies highlight historical,

economic and geopolitical factors, with emphasis on legacies of the colonial experience; interactions with the structures and processes of global governance, mainly in connection with aid dependence; and regional security realities.

Among other effects, the studies note that policies of differential ethnic recruitment first instituted under colonial rule have placed group relations within all the countries covered by the study on the wrong footing, a factor that continues to broadly affect policy management, particularly in the security domain. Differential ethnic recruitment continues to constitute the basis for exclusion and has served as an initiator and driver of intractable conflict. The studies also highlight the impact of such policies on the capabilities of the security sector by narrowing the recruitment pool, and on the accountability of security sector institutions by hardening intergroup boundaries.

The relations between key external actors and the countries covered by the studies are shaped by the latter's aid dependency, particularly in the case of Uganda. Aid donors may not have a direct influence on policy formulation or decision-making in the security domain, but the macroeconomic policy guidelines that aid recipients set under pressure from donors place certain constraints on recipient countries, as the Uganda case clearly demonstrates. This is particularly the case in the areas of debt relief and poverty reduction, and spending on the social sectors. Such constraints – a typical example being the cap on defence expenditure as a proportion of gross domestic product that was imposed in Uganda – shape the budgetary framework within which aid recipients formulate policies that guide the management of their security sectors. By thus shaping the management of security policy, donor constraints on public spending have a direct impact on the sovereignty of aid recipients.

However, this is not to imply that the political elites of these countries have no room for manoeuvre. Where donor priorities diverge, they often work at cross-purposes. The lack of policy coherence is also evident within certain donors where there are weak mechanisms for cross-departmental working. These factors, among others, blunt donor influence, making it easier for aid recipients to play them off against one another, as the Uganda study demonstrates. As such, although donor influence may on occasions be significant, it is not always decisive.

The Uganda study in particular highlights the potentially contradictory effects that external resources can have on the political and socioeconomic development of aid-dependent countries. While aid can serve to strengthen the capacity of government for service delivery and democratic accountability, it can also serve as a disincentive for political elites to develop their countries' internal capacities for revenue generation and extraction. In the long term, aid can undermine responsiveness by removing the incentives for policy elites to strengthen the efficiency of public institutions and the productivity of national economies. Aid dependence eliminates the need for policy elites to make a fiscal contract with the citizenry, and thus fundamentally undermines the very foundation of democratic accountability and responsiveness.

The geostrategic realities of the three countries studied remain a key external influence in security management in ways that are unique to each country. Whereas Nigeria is a hegemon

with major regional commitments in peacekeeping and peace enforcement,[21] Sri Lanka is a small state constantly struggling to counter India's hegemonic influence within the South Asian regional set-up. This can be understood in the context of Sri Lankan anxieties regarding the long-term plans of south Indian Tamils of swallowing up the island by actualizing their pan-Tamil ambitions. Nevertheless, Sri Lanka has accepted that its primary interests lie in aligning itself closely with India on many international issues, examples of which are the Non-Aligned Movement and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

On the other hand, India views the Sri Lankan harbour of Trincomalee as a problematic issue, especially if the facilities it offers are opened up for military use by any country in a manner prejudicial to India's interests. Accordingly, leading political elites, especially among the Sinhalese, have even attempted, firstly, to enlist the country as a member of the far-flung Association of South-East Asian Nations, and, secondly, to emphasize bilateral relations with Japan, especially because the latter does not prioritize Colombo's defence expenditure. In spite of Indian opposition, Sri Lanka has turned to China and Pakistan as sources of military hardware for the war against the LTTE.

Uganda occupies an intermediate position between Nigeria and Sri Lanka, being neither a major player in the region nor a strategic subordinate of a regional hegemon; while at the same time being capable of exerting politico-military influence on some of its neighbours, as the country's heavy involvement in the affairs of Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan in the last two decades clearly demonstrates. Extra-regional actors, particularly aid donors, seeking to devise ways of reforming the 'security sectors' of a country like Nigeria or Uganda have to take into consideration the reality that these countries are not exclusively aid recipients or supplicants to be dealt with paternalistically. For better or for worse, the two countries are external actors in their own right within their local regional settings, with commitments that go beyond the confines of their own national jurisdictions.

3.3.3 Assessment of governmental responsiveness

The formal institutional framework for security decision-making is important in determining whose interests are secured in the policy process, but state responsiveness – understood as the degree to which policy elites defer to the demands and preferences of the wider community – is about more than this. State responsiveness is context-dependent, varying from one country to another depending on historical, socioeconomic/structural and political factors. It involves the interaction between formal and informal rules, and is a political process. As this study has showed, responsiveness is about power and relationships, and is the outcome of the bargaining that results from the interests of individuals, social groups, political elites and external actors.

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21   The Nigerian military has been very prominent in United Nations peacekeeping missions, coming second to India. It has participated successfully in peace enforcement and peacekeeping operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone under the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and in Darfur under the auspices of the African Union. Between 1991 and 1997, the Nigeria military contingent in ECOMOG averaged 75 per cent of the force. Nigeria has also been involved in UN peacekeeping missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Lebanon, among others.

The study identifies four principal determinants of state responsiveness in the security domain that have relevance for SSR. The first key determinant is citizen 'voice', this being the measure of the capacity of the citizenry to aggregate and articulate their preferences; the second is the capabilities of a political system to effectively assess those demands, devise appropriate policies and then implement these policies in a timely manner; the third is the policymakers' inclination to formulate policies that accommodate the demands that are placed on the political system; and the fourth is the accountability of the policy elite, in the sense of whether decision-makers are held answerable if security decisions do not meet people's needs.

The studies show that in order for social groups to exercise their demands for security within a political system, there have to be structures of interest articulation, which in turn require the requisite levels of social cohesion and capital. Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda exhibit a mixture of mechanisms and processes for demand articulation, which, as in other parts of the political system, can be described as dualistic. Models that were bequeathed to these countries at independence overlap and coexist with pre-colonial patterns, with the former being more pronounced at the centre. The ability of citizens to express their policy preferences, particularly at the national level, is constrained by the low level of socioeconomic development and mobilization measured in terms of average literacy, access to information (from the print and electronic media), and the remoteness of the majority of the population from the centres of decision-making.

