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Understanding Security Sector Reform

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Introduction

Although there is a growing literature on Security Sector Reform (SSR), most of those who have reflected on the subject for any length of time would agree with Philipp Fluri that it is an "ill-defined concept.[1]" This is odd, but it is also disquieting. It is odd because the subject has been much discussed since the late 1990s (and most of its component parts go back much further than that). It is disquieting because SSR is not just a theoretical subject. It has been the basis of reorganisations around the world, which have reallocated functions, terminated careers, reduced budgets and manpower and reconfigured the defence and security sectors in numerous countries.

This essay does three things. First, it briefly describes the confusion and uncertainty of much SSR thinking, and tries to account for it in historical and institutional terms. Next, it works methodically through the main issues of SSR – notably definitional ones – and tries to dispel confusion and propose some working definitions. Finally, it sets out what a sensible SSR concept might consist of, taking specific account of the very different circumstances which exist in different areas.

Two immediate qualifications are necessary. First, the last few years have seen the appearance of a new generation of SSR studies, usually by regional experts, and sometimes by active participants, describing individual cases in much more

[1] Philip Fluri, "Oversight and Guidance: The Relevance of Parliamentary Oversight For the Security Sector and its Reform" in Hans Born, Philipp Fluri, Anders Johnsson (eds.) *Handbook for Parliamentarians No 5, Oversight of the Security Sector: Principles, Mechanisms and Practices*, IPU/DCAF, Geneva, Belgrade, 2003, p. 16.

nuanced and sophisticated terms.[2] There have also been a number of useful general studies which acknowledge the complexities of the subject, and whose analysis is often close to that offered here.[3] Nonetheless, much writing about SSR still suffers from two principal weaknesses.

- It is too often the product of those without personal experience of, or frequent contact with, the security sector or with politics on the one hand, or without deep regional political expertise on the other.
- As a consequence it is too often based on theoretical models drawn from political science, which are of limited use for understanding how the security sector actually works in practice, varying as it does enormously from country to country.

This essay is designed to make good some of these deficiencies.

In addition, when those involved in SSR projects on the ground are taxed with the sort of concerns expressed in this paper, they often object that, in practice, SSR projects are much less rigid in design, and much more influenced by local conditions, than might be thought from a reading of the literature. By my own observation, this is often true. But it is surely unsatisfactory if practitioners on the ground have to develop, by trial and error, successful modes of operation which can run counter to the publicly-expressed ideology of the very organisations for which they work. In contrast, it is also true that some organisations new to SSR and without experienced staff, have actually tried to apply some of these concepts very rigidly in a rather ideological fashion, and without conspicuous success. Ultimately, it is unsatisfactory if a subject such as SSR, important and complex as it is, does not actually have a respectable, empirically founded, set of concepts from which to work. This paper is a contribution to the development of that set of concepts.

Definitions of SSR are various. On one hand, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) defines SSR as helping "developing countries improve the accountability and transparency of their security sectors."[4]. On another hand, a paper for the Stability Pact Working Table III (on Security and Defence issues) defines it as "Right-sizing, re-orientation, reform, and capacity-building of national defence forces."[5] On still another hand, the Bonn International Centre for Conversion (BICC) defines the same process as intended "to create armed, uniformed forces which are functionally differentiated, professional forces under objective and subjective political control, at the lowest

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2 In particular, Gavin Cawrtha and Robin Luckham (eds.) *Governing Insecurity: Democratic Control of Military and Security Establishments in Transitional Democracies*, London, Zed Books, 1993, and Rocky Williams, Gavin Cawthra and Diane Abrahams (eds.) *Ourselves to Know: Civil-Military Relations and Defence Transformation in Southern Africa*, Pretoria, Institute for Security Studies, 2003.

3 Notably Dylan Hendrickson, *A Review of Security Sector Reform*, London, Conflict, Security and Development Working Group Working Papers No 1, 1999, and Michael Brozoska, *Development Donors and the Concept of Security Sector Reform*, Occasional Paper No 4, Geneva, Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2003.

4 DFID Terms of Reference for the Provision of Consultancy Services on Conflict, Security and Development Issues, ref 01/2892 - undated, para 8.