This is not to suggest, however, that people do not know what they want in terms of security, nor that this is not expressed at the local level. Participatory poverty assessments such as the World Bank's 'Voices of the Poor' studies demonstrate this very clearly.[22] Furthermore, given the difficulties that many people face in engaging with national policy processes, many prefer to deal with their traditional leaders, and local justice and security networks.

The transitional nature of the political systems studied means that even the centre is not fully developed, limiting states' abilities to formulate authoritative policy and decisions. This is not helped by the tendency of the elite to ordinarily thwart effective debate on account of secrecy, confidentiality, and the protection of national and state security. In all three of the countries examined, the mystification of matters related to security (particularly defence issues) shuts the little that there is of civil society out of providing meaningful input into the security management policy processes at the national level. How well developed interest articulation structures are is therefore not only critical to the responsiveness of the political system, but also determines its stability and the content of the political process. The pre-industrial socioeconomic structure of the countries surveyed affects citizen inputs into the policy process in various ways.

Firstly, the study highlights the paucity of formal interest groups, such as professional organizations, well-developed political parties, lobbies, trade unions, pressure groups and other structures of interest articulation that would normally be subsumed under the rubric of 'civil society'. In the absence of such groups, interests are articulated through channels

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22   See http://go.worldbank.org/H1N8746X10.

that are most available and most likely to bring policy concerns to the attention of those involved in decision-making, and these include personal ties, kinship, ethnicity, patronage and client-like relations. These channels usually overlap with the broader political and socio-economic system, but unless people's preferences are effectively aggregated, this may serve to degrade the quality of inputs into the political system.

Secondly, the low level of socioeconomic development affects the range, focus and intensity of demands from domestic society. The domestic populations of the countries studied live in conditions of all-round deprivation and ill health, and are constantly absorbed in the struggle for basic survival. Such conditions tend to preclude the majority of the population from engaging with broad policy and ideological concerns at the national level, making them privilege non-ideological particularistic demands and individual inducements, material rewards, and patronage.

Thirdly, a low level of socioeconomic development in the countries covered by the study creates conditions for a parochial political culture. This is characterized by a lack of sustained engagement with the political system, which results in the limited transmission of demands to the policy elite, giving the latter virtually unlimited latitude in determining policy.

A related dimension of underdevelopment is reflected in the stature of institutions of popular participation in Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda. In mature, open democracies, political parties have a central role to play in presenting the policy preferences of the general populace in the legislature, which is the rule-making structure. Unlike Sri Lanka, where a multiparty system has been in operation since independence, decades of single-party, military or transitional rule in Nigeria and Uganda have largely rendered political parties peripheral to the process of articulating and aggregating public interests. Opposition groups have rarely been able to actively and consistently move beyond denouncing ruling regimes and propose coherent, alternative policies for managing security policy.

In summary, our synthesis identifies five factors that are particularly important in determining state responsiveness in Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda:

- *Political and historical legacies:* These include colonial rule, prolonged periods of military rule, chronic civil war and political instability, and regimes that have originated from revolutionary warfare, as in Uganda.

- *The relative autonomy of the policy elite:* The pre-eminence of policy elites and key decision-makers in determining policy is partly explained by the feebleness of the interest articulation structures of the domestic community. An extreme manifestation of this autonomy of policymakers is the tendency of parties, branches of the state or even single individuals to dominate policy processes.

- *The decision-making environment:* In all three cases, security decision-making takes place in a crisis-ridden political environment characterized by protracted or intermittent violent conflict that is managed reactively on a crisis-by-crisis basis. Recurrent crises are accentuated by the absence of a widely accepted set of goals and objectives for public policy management, and fragmented consensus, especially among sections of the elite.

- *The prominence of particularistic agendas in decision-making:* This degrades responsiveness by causing the exclusion of the preferences of political forces that are not favourably positioned within the political system.

- *Critical shortfalls in capabilities:* Shortages in the extractive, regulative, technical and administrative capacities of the political system constitute a key limiting factor in governmental decision-making. Limitations in capabilities across the board partly explain the perennial recourse to donor resources and the prominent role of external actors in policy formulation. ∎

Chapter 4
Implications for SSR policy and programming

4.1 The relevance of findings to other countries

The sample of three countries examined in this study cannot be considered representative of the diverse societies across Africa, Asia and Latin America where SSR is being promoted today. None of the three countries would qualify as 'failed' or 'fragile' states, for instance, which have quite different defining characteristics. Similarly, there are other categories of higher-income developing countries that are not conflict-affected and where SSR is on the agenda, but which face quite different reform challenges than Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda.

Nevertheless, the study findings have broad relevance for donors engaged in SSR. This is particularly so from a *process* perspective – with regard to how donors go about analysing the politics of security decision-making, and what they do with information once they have it. What will differ from country to country is the context – and therefore the answers to the kinds of questions that are raised by this study. This is why donors need to ask these questions in the first place, and be prepared to vary assistance programmes from country to country, as appropriate.

4.2 Policy orientations: lessons from Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda

The key conclusion that can be drawn from the cases studies of Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda is that the existence of a formal institutional framework for security decision-making is not sufficient to ensure that state policy is responsiveness to the needs of citizens. In all three countries, a constitutional form of government exists, security decision-making architectures are well developed and civilian authorities enjoy primacy in decision-making. In reality, though, the foundation of decision-making is a political process in which history, interests and power are key in determining which groups in society benefit from security decisions.

What are the implications for donors of accepting this centrality of politics in determining security policy outcomes? Our first conclusion is that it is necessary to accept that the context will determine what is possible in terms of SSR. This is not simply an argument for more and better contextual analysis, although this is important, but also to underscore the importance of donors acting strategically. In both Sri Lanka and Uganda, for instance, past UK initiatives in the defence sector have been seriously constrained by the ongoing con-

flicts with the LTTE and the LRA, respectively. The relevant country studies have demonstrated that the reform of security institutions was in each case closely bound up with the resolution of the conflict and, to a certain extent, deeper reforms of the structures of the state.

Support for SSR therefore needs to be based on a careful assessment of the political space available for change within the security sector. Pushing governments to develop more integrated policy responses to security problems that more effectively combine military options with legal, social, diplomatic and political instruments may in certain cases be premature without concomitant changes in the wider political environment.

In addition, SSR interventions need to take into account the fact that many security sectors are operating in a context of recurrent crisis. This reflects, on the one hand, internal realities that relate to years or decades of institutional decay brought about by underinvestment, low salaries and – in some cases – active attempts by political parties to undermine security institutions that were not considered loyal. On the other hand, it reflects wider political realities, namely that SSR is often being undertaken in a context of armed conflicts, generalized public insecurity or political uncertainty, which means that decision-making tends to be crisis-driven. This leads to ad hoc and short-termist approaches to reform that often cannot be sustained.

From a policy perspective, this has two implications for external actors. Firstly, they need to carefully tailor interventions to these institutional realities, ensuring that their interventions do not overload the government reform agenda and that proposed activities are realistic under the circumstances. Secondly, there is a need to think of 'critical junctures' – those political openings where opportunities may exist to push forward a reform agenda and where an enormous amount will likely depend on donors making the right decisions and moving quickly. Such opportunities may arise following elections, peace settlements or perhaps even government reshuffles that result in new political configurations that may be more favourable to SSR. Conversely, when these opportunities are not present, donors may need to move much more cautiously.

A second conclusion from the study is that in the absence of basic consensus within societies on the basic notion of security, the foundation for SSR is likely to be very weak. There is contestation in Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda over not only whose interests should take precedence (regime vs. community), but also what kind of security is required (physical safety vs. human security), and how priorities should be determined (by political elites or through participatory processes). This contestation of security has deep historical roots; is bound up with the violent conflicts each of these countries are currently experiencing; and reflects the differing economic, political and personal interests of not only national actors, but donors as well. The 'war on terrorism' that is supported by a number of OECD countries has generally had a deleterious impact on how SSR is conceived by shifting emphasis away from the governance and 'soft' (human security) dimensions to 'hard' security approaches.

This contestation over understandings of security has implications for the time frame of SSR – which may need to be understood in generational terms instead of years – as well as the role and focus of external assistance. While it is important that international assistance for SSR is informed by a holistic understanding of security (see for instance, the new *OECD*

DAC Handbook on Security System Reform), countries need to be given the space so that a genuinely national vision of how the security of the state and its citizens can best be achieved can emerge organically. Unless a broad notion of security that has roots in the society in question is mainstreamed in both political and security discourses, it is unlikely that more responsive state security institutions will emerge.

The problem is illustrated by the UK-supported Defence Review in Uganda, carried out during 2002–04, which embraced a holistic approach to security. However, the Security Policy Framework that was produced – which was intended to operationalize a new and more integrated policy response to security problems – was never effectively anchored in wider government planning and budgeting processes. This may yet happen, but there is a perception among certain groups that the Defence Review was driven by donor priorities. This – along with the fact that there have been conflicting messages from within the donor community about their support for the Defence Review – has undermined its legitimacy.[23]

A third conclusion, which follows on from the previous one, is that the holistic concepts of security that donors are promoting are unlikely to lead to more responsive security decision-making unless there is an appropriately integrated security decision-making architecture. This point is key, because SSR interventions often uncritically accept the basic institutional format that exists within the security sector, assuming that all that is required are basic organizational reforms or additional training in order to make institutions more responsive to public security needs. Yet current institutions are themselves the product of the orthodox state-centric and military-oriented approaches to security that prevail. There is thus a danger of SSR getting trapped in formal state structures and processes that give the impression of being democratically legitimized, but may in actual terms do little to respond to the real security needs of the community.

This problem can be seen with regard to the high-level security decision-making structures (often referred to as national security councils) that exist in different forms in most countries. While the names, composition and functions of these structures will differ, national decision-making structures have a fairly standard role, which may include advising the executive on security policy, co-ordinating security activities or executing policy decisions. In practice, as our studies have illustrated, these structures tend to focus mostly on traditional security threats, reflecting in part their composition – which is dominated by the military and intelligence actors, and in part the preoccupation of policymakers in countries gripped by armed conflicts or facing political challenges to their rule. Yet if broader notions of security are to become operationalized, these structures may need to be superseded by other institutions that more effectively combine all the policy instruments available to the state for addressing insecurity.

Before security decision-making structures that better respond to the realities of Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda can be crafted, however, there may need to be more fundamental changes in the way that the idea of security is conceptualized. One unintended consequence of the security sector debate has been to further entrench in people's minds the idea that

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23   For a detailed assessment of the Defence Review, see CSDG, *The Uganda Defence Review.*

security is something that can be 'delivered' or 'provided' by a well-functioning security sector. In the process, this may also have contributed to a tendency to conflate security with physical safety, rather than understanding security as being about a broader set of conditions that allow people to live a life free from fear and under the rule of law. For these broader conditions to be achieved, security must be seen as the *outcome* of broader political and policy processes that cut across not only all parts of the public sector, but also the non-state domain. In other words, security is a public policy issue rather than a concern of the security sector alone.

Furthermore, all three studies show that while security decision-making authority is heavily centralized, this power is in practice often fractured and contested. There is growing recognition of the importance of community action and self-provision of security and justice in response to the limitations of the state in the security domain. It is not necessarily a question of the state losing its monopoly of violence – which it may never have possessed in the first place – but that the state has subcontracted to or allowed other non-state groups to fulfil security functions with varying degrees of state support. The implication of this broader security thinking is that decision-making architectures must account for the role of non-state actors in addressing not only physical security threats, but also the human vulnerabilities that give rise to such threats in the first place.

All of this suggests that there is a potential for a vastly overloaded security decision-making agenda that may in some ways make it more difficult for states to address critical threats to their security. This study does not examine in any detail what forms of institutions might be appropriate. It highlights the gap that currently exists between the 'human security' conception of security and how security decision-making architectures in Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda currently operate. This gap will only be bridged by the (internal) development of decision-making architectures that address the unique circumstances facing these countries. External SSR assistance can encourage and support this process of change, but the real impetus for change must come from within these societies if it is to be sustainable.