5 Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, Working Table III, Security and Defence issues, "Security Sector Reform", paper for the Regional Conference, Bucharest, 25-26 October 2001.

functional level of resource use", followed be several pages of detailed discussion.[6] Women Waging Peace see it as about "(r)educing the size, budget and scope of the security sector and reforming it to become more transparent and accountable to its citizens."[7] Elsewhere, SSR has been linked to the proliferation of light weapons, and small arms in various countries[8], and the Peace Research Institute of Oslo project on Security Sector Reform in Malawi to "prevent the proliferation of small arms in the country" [9]. And a UK consultancy offers its assistance in SSR projects "including weapons collection, munitions recovery and specialist EOD and Mineclearance (sic) training and advice [10]. To this, already considerable, list, some would also add the demobilisation of ex-combatants and the promotion of regional security structures.[11] Child soldiers have even been proposed as an element of reform by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee in their Guidelines for Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation.

Much of this incoherence can be explained by the parentage of SSR itself: it is the bastard child of Civil-Military Relations and Development Studies. Civil-Military Relations (CMR) arose from the interest which political scientists, especially in the US, started to take in the military as an institution after the Second World War. By that stage, military involvement in Latin American politics was proverbial, and military regimes were everywhere in that continent. Unsurprisingly, relations between the political world and the military became a major theme. Yet it was difficult to investigate it empirically: foreign political scientists with notebooks asking about the military were unlikely to be welcome, and few military dictators were prepared to give interviews. As a result, much of the work had to be done by inference, through careful reading of legislation and government statements, and through the application of theoretical models often derived from the operation of the US political system. When newly-independent states in Africa began to fall under military control as well, it began to seem to some that there was a world-wide tendency for the military to seek power, an impression strengthened by the rise of military governments in places as various as South Korea and Pakistan. Thus emboldened, non-specialists began to wonder whether there were, in fact, things of general applicability that could be said about the military, and a rash of books in the 1950s and 1960s argued implicitly that there were.[12] Although it is important not to minimise the real difference in approach between these books, they do share

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6 Michael Brzoska, "The Concept of Security Sector Reform" in *Security Sector Reform*, BICC Briefing Paper No 15, Bonn, 2000, pp. 9-11. Pedantically, it might be noted that this definition, based of course on Huntington's writing, yokes together two concepts, "subjective" and "objective" political control, which that author considered to be alternatives to each other, and the first to be undesirable anyway.

7 At www.womenwagingpeace.net/ content/toolkit/ chapters/Security_Sector_Reform.pdf

8 Eg Dominick Donald and Funmi Oloisakin, *Security Sector Reform and the Demand for Small Arms and Light Weapons*, Ploughshares Briefing 01/7 (at www.ploughshares.ca)

9 See w.prio.no/research/project.asp <http://www.prio.no/research/project.asp>)

10 [Higginson Associates: see www.bcb.c.uk/database/member641.htm <http://www.bcb.c.uk/database/member641.htm>

11 Malcolm Chalmers, *Security Sector Reform in Developing Countries: an EU Perspective,* Saferworld, Conflict Prevention Network, 2000.

12 Samuel P Huntingdon, The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Practice of Civil Military Relations, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1957. S E Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics*. London, Pall Mall, Press, 1962, and, somewhat later, Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*, New York, Free Press, 1971.

some common features. The armies portrayed in them noticeably resemble those of Britain and the United States, as well as those written about by Latin American CMR specialists. They are large, powerful, well-trained and well-disciplined and so it is a mystery "not that this force rebels against its civilian masters, but why it ever obeys them."[13] Most armies in the world, then and now, are not like this, of course.[14] Likewise, it was argued that the military were always "pessimistic, collectivist, historically inclined, power-oriented, nationalistic, militaristic, pacifist and instrumentalist in [their] view of the military profession."[15] Real military officers were rather different from this image, and they were different from it in different ways in different places. Military officers from Angola and Australia, Brazil and Bulgaria, Canada and China, came from totally different traditions, and thought in very different ways. As will be explained later, the political background of various militaries and their relationship to the state and politics, varies enormously.