Our fourth conclusion is that for state decision-making architectures to be truly responsive to the needs of wider society, there must be two developments. On the one hand, citizens must become more actively engaged in articulating their demands for improved security. Experience suggests that new thinking is required about how to mobilize sustained citizen pressure to ensure that security institutions are accountable. The ability of civil society, political parties and the citizenry to aggregate and articulate policy positions on security that can successfully challenge orthodox state approaches depends not simply on capacity-building, democratic elections or effective parliaments, but will require addressing more fundamental problems that relate to socioeconomic underdevelopment, low literacy levels and limited access to information.

On the other, state decision-making architectures will need to accommodate in a more systematic manner the dominant role that communities and non-state security actors in some countries (Nigeria is the best example from our study) have assumed in the security domain. The relationship between the formal state security architectures and the informal non-state architectures are simultaneously conflictual and complementary. It is very unlikely in the

short-to-medium-term time frame that formal state security actors such as the army and police in, for example, Nigeria will achieve complete pre-eminence in the delivery of security services, except in perhaps a limited number of urban areas.

Fifthly, donors involved in SSR need to acknowledge and address the fact that they are effectively part of the security game they are trying to influence. All external interventions in the security sector are bound up in the network of political relations and conflicts in a country. This requires not only that donors carry out sound political assessments in order to understand how their interventions will affect political conflicts and the dynamics of reform, but that they also adopt a clear policy position on the direction of change they would like to see, and work with other donors to achieve this. The cases of Nigeria, Uganda and Sri Lanka suggest that that this is not a mere exercise in co-ordination, but that to be effective it will require a shared political position based on shared analysis (a point we examine in more detail below).

As we argue next, internalizing political analysis in SSR policy and programming processes does not mean carrying out one or two studies. Rather, this should be seen as a long-term challenge that involves developing internal capacity to source and utilize the required knowledge, as well as institutional memory regarding SSR issues so that donors can learn from past experiences.

4.3 Guidelines for developing more politically sensitive programming

4.3.1 Situating SSR assistance within a coherent political framework

The security sector is the domain of donor engagement that is the least understood and the most sensitive. Control of the state security apparatus underpins political power in most countries, as a result of which external interventions are generally treated with suspicion. What happens in this sector at both a policy and an operational level is considered confidential by partner countries and is veiled in secrecy. These factors have made many donors wary of engaging in security matters, even as pressure has grown on the aid community to support SSR.

Most donors will therefore tread carefully when supporting SSR, all the more so because security is not a 'sector' like more traditional areas of donor engagement. Unlike health or education, security as a sector of public policy defies easy bureaucratic compartmentalization. This is because a broad range of state and non-state actors play a role – or have a role to play – in achieving security outcomes, many of whom do not fall within the formal domain. In these circumstances, politics is often seen as an obstacle to reform rather than as a 'lubricant' that may allow solutions to be found when there are different interests in a reform process.

However, because SSR is a political process, donors need to situate any form of engagement in the security sector within a political framework. This means, firstly, adopting a politically sensitive lens for analysis. SSR is concerned with fundamental issues about how security is governed in societies and whose interests are secured in the public policy process. Competition,

conflict and bargaining are all features of the policy environment in which security decision-making occurs. Political analysis is therefore necessary to understand what is at stake for different interest groups and what is possible in terms of reforms.

Secondly, working within a political framework has implications for how donors provide assistance for SSR. Donors usually have a range of instruments at their disposal to influence SSR processes, including financial aid, technical assistance, equipment transfers, dialogue, and various other means of encouraging or pressuring aid recipients to carry out reforms. How donors combine these instruments will determine the likelihood that their assistance will have a positive impact, although the kinds of changes donors would like to see in the security domain are unlikely to come about through technical assistance alone.

One way in which donors have reacted to the sensitivities and complexities of working with SSR has been to 'projectize' assistance and to out-source as much of it as possible to consultants. This has been accentuated in the UK's case by the trend to spend more with fewer staff inputs. To the extent that depoliticizing engagement in SSR is based on a desire to respect the sovereignty of partner countries on matters related to security, this could be seen as a good thing. But it may also have the opposite effect, by increasing reliance on pre-scriptive and technical approaches to assistance and marginalizing political engagement at crucial stages during an SSR process.

During the latter stages of the UK-supported Defence Review in Uganda, for instance, UK advisers were closely involved in discussions about the level of military expenditure that should be included in the 2004/05 budget. The advisers felt they had a duty to provide the best objective guidance they could about what level was appropriate in light of the Defence Review findings. However, recognizing that the judgement about affordability was a political one, to be taken by Ugandans themselves, they did not want to be seen to be dictating levels of spending. In the process, a misperception arose that the advisers' position reflected that of the British government, which did not in fact endorse a large increase in defence spending, but whose position on this had not been clearly communicated to the Ugandan government.[24]

As the three country studies show, the kinds of changes donors would like to see come about are by definition going to be very sensitive in nature. An approach that is politically insensitive, and that focuses on the transfer of aid without sufficient attention to cultivating relationships and understanding, runs the risk of damaging the trust between sovereign countries that must be the foundation of SSR assistance programmes.

Without coherence among different parts of donor governments and among donor countries, aid recipients may receive mixed signals about donors' own commitment to the SSR aims and the principles that the latter are advocating. There are, for instance, a huge number of externally supported security assistance initiatives that are not consistent with SSR. Within the UK government itself there are a range of departmental frameworks and policies that influence how SSR is approached. In the absence of a unified SSR policy, depart-

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24   The OPR that was carried out in 2005 following completion of the Defence Review recommended that there should be closer supervision of advisers working in such situations to ensure that misunderstandings do not arise about UK policy positions.

mental interests and mandates often take precedence in SSR programming, and it will be more difficult to reconcile UK strategic interests and development objectives.

Recommendation 1: *UK support for SSR should be provided within a clear strategic policy framework that spells out what the UK hopes to achieve by assistance in this area, the instruments and resources that it will draw upon, and the roles and responsibilities of different departments. The current SSR strategy is not binding upon departments, nor does it offer targets for departments to work towards in developing capacity to support SSR. [This is consistent with a recommendation made in the recently completed GCPP Review.]*

Recommendation 2: *DFID, FCO and MOD desk officers in London, as well as members of the SSDAT and the relevant advisory cadre in the UK missions overseas who have a responsibility for SSR programming, need to ensure that assistance is grounded in a solid political analysis that is regularly updated. FCO has a clear role to play in leading political dialogue around SSR with partner countries; this should be reflected in the job objectives for FCO staff.*

Recommendation 3: *Responsibility for delivering a significant portion of UK assistance for SSR is now out-sourced to the private sector. Consultants also need to demonstrate an understanding of how politics will affect their activities, and this should be reflected in the work plans of consultants and consulting firms to which HMG subcontracts the management of SSR assistance. HMG should push for a set of 'industry' standards that apply to private sector actors working on SSR.*

Recommendation 4: *The merger of the Africa and Global Conflict Prevention Pools offers an opportunity for cross-regional analysis and learning, as well as the development of a common departmental voice on SSR. The new Conflict Prevention Pool (CPP) should not simply be seen as a mechanism for co-ordinating SSR spending, but also for assessing the coherence of approaches and the impact of broader policies that may not fall under SSR programming, but can impact upon it (defence relations, counter-terrorism activities, arms sales, etc.). A key aim of the CPP Security and Small Arms Control Strategy should be to add value over and above the activities it funds.*

4.3.2 Integrating political analysis into programming

The basis for a politically sensitive programme of support for SSR is good political and contextual analysis. This can facilitate programming in several ways. Firstly, it can provide a policymaker or programme manager with a comprehensive assessment of the factors that are likely to affect the outcome of an SSR initiative. Such an analysis cannot divulge every detail, for instance, of how security decision-making occurs or a government's policy agenda in this area. That is not the point. But it can help to build up a picture of the personal and political interests of key stakeholders and the institutional characteristics of the security sector.

An important element of such analysis involves pinpointing which social and political forces might have the capacity and inclination to 'demand' change in the security sector and, conversely, those that might oppose it. This is not simply a question of conducting a standard

'stakeholder analysis', but rather understanding how pro-reform alliances emerge within societies, the critical political junctures at which these are more likely to occur, and whether conditions exist for a proposed programme of external assistance to have its intended impact. Understanding the personalities of decision-makers is particularly important; the more that power is personalized, the more that donor analysis and planning must account for the factors that shape decision-making at the level of the individuals involved.

It is also important to understand the motivations of the donor community that will come into play when a reform programme is launched. There are a range of 'costs' of aid related to the structures, practices and procedures of a donor or the current international aid system that can have certain perverse consequences, including reinforcing some of the practices that an SSR programme is ostensibly supposed to address.[25]

Secondly, political analysis should encourage close examination of the assumptions that underpin country SSR strategies. SSR thinking – as in other areas of development assistance – is influenced by 'received wisdoms' about the best way to support SSR, which are often accepted without critical examination. This includes, for example, the assumption that the state is the central provider of physical safety for most people, when in fact state security institutions are often a cause of insecurity or are simply absent from people's day-to-day lives. Another is the unquestioned belief that civil society groups, with sufficient international support, can exercise a 'demand' for change in the security sector, when, as our studies have confirmed, there are deeper structural impediments that may need to be addressed first.

Thirdly, a commitment to deeper contextual analysis should also encourage donor policymakers to recognize the limitations of traditional sources of information that tend to emanate from Western-based researchers and policy analysts. The recent reliance, in many cases, on international consultants to generate analysis may be problematic if they lack the in-depth local knowledge necessary to paint an accurate picture of the factors that will affect SSR. By relying on outsiders, an opportunity may be missed not only to tap into alternative perspectives on a country's security situation, but also to use research as an instrument for building internal constituencies to support SSR.

Besides helping to identify practical entry points for assistance that can be negotiated with a partner country, such baseline research can also provide a basis for ongoing analysis at various key stages of the programme cycle, which was one of the aims of this project. This is not an idea that any UK government departments are averse to, and indeed is consistent with messages from other policy studies.[26] The issue rather is how the tension between the long time frames generally required for good research and analysis and the pressure on government to act quickly can be managed within the programming cycles for SSR assistance.

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25   For a discussion, see Moss et al., 'An Aid-Institutions Paradox?'. They cite, among others, the volatility and uncertainty of overseas development assistance flows, the fragmentation of donor efforts, project proliferation and duplication, conflicting or dominant donor agendas, competition for staff, and high administrative or overhead costs. Drawing upon a review of the literature, they argue that certain aid practices 'can in fact serve to reinforce the patrimonial element within recipient governments at the expense of the legal-rational' (p. 8).

26   Ball and van de Goor, 'Promoting Conflict Prevention Through Security Sector Reform'.

Within DFID, which has lead on UK SSR programming in Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda, this cycle typically comprises four stages: firstly, some form of pre-assessment to determine whether there is an interest on the part of a partner government for SSR assistance, and whether such assistance would fit within DFID's development mandate; secondly, the development of a country SSR strategy, often, although not always, in close consultation with the partner government and other non-state actors; thirdly, implementation, including arrangements for monitoring or mid-term review over the course of the programme, at which points adjustments in the programme might occur; and, fourthly, programme evaluation.

The examples of Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda suggest that there is much variation in terms of how consistently research is integrated into the programming cycle.[27] In Nigeria, the DFID-funded, British Council-managed Access to Justice programme, initiated in 2002, was preceded by an assessment of justice and policing requirements conducted by external consultants. At the conclusion of the 18-month inception period, the programme was redesigned to include a growth component. Over the course of the programme, a number of studies conducted by external consultants have been commissioned that have examined issues of relevance to the project, including informal policing and the role of traditional chiefs in security. There has not yet been an evaluation of the programme's substantive achievements to date, although this is scheduled following completion in 2008.[28]

In the cases of both Sri Lanka and Uganda,[29] HMG's SSR programmes were based principally on the findings of a two-week 'scoping visit' led by the SSDAT. This involved consultations with a broad range of national and donor stakeholders. This project's studies on security decision-making constituted the first time in all three of these countries that an in-depth analysis was conducted of the political conditions affecting SSR (although as our Review of Methodology confirms, integrating this knowledge into the programming cycle faced a number of challenges).