This type of analysis was very simple. It assumed only two actors (the military, often in practice the Army, and civilian politicians), and it saw their relationship as adversarial, such that there is a constant battle by civilians to "control" the military. This in turn meant that the two played a zero-sum game, in which "the essential premise for any system of civilian control is the minimisation of military power."[16] Since this power varies with "the proportion of the national product devoted to military purposes and … the number of individuals serving with the armed services,"[17] then logically civilian control is enhanced by reducing defence budgets and manpower levels. It also assumed that there were only two possible states – civilian democracy or military rule.

Yet quite suddenly, in the early 1980s, military regimes started to disappear from the world. The process began in Latin America where in a few years military regimes tumbled like dominoes, followed after a brief delay by many regimes in Africa. Even distant South Korea became a democracy. In many cases, budgets and manpower were savagely cut, yet scholars found that there were relationships between the military and new civilian regimes of unsuspected complexity, and that "control" was a much more slippery concept than it had appeared. Even in the relatively homogeneous area of Latin America, it was not clear whether civilian "control" had been enhanced or reduced, or even if the concept had much meaning. As J Samuel Fitch noted, all this uncertainty was

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13 Finer, *Man on Horseback*, p. 6.

14 Eliot Cohen points out that fear of the power of the military has been a constant in western civilisation since at least Plato, and has existed for centuries (e.g. in the United States and Britain) largely independently of the activities of the military in those nations. See Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen and Leadership in Wartime*, New York, The Free Press, 2002, p. 225.

15 Huntington, *The Soldier*, p.68.

16 *Ibid,,* p.122. Cited – approvingly – by Ernesto Lopez, "Latin America: Objective and Subjective Civilian Control Revisited" in David Pion-Berlin (ed), *Civil-Military Relations in Latin America: New Analytical Perspectives*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2001, p. 91.

17 Huntington, *The Soldier*, p.88.

> troubling in a field that aspires to be treated as a serious social science. The lack of even minimal consensus on seemingly basic questions undermines our authority as scholars to speak on policy issues that are crucial.[18]

Much of this uncertainty has been passed down to SSR as a discipline. In the 1990s, however, CMR theorists were joined for the first time in the debate by several sorts of development experts. Historically, government development donors had not had much to do with the security sector.[19] Increasingly, however, they began to try to play a role, initially concentrating on "the reduction of military expenditure for development purposes,"[20] but subsequently becoming involved in other areas as well. As more and more complex UN operations were launched in the 1990s, and as post-conflict reconstruction schemes were Implemented in places as various as Kosovo and East Timor, the role of these organisations increased, although in most cases they continued to have a wary relationship with the security sector itself. In addition, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank increasingly intervened in SSR issues, not always helpfully, since both organisations were "dominated by neo-classical economists" who have historically considered military expenditure to be "pure waste."[21]

The entry of development specialists into the debate coincided roughly with the wider involvement of governments, turning very quickly what had been an academic subject into one with extremely practical implications. Defence reform (except in the sense of larger budgets and more forces) was not a priority for the West during the Cold War, when military governments were tolerated and even encouraged, since they were assumed to be reliably anti-communist. Outside the cockpit of Europe, the Communist Threat was not perceived to be primarily military, but rather political. Under US tutelage, and drawing also on French counter-insurgency doctrine from Algeria, Latin American nations evolved National Security doctrines, involving the use of the Army against Communism in all aspects of daily life. A typical view was that of the Argentine General Ongagnia that among the tasks of the armed forces was the defence of the "moral and spiritual values of western Christian civilisation", which Communism, with its modernity, its secularism and its egalitarianism, was clearly intending to destroy. [22] In Africa the situation was more fragmented and less driven by ideology, but military leaders were again tolerated and encouraged because they could be relied on to defend western strategic interests, especially if appropriately paid. With the end of the Cold War, all this changed, and it became an urgent task, reform these same governments, as well as those of the former Warsaw Pact states. It was no longer acceptable to have military dictatorships in the western camp.

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18 J Samuel Fitch, "Military Attitudes Towards Democracy: How Do We Know if Anything Has Changed?" in Pion-Berlin (ed;) *Civil-Military Relations*, p.60.