In Sri Lanka, this analysis fed into a number of internal British High Commission discussions in Colombo during 2007 on the future of the SSR programme. No formal evaluation of the programme has yet taken place, although the recent, wide-scale resurgence of hostilities between the government and LTTE has highlighted the need to reconfirm that the initial programme assumptions and objectives remain valid.[30] In Uganda, this analysis

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27 See Bastian and Hendrickson, 'State Responsiveness to Public Security Needs, Review of Methodology' for more detailed discussion of this.

28 In 2006, the programme was one of three case studies examined as part of a broader internal review of ACPP and DFID security and justice sector reform programming in Africa. This review was based primarily on interviews conducted over a short period of time, with the review team noting that monitoring and evaluation documents were 'difficult to access'. The team noted further that 'there did not seem to be a consistent application of either internal or external review and evaluation either between departments or between projects'. See Ball et al., 'Aide Memoire'.

29 In preparing the UK proposal for support for the Defence Review, the project advisers drew upon three sets of analysis: (1) two studies on financial management issues prepared by international consultants in 1997/98 (the Logistics and Accounting Reform Programme [LARP] and the Uganda Defence Efficiency Study [UDES], respectively); (2) a report produced by international consultants that was based on a workshop and revisited the recommendations of the LARP and UDES studies; and (3) a number of brief 'risk analysis' documents written by the UK defence attaché and an external consultant from King's College London.

30 The programme consists of assistance in the areas of national security, higher defence management and policing.

has thus far informed the drafting of the 1998–2011 SSR programme proposal, although there has been limited discussion involving advisers from DFID and the High Commission about the country study findings. In Nigeria, attempts to feed the findings into the DFID's Nigeria policy process were frustrated due to delays in completion of the Nigeria study.

The three cases confirm that decisions on whether and how to incorporate research, analysis and evaluations into the programming cycle are generally taken by country offices, in keeping with the large autonomy that most have. Guidelines from DFID London seem to exist solely for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation, and appear to be restricted to specifying the need for some kind of OPR that includes a basic impact assessment, although country offices again have considerable flexibility to determine who carries these out and the scope of the evaluation. This variation in practice, furthermore, does not seem unusual, given DFID's policy of decentralizing programming and the real diversity of country contexts and SSR initiatives, which make a certain degree of flexibility desirable.

Given that SSR programmes will tend to vary enormously in terms of their focus, aims and activities, not to mention the context in which they are implemented, it is not possible to develop a template for integrating analysis into the programming cycle. It may be more helpful to think about how to ensure that programmes – particularly those with a multi-year time frame – are flexible enough to respond to emerging research ideas and findings as they appear, rather than needing to wait until the next annual review or phase of the programme to incorporate them. As Sri Lanka amply illustrates, a sudden change in the political context – in this case, a dramatic escalation in violence between the government and the LTTE in the latter part of 2007 – may make it necessary to review the underlying programme aims and assumptions.

Recommendation 5: *To be effective, SSR country assistance strategies must be context-driven. There should be involvement by local analysts in the various programming stages, including the preliminary assessment phase of an SSR programme, monitoring and evaluations. Programming should be informed by a thorough assessment of all major factors that will affect its outcome.*

Recommendation 6: *Political analysis should be a central component of SSR programming. The timing of analysis should respond not simply to administrative requirements, but should be carried out at strategic programming points. Programming, in turn, should be flexible enough to respond to emerging research, rather than waiting until the next annual review or phase of the programme to incorporate findings.*

Recommendation 7: *Detailed plans for the monitoring and evaluation of SSR programmes, as well as risk identification and management, should be included in SSR programme documents to ensure that adequate provision is made for financing and managing the process. This may help to safeguard research and evaluation activities, particularly if substantive changes to the programme are made after its inception.*

Recommendation 8: *Criteria and guidelines for incorporating analysis into SSR programming, determining the nature and level of involvement by local analysts in setting research agendas*

and evaluating SSR programmes, and establishing and maintaining a programme log on SSR issues should be developed by the Security and Small Arms Control Strategy.

4.3.3 Developing common departmental and donor analytical frameworks

It should be expected that the task of ensuring donor policy coherence will be as difficult in the security sector as in other sectors, and probably more so. What distinguishes security from, say, health and education is that certain donors are more likely to have strategic interests at stake in the security sector. These may have to do with common defence pacts; a political interest in supporting the regime in power for historical, strategic or economic reasons; and other national security considerations (such as the US-led war on terror). These strategic interests may be at odds with the security interests of the partner country where SSR is being undertaken, with the result that several donors may be working at cross-purposes.

Where a government is receiving mixed messages from its donor partners about the importance of SSR, there is a very real risk that SSR assistance may not be as effective as it might otherwise be. In these circumstances, efforts to strengthen policy coherence – whether through better harmonization of donor activities or seeking to align these more effectively with the partner government's needs and priorities – are likely to confront real obstacles of a political nature. There may, however, be benefits where donor countries agree to participate in joint policy-making initiatives (such as the OECD-DAC SSR process) or conduct joint analysis at the country level around programmes where there is a shared interest.

Among international actors, there are four broad approaches to assistance in the security domain that give an indication of what donor countries want to achieve programmatically: peace-building, (democratic) governance, justice and security, and a defence/military approach. The diversity of donor approaches is not always consistent with SSR as defined in the OECD-DAC sense of the word, reflecting donors' different political agendas and/or interpretations of the nature of the problem that needs to be solved.

DFID, for instance, sees SSR as an enabler for conflict prevention, economic development, social development and good governance. Programmatically, SSR contributes to two key policy agendas: conflict prevention and governance. Advisory cadres in both areas have been involved in developing SSR programmes in Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda, as well as in other countries where DFID has been engaged in SSR. While both conflict and governance advisers bring different skills and competencies to the table, it is not necessarily the case that either is best-suited in a given context to develop or manage an SSR programme of assistance. More often than not, SSR will straddle both areas, and the danger is that the particular approach adopted will reflect not so much the needs on the ground, but the lens of analysis of the adviser in the country office in whose portfolio SSR falls, or the consultant that this person hires.

Because the context for SSR is likely to differ from country to country, in some cases significantly, different analytical approaches may be required when assessing needs and designing programmes of assistance. Despite the conceptual ideal, SSR is rarely manifested on the ground in terms of a comprehensive, sector-wide and holistic approach, with clear

linkages between different 'subsectors'. In practice, approaches to assistance will be heavily influenced by what is possible in a given context, making the choice of analytical framework important.

Recommendation 9: *Given that SSR plays a key part in HMG's international assistance programmes, there is a strong case for DFID to designate the specific skill sets and experience required for SSR advisory posts. This would be the best way of ensuring that the right people are selected for the right postings in countries where SSR is being supported. [See the GCPP Review.]*

Recommendation 10: *Joint donor programmes of support for SSR are in most contexts desirable in order to maximize the impact of donor assistance and avoid duplication. The development of common analytical frameworks offers a basis for harmonizing donor views and policy, and should be encouraged by HMG.*

4.3.4 Fostering national, research-led debates on SSR

The development of a process of national debate and reflection upon SSR is ultimately necessary if countries are to chart an SSR path that is genuinely independent, home-grown and responsive to national circumstances, needs and priorities. This debate cannot be expected to flourish if it is based on externally generated research and analysis. This is so not simply because of the obvious, previously mentioned limitations of such research in terms of capturing the empirical reality of security and insecurity in developing countries, but also because the research *process* itself may be as important – if not more so – than the actual *findings* in terms of influencing policy change.

This is the case for three reasons. Firstly, it is because involvement by national researchers is more likely to confer legitimacy on a research initiative in the eyes of national stakeholders. This is more likely to be the case where there are doubts about donor models of SSR or whether external researchers have the local knowledge required to examine a particular policy issue. In the cases of both the Security, Justice and Growth programme in Nigeria and the Uganda Defence Review, outside national consultants were contracted at various stages to produce policy-relevant analysis to feed into the respective SSR programmes. In Uganda's case, a number of these consultants subsequently became more involved in Defence Review activities, including monitoring, evaluation and implementation of the findings.

Secondly, it is because processes of policy change tend to be long-term in nature and unlikely to culminate in real changes in practice within the security sector until there are significant changes in prevailing policy discourses and the mindsets of political elites, policymakers and members of the security forces. Policy change, therefore, is a dynamic process involving debate, negotiation, compromise and the building of pro-reform constituencies – all of which can be enhanced, in the right conditions, by interaction among researchers, policy analysts, advocacy groups, policymakers and members of the security forces themselves. If donors accept these arguments about both the time line for policy change in the security sector and the need for this to be driven by a national vision for reform, then this has implications for where they prioritize capacity-building for research in their SSR assistance programmes.

Thirdly, recognizing that there is a general paucity of knowledge on security issues in countries where donors are engaged in the security sector, donors should be open to opportunities to fund and support a stream of research that will support the objective of a nationally led debate on SSR. This would complement their programme activities and serve a number of key objectives, including deepening their understanding of the SSR challenges being faced, testing the assumptions that underpin donor SSR assistance and building the bank of institutional knowledge within the country.

Such a research agenda should include both 'core' research that generates new empirical insights about the security sector and policy-relevant analysis conducted with the aim of testing the (at times conflicting) conceptual frameworks such as human security, SSR and the war-on-terror/counter-terrorism approaches that have come to inform international assistance in the security domain.

As important as research is, it is by no means a sufficient condition for national ownership of SSR processes, nor is it necessarily the entry point for donor engagement in SSR. Unless government's are receptive to research findings, then it may be counter-productive for donors to be seen to be encouraging research that challenges government policy. National researchers may end up being seen as representing donor interests rather than constituting a legitimate alternative source of policy advice that is being offered in the national interest. In such a case, it may make sense to start by building analytical capacity within policy and planning units, which was the approach taken during the Uganda Defence Review.

Despite the case for strengthening national research capacity, this objective tends to rank low in donor SSR priorities. The main reason is that donor time frames do not allow for the long-term programming required to support substantive and sustainable improvements in research capacity either in academia or civil society. This can rarely be achieved in one-to-two-year time frames, which is the average for donor SSR projects or programmes. Most donors therefore decide, when a local view is required, to call upon national consultants, whose numbers, in most countries, are typically limited. The expertise and commitment of these consultants should not be called into question; the point is, rather, that commissioning policy-relevant research from national consultants is not the same as building research capacity.

But it is also possible that the policy objectives of certain donors may be at odds with the policy orientations of national research, policy and advocacy groups. In these cases, it should be expected that the donor or donors will be reluctant to provide a platform for a national, research-led debate on SSR that may diverge from their own interests. This attitude is not consistent with the emphasis now being placed on national ownership by many donors, including the OECD-DAC, whose recently published *OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform* gives pride of place to this principle. It is therefore essential that donors do not simply pay lip service to this principle, but that a commitment to national ownership informs all aspects of donor support for SSR.

Recommendation 11: *Genuine national ownership of SSR programmes cannot be achieved unless there is meaningful capacity among national stakeholders to analyse and lead the debate*

on SSR issues.[31] *The UK should make it a priority to foster the development of an SSR research community in the countries where it is engaged in supporting SSR. While this aim can be promoted centrally through support for (cross-) regional research initiatives such as the GFN-SSR and the new Global Consortium on Security Transformation (GCST), this should not take the place of nationally targeted support, where there is an entry point and need for this.*

4.3.5 Strengthening in-country SSR advisory capacity

SSR is a political issue, as we have argued throughout this paper, and therefore fundamentally about people. This has implications for the balance that donors strike in their aid programmes among analysis and programme management, spending money, delivering technical assistance (which is often subcontracted to consultants), managing relations with the various stakeholders in a programme, and political dialogue. The recent trend of some development organizations, including DFID, to focus on the size of an aid package rather than staffing levels (the 'more with less' agenda) carries with it the risk that country offices will be less equipped to carry out those tasks, such as analysis and relationship-building, that are most important for SSR.