19 Brzoska, *Development Donors*, p.3,

20 *Ibid*, p.5.

21 *Ibid*, p.6;

22 The training provided by the US is well-documented. Less known is the transfer of expertise from the French war in Algeria. See Gabriel Périès, "Un Modèle d'Echange Doctrinal Franco-Argentin", in Frégosi, (ed.) *Armées et Pouvoirs*.

This varied heritage is reflected in the long and elaborate list of tasks put forward as components of an SSR programme. A representative list is that provided by Wulf, building on earlier work by Chalmers and Nicole Ball [23]

- Building the capacity of security-sector organisations to perform their legitimate functions.
- Strengthening civilian management and control
- Fostering respect for human rights and the rule of law within security-sector organisations.
- Strengthening the capacity of civil society to perform monitoring functions.
- Fostering the transparency of security-sector and budget management
- Promoting regional confidence-building mechanisms
- Technical assistance for the demobilisation and reintegration of non-combatants
- Tackling the proliferation of small arms
- Incorporating security-sector reform into political dialogue.[24]

This is an extremely ambitious list. What it reflects, however, like the SSR definitions cited above, and the view of the security sector historically common to both the CMR and Development debates, is a lack of interest in what the security sector is actually *for*. This is not surprising: CMR theorists had, after all, seen the security sector as a threat, and once that threat was removed by making the military smaller and poorer the problem was essentially solved. Development theorists saw security expenditure as a drain on resources which could be better used elsewhere: that expenditure should be reduced or even eliminated. Neither group saw, except in the most abstract and theoretical of terms, any useful function for the security sector. The DNA of Security Sector Reform, in addition, comes largely from groups which have deliberately shunned too close an involvement with that sector, and so have little practical knowledge of how it works: some continue to argue that SSR practitioners should not actually engage with the sector itself. [25] Thus, as Brzoska notes, "few of those employed by development donor institutions have either prior knowledge or experience of security-related issues[26]" in spite of the power they wield. It is for this reason, surely, that the vocabulary of SSR studies tends to privilege constraints by outsiders: reduction, control, oversight, monitoring, downsizing, and the strengthening of organisations outside the security sector.

Which brings us to the important and unresolved question of how we actually define the security sector. Originally, as we have seen, it was the military. It expanded to include the police when development experts began to take an interest in the subject, and at a minimum is now thought to include the intelligence services

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[23] Nicole Ball, S*preading Good Practices in Security Sector Reform: Policy Options for the British Government*, London, Saferworld, 1998.

[24] Wulf, *Security Sector Reform*, p. 27.

[25] For example, it is argued that that in "case of doubt it is appropriate to avoid direct co-operation with security forces and instead to strengthen and support primarily those responsible for democratic control of the security sector… support for civilian governments, democratically elected parliaments, civil servants [actually part of the security sector anyway] with competences for control and monitors within civil society will be much more effective." See *Ibid*, p. 8. Experience suggests this is quite wrong.

[26] Brzoska, p. 38.

as well. But of late, much more far-reaching definitions have been offered, often including bodies "with a role in managing and monitoring the security sector – civilian ministries, parliaments and NGOs."[27] As it stands, this is confused – the Ministry of Defence in a democracy is a civilian ministry and is itself part of the security sector. In addition, there are dangerous constitutional problems in including parliament, let alone "human rights commissions [and] local and traditional justice mechanisms"[28] in the security sector as such. (NGOs, of course, have no status except that which they earn for themselves by being useful).

But the real dangers in this kind of approach are practical: they make any serious SSR programme impossibly large and complex, and turn SSR questions themselves into more general questions of "governance". As anyone who has worked in the security sector knows, there is almost no part of government, (and many institutions outside), which does not come into contact with the security sector at some stage. It is not unlikely that many of the groups and institutions mentioned above are in need of reform. So, parliament may be corrupt, NGOs may be in the pockets of foreign governments, and the judicial system may be open to abuse, but none of these are primarily security problems, and have to be dealt with as part of a wider programme to improve governance.

Even narrower definitions have their problematic moments. So the DCAF definition: "all state institutions and agencies that have the legitimate authority to use force, to order force or to threaten the use of force …. The Military… Intelligence, Border Guard and Paramilitary organisations,[29] " is concise and useful, but does perhaps put too much emphasis on "force". The Intelligence services, in a democracy, are not supposed to be concerned with the use of force, and, in modern society the Police proper are so linked with military and paramilitary forces that it seems artificial to exclude them; but using force is only a small part of their function. Finally, in most democratic jurisdictions, we need to remember that the security sector has no more legal right to use force than does the private citizen. It is in states of armed conflict that the difference applies.

A better approach perhaps is to take literally the concept of the security sector, and to define it as those organisations primarily responsible for the provision of security. A definition might run as follows:

> The security sector consists of all those institutions whose primary role is the provision of internal and external security, together with bodies responsible for their administration, tasking and control. In practice, this means the military, the police, the intelligence services, paramilitary forces and the government agencies responsible for them.[30]

This kind of narrow definition of the security sector, and correspondingly of SSR itself, is, of course, frequently contested, and it is worth taking a moment to examine why. One set of reasons is essentially political. In reality, many of the

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[27] Clingandael, International Alert and Saferworld, Towards a Better Practice Framework in Security Sector Reform, (Occasional SSR paper No 1, August 2002,) p. 1.

[28] *Women Waging Peace*..Presumably vigilante groups are not included.

[29] DCAF definition.

[30] The administration of justice – excluded from this list – is very important for stability, since, when people lose faith in the justice system to protect them, they take the law into their own hands, often with disastrous results. But that is really a different subject with a different set of criteria.

practical questions which arise in SSR programmes – the formation of a new civilian intelligence service, for example, or the establishment of a Ministry of Defence and its relations with operational headquarters – are very complex. They require the level of experience and expertise one would expect if the subject were brain surgery or the taxation of multinational corporations, and so limit sharply the number of parties who can sensibly be involved. The more the subject can be expanded, the more institutions and individuals with no practical experience can involve themselves. There is, therefore, often a competition to define SSR as – or at least extend it to – areas where others feel they have competence. Thus, parliamentarians and those who work for them will stress strengthening of parliamentary oversight, whereas civil-society groups will talk about accountability to citizens, in order to extend their influence in the SSR area. This is politics, and has to be accepted in a democratic society.

There are more fundamental issues as well, and two are worth raising, because they both have the effect of broadening, as well as blurring, the SSR debate. One is what is called "Human Security", first given that title by a 1994 UN Development Programme Report, and since taken up more widely. The core idea is that there are many threats to the well being of communities, and that war, or even violent crime, are not necessarily greater problems than epidemics or natural disasters. As far as it goes, this is hard to argue with, but it was, perhaps inevitably, coupled with demands for deep cuts in spending in the security sector, to release funds for disaster relief etc. The whole debate – essentially about where, if anywhere, to draw the boundaries of the issue of security – has become very complex, but has encouraged those who would wish to define the security sector very widely.

Yet by the same token, there has been a growing realisation that these priorities are not alternatives to each other, but rather that poverty reduction, and ultimately the creation of a society better able to cope with other emergencies, requires security first. This is easy to understand pragmatically. All states without exception have enjoyed prosperity when the central government is able to provide its people with security in their daily lives and their commercial activities. This security produces an increase in trade, and a middle class willing to invest for the future, in the knowledge that the future will be secure enough to invest in. Personal security requires laws that can be upheld, and penalties for transgression that can be enforced, and this requires a security apparatus. Once a businessman starts paying taxes to the state, rather than the local warlord, there is a good chance that economic growth – and with it poverty reduction – can truly be said to have begun.[31] In turn, as the state receives more revenue, it is able to open schools and universities to increase the skills of the population, to improve communications and, ultimately, to better prepare against natural disasters and diseases. After all, there is no point in spending a lot of money on anti-malarial drugs if you cannot prevent them being stolen from hospitals and sold on the black market.

All this should be obvious enough, but of course its implications – that the security sector is critical, and therefore needs strengthening and making more effective – will not please everyone. Indeed, it runs counter to the suppositions of the intellectual parents of SSR, with their distrust of the security sector and their assumption that it performed no useful functions. Some progress is being made,

[31] Whence the – apparently paradoxical - willingness of some African rulers to see large cuts in their security sector budgets, since it makes informal power structures which they control more powerful. See in particular William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1999.

however, at least at the rhetorical level, such that the OECD Development Advisory Committee was prepared to say (albeit, one imagines, through gritted teeth) that

> … a *single-minded focus* on downsizing the security forces and reducing military and/or security spending, often a component of donor conditionality, *may not* be consistent with the end of enhancing security as a foundation for development. Strengthening state capability to perform *legitimate* duties *may help* restore order and maintain security.[32]

More recent reports have equally been prepared to admit rhetorically that security is important, but have fought shy of the logical corollaries of that judgement[33].

A second factor which has tended to widen the debate is the increasing tendency to include SSR programmes in post-conflict reconstruction schemes. A great deal of confusion has arisen here; leading to the assumption that SSR is therefore necessarily concerned with force reductions. Post-conflict reconstruction takes place, by definition, after a conflict. Normally, but not always, military forces and spending are reduced after a conflict, not because of a fear that the military will re-ignite the conflict, but for the simple reason that they are no longer required. Militaries are never manned for war in peacetime – it would be prohibitively expensive – and so naturally shrink when the war is over. The British and Americans demobilised millions of personnel in 1945-6, not for SSR reasons, but because the war had been won, and they had no further need of them.[34] In addition, many modern conflicts are fought by political militias, which have to be disarmed as part of a peace agreement. Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programmes can play a useful role in peace settlements, provided they are competently and successfully conducted, [35] but they are conceptually different from SSR programmes. Unfortunately, the ever-growing shopping list of elements for contemporary peace missions is likely to include SSR for some time; even if – as in Afghanistan – there is no consensus that the timing is right.

So far, I have attempted to describe and account for the confusion of much of the SSR debate, and to set out proposals for sensibly defining and limiting it. I now turn to issues of terminology and concepts, hoping to clarify a number of misunderstandings and confusions.

The Military

Most people have a fairly good idea of what the police do, and nearly everyone has a sense (usually quite mistaken) of how intelligence services work. The military, however, has been more of a conundrum. As visualised by early CMR theorists, it was a vast, fearsome, trained, disciplined body which acted so much as

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[32] *OECD, DAC Guidelines on Helping Prevent Violent Conflict*, Paris, 2001, p.39. Emphasis added.

[33] For example, *Why Fighting Crime Can Assist Development in Africa: Rule of Law and Protection of the Most Vulnerable*, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, May 2005, *Our Common Interest: Report of the Commission for Africa*, London 2005.

[34] Interestingly, the demobilisations were carefully staged, to ensure that those returning home did not suddenly flood the labour market.

[35] On the problems and dangers of DDR, see for example, I*dentifying Lessons from DDR Experiences in Africa, Workshop Report*, published as ISS Monograph 106, Pretoria, Institute for Security Studies, 2004.

a unit, and was so similar everywhere that "Civil-Military Relations" was seen to be a valid subject of study from which general conclusions could be drawn. Although, as already noted, militaries differ enormously from one country to another, it is worth stressing that many strains and tensions exist even within the armed forces of a single nation. Some of this is the normal product of historical rivalries and jealousies, especially where money is involved. But it is also common to find major cleavages within the military for political, religious or ethnic reasons, as well as on points of principle. The French Army, for example, split over the question of the future of the French colony of Algeria, and some of its most famous units staged a mutiny. Militaries which consider involving themselves in politics usually undergo wrenching internal divisions before they do so, and invariably do afterwards.[36] Many attempted military coups have been put down by loyal officers, and coups staged by one part of the military against another are not unknown. Militaries may be dominated by one group for historical reasons (Bosnians, because of the Partisan heritage in the former Yugoslavia), or they may be a careful balancing of groups as in many African states. Control or part-ownership of security forces may even have been awarded by western mediators, as was the case with the disastrous 1993 Arusha Peace Agreement. All of this means that an SSR project has to begin with the recognition that the military in a given country is likely to be as factional and as riven with dissent as any other institution.

These national differences, as well as internal tensions, are largely explained by the different origins of military forces. There are probably as many origins as there are cases, but the main types are set out below, with due allowance for the fact that some militaries could appear under more than one heading. A recognition of these differences, and their importance, is fundamental to any SSR programme.

- *Traditional national militaries*. The western European tradition, in which the military were originally the private armies of rulers. They were mercenaries in the best sense of the term – politically indifferent and professional. In most cases, the loyalty was transferred to elected governments, although not always without difficulty.
- *Nation-building militaries*. Here the military is intimately involved with the foundation of the state and its development. The United States is the best known example (its Army was engaged in the eviction of the indigenous inhabitants, and then the suppression of separatist rebellion), but there are also many Latin American examples where the military was so intimately involved in the founding, development and running of countries that it is doubtful whether, in the abstract, a phrase like "civil-military relations" makes much historical sense.[37]
- *Militaries of National Liberation*. Here, the military traces its origins back to an anti-colonialist struggle, and often sees itself having a special role in the country's history. Examples would include Indonesia and Namibia.
- *Revolutionary militaries*. Such militaries have often fought civil wars against ideological opponents as well as colonial powers, and can be the

[36] The Argentine military's involvement in the 1955 ousting of Peron ultimately produced "a near civil war among opposing military factions." See J Samuel Fitch, *The Armed Forces and Democracy in Latin America*, Baltimore, the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998, p. 18.

[37] On Latin American traditions see among others Kees Konings, "Political Armies, Security Forces and Democracy in Latin America", in Cawthra and Luckham (eds.), *Governing Insecurity*, and Brian Loveman, "Historical Foundations of Civil-Military Relations in Spanish America", in Pion-Berlin (ed.) *Civil-Military Relations*.

military forces of the party, not the nation. Examples would include the Chinese PLA as well as the militaries of Angola and Mozambique.

- *Post-colonial militaries*. Military forces of states which achieved independence peacefully, and often based on imperial models, as well as indigenous traditions. Most former French and British colonies in Africa come under this heading.
- *Western-influenced militaries*. This would include countries like Japan, Thailand and Korea, which adopted western models for their armies.

Within these lists are many overlaps and subdivisions, but it is clear, I think, that no SSR programme could begin without a sophisticated understanding of the origins of the military culture of the state concerned, and for that matter the origins of police as well. (In colonial Africa and Latin America, the military often carried our police functions, for example). So, to take an obvious example, an SSR programme in Zimbabwe would have to recognise that its military traditions were fundamentally different from those of neighbouring Zambia.

The Military In Politics

Given the very disparate nature of the world's militaries, it is obvious that their relationships to the political process – even under conditions of stability – will be very different. Even western democracies differ sharply among themselves: as even a neophyte SSR practitioner will be aware, the British, French and German cases are quite different, for example. So military involvement in politics – especially of the muscular kind – differs substantially from case to case. The number of potential motivations is very large, but here are the main ones.

Some interventions are on points of principle, with an agenda and a set of objectives. Both the Chilean Armed Forces in 1973, and their Greek equivalents in 1967, attempted a wholesale social and political revolution, designed to rescue the nation from Communism, or at least from modern social and political ideas. Other Latin American interventions had the same broad objectives but were less organised. Contrariwise, the 1986 Peruvian military intervention, notable for its respect for human rights, had objectives including agrarian reform, nationalisation of key industries and redistribution of wealth.

Other interventions arise from disgust with the failures of the democratic system itself – often shared by the population. The 1979 coup by Fl Lt Jerry Rawlings in Ghana was initially popular for this reason, and became more so when he had some former leaders executed. In time, however, such governments – Rawlings is an example – often succumb to the same vices they once opposed.

Other interventions arise from a sense of despair and imminent crisis where the military feels it has to save the country. An example is the Algerian military's intervention in to save, as they saw it, the country from militant Islam.[38] But as often happens, the new government, having taken power, had no idea what to do next, and was no more successful in resolving the problems. In some cases, the military finds itself backed into taking power by the deteriorating situation and by public opinion, as with the Pakistani Army's reluctant intervention of 1999, greeted as it was with dancing in the streets of Karachi. And finally, the military can itself

[38] See for example Frédéric Volpi, "Democratisation and its Enemies: The Algerian Transition to Authoritarianism 1988-2001", in Cawthra and Luckham (eds;) *Governing Insecurity*.

be invited in by politicians who are unable or unwilling to tackle the problems. The old South African Defence Force became deeply involved in politics in the 1980s because the politicians turned to its leaders for their professional skills and technocratic know-how.[39]

Then, of course, there are militaries which involve themselves in the political life of a country for gain, although usually on an individual bases. In many African countries, the state itself is the only real source of wealth, and ambitious individuals will try to capture and exploit it. The military can be tempted into this course as well, and there are even cases of different factions of the military fighting over the spoils.

Finally, there are military interventions which proceed from apparently trivial causes, but often reflect complex underlying tensions. In Africa, the origins of military involvement "have always been complex and include personal considerations."[40]. Coups have been carried out by dissident factions within the military, frequently relatively junior officers who feel discontented, or as in the case of Burundi, non-commissioned officers resentful of the rule which prevented them being promoted to officer rank. (The first ever coup in Africa, in Togo in 1956, was carried out by soldiers protesting at not being paid, and the most recent attempt – in the Ivory Coast in September 2002 – was by soldiers angry at being made redundant.)

Conspicuously missing from this (incomplete) list are the kind of interventions which take place in CMR studies and writings influenced by them: the kind of powerful, determined, power-hungry militaries which clearly kept Professor Finer awake at nights. It is often argued that the "military, like any large complex organisation seeks to advance its institutional prerogatives"[41] but this is not an empirical observation, but a norm derived from American political science writing. It is sometimes true, as those who have worked in large organisations know, but by no means always. In many European governments, the *compétence* doctrine makes institutions reluctant to expand outside their recognised area. Similarly, a number of militaries – the US especially – have made it clear that they do not want to become involved in peacekeeping and post-conflict peace building. The idea that an unsupervised military will automatically try expand into the political arena is simply wrong.

As one would expect, the behaviour of military regimes in power is equally various. Where the state is the prize, the military will be as assiduous in looting the public coffers as the civilians they replaced. An ideological military government will persecute its perceived enemies, but generally leave others alone. Indeed, most military governments are military in name only, and depend on widespread civilian acquiescence for their survival. (It is almost impossible for the military to institutionally rule a state.) In most cases, those who do not actively oppose the regime are left alone. Some military regimes have been conspicuously liberal and have safeguarded human rights – those of Peru and Ecuador come to mind. And

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[39] See Kenneth W. Grundy, *The Militarization of South African Politics*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1986.

[40] Samuel Decalo, *Coups and Army Rule in Africa: Motivations and Constraints*, Second Edition, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990, p. 29.

[41] Felipe Agüero, "Institutions, Transitions and Bargaining: Civilians and the Military in Shaping Postauthoritarian Régimes," in Pion-Berlin (ed.) *Civil-Military Relations*, p.199.

finally, those who have blundered into power often cling to it helplessly, discrediting themselves, but frightened at the consequences of handing power back.

The Military And The Civil Power

The State, with which The Soldier, in early CMR theory, had a troubled relationship, is best understood pragmatically as the permanent apparatus for the administration of the political entity, available to the recognised government of that entity to carry out legitimate tasks. The military is therefore in principle part of the state apparatus, as are the police and the intelligence services. This State is known sometimes as the Civil Power (from the Latin *civi*s = state), and hence Civil-Military Relations were the problem of the military not being an obedient part of the State, but rather seeking to dominate it. Often, this was because they were ideologically linked to traditional patterns of wealth and power which were under threat, and because they regarded themselves (and were often regarded by others) as somehow responsible ultimately for the safety of the nation.

If formal apologias for the leading role of the military are now rare, this does not mean that the wider problem has gone away. For example, the tidy boundaries often assumed by SSR theorists between elements such as the political class, the state, civil society etc. do not always exist in reality. In British and Canadian tradition, as well as in countries like Japan and Korea, the permanent state is separate from the political class, with its own traditions and hierarchy. It serves politicians but is not ultimately controlled by them. The