We argue that a dynamic analysis of the factors that will affect SSR should underpin all stages of programming, although the benefits of this may be limited if donors lack adequate in-country capacity to manage their programmes in an effective, sensitive and politically informed manner. This requires staff with appropriate local knowledge, skills and incentives to engage with the non-administrative aspects of programme management, including political analysis, policy development and relationship-building. The absence of a lead SSR adviser or frequent changes in adviser, as has been the case in Uganda, will increase the pressures to subcontract management of a programme to outside advisers or consultants, with potential implications for its success.

Between 2001 and 2007, during which period the UK has supported the Defence Review, six different advisers in DFID Uganda have had responsibility for managing the programme, of which three were governance advisers, one was a conflict adviser, one was part of the Associate Professional Officer Scheme, and one was an outside consultant who was also tasked with advising the Ugandan Defence Reform Unit on its conduct of the Defence Review. During this period, there has been an ongoing debate within DFID Uganda about the need to appoint a full-time SSR adviser to lead the work in this area, although this has not happened because of civil service restrictions on the hiring of additional staff and the sensitivity of the UK's engagement in support of the Defence Review.

The outsourcing of SSR to external advisers (whether this be the London-based SSDAT, the new Geneva-based International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT)[32] or the growing corps of independent international SSR consultants) is a pragmatic response to capacity limitations within country offices. The use of external advisers has the obvious benefit of

31 See Nathan, *No Ownership, No Commitment.*
32 ISSAT is based at the Geneva Center for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF).

allowing programme managers to match specific core thematic or regional SSR expertise with needs on the ground. Examples can be given from Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda where the use of external advisers has proved an effective means of transferring knowledge and supporting a nationally led SSR programme.

However, this trend carries with it various risks, which arise primarily because external advisers often (though by no means always) lack extensive grounding in the SSR process that they are advising on. This may be the case because they simply know little about the country they are advising on. But even where advisers have country expertise, with frequent comings and goings there may be insufficient incentives or opportunities to cultivate relationships with key stakeholders. This may have the unintended consequence of increasing the UK's engagement in SSR at a technical level at the expense of an engagement that is based on a thorough political understanding of and regular political dialogue with partner government counterparts.

Recommendation 12: *HMG should ensure that it has adequate advisory capacity within country offices to manage SSR programmes before it engages. The management task should not be seen purely in administrative terms, but includes SSR expertise, country knowledge, and adequate time and incentives to engage with national SSR actors. Where capacity does not exist, the SSDAT should be capacitated to deal with the political, development and conflict issues that may arise. [See the GCPP Review.]*

Recommendation 13: *The drive to cut administrative costs within the UK's aid programme may make it more difficult for HMG to ensure sufficient, well-trained human resources in its overseas SSR programmes. HMG needs to assess how the out-sourcing of SSR programme management to consultancy firms will impact upon overall programme effectiveness and, in particular, the ability to ensure that technical assistance is provided in a politically sensitive manner.* ◼

Chapter 5
Conclusions

Drawing on the experiences of Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uganda, this study suggests that UK programming in the security sector is based on a relatively weak empirical base, particularly with regard to the politics of reform processes. The problem is not fundamentally one of the poor capacity of advisers or a lack of appreciation of the importance of analysis. The importance of evidence-based programming is understood by those managing SSR engagements in all three countries, a point that applies more broadly to other countries where HMG provides SSR assistance, as confirmed by the recent GCPP Review.[33]

Rather, a number of different factors help to explain the inconsistent resort to political analysis in SSR programming: the political imperative to move quickly that existed at the time programmes were established; the lack of institutional memory on SSR issues within UK missions in these countries; the fact that SSR advisers in country offices are often over-stretched, which reduces the amount of time spent on analysis; and a reliance on UK-based advisers who were often not country specialists to implement the assistance programme.

In these circumstances, this raises the question of whether more research would actually result in different approaches to SSR. It could be argued that such research leads SSR advisers to examine their programmatic assumptions more critically, to consult more extensively with local actors and to seek to cultivate greater national ownership of the initiative before it is launched. This may result in different objectives or time frames being adopted for the programme of assistance or alternative modalities for delivering UK assistance. But there are also other factors that determine policymakers' ability to utilize research, which means that more research might not have the intended impact.

A key issue is whether SSR research is relevant to UK policy concerns and assists policymakers in resisting the political pressure they often face to act before they fully understand the situation. Experience suggests that this is not always the case, due to the weak link between research and policy that this project highlights. Developing an SSR knowledge base that donor policymakers will actually draw upon in a consistent manner will therefore require a collective learning process in which SSR researchers and donor policy users work closely together.

The basis for an effective collaboration – which is examined more closely in Part II of this paper – is a research compact. Donor SSR programming must be flexible enough to respond to the changes that research findings entail; while researchers who seek to produce policy-

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33   Ball et al., *From Project to Programme*.

relevant research must, for their part, be willing to accept some direction from donors about what issues are relevant, to present research in a form that is accessible to policymakers, and to do so in a timely manner. SSR research will not achieve policy relevance merely through the greater involvement of local analysts, but through a better synergy between its production and its potential uses. ■

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Annex B Partner institutions

The **Centre for Basic Research** (CBR) is a research and training organization based in Kampala. Established in 1988, CBR is a centre of excellence on sustainable development issues. CBR conducts basic and applied research of social, economic and political significance to Uganda in particular and Africa in general, so as to influence policy, raise consciousness and improve quality of life.

www.cbr-ug.org/

The **Centre for Democracy and Development** (CDD) is an independent, not-for-profit, research, training and advocacy organization based in Abuja, Nigeria. Its primary mission *is to be a catalyst and facilitator for strategic analysis and capacity building for sustainable democracy and development in the West African sub-region.* Dr. Jibrin Ibrahim, who managed the Nigeria research, is Director.

www.cddwestafrica.org/

The **Social Scientists' Association** (SSA) is a leading civil society institution in Sri Lanka committed to the production and dissemination of critical knowledge in the areas of political economy, gender, social and political change, conflict and peace processes. The SSA is also engaged in community education and advocacy. SSA publishes *Polity*, a monthly journal on current critical issues concerning Sri Lanka.

www.ssalanka.org/

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

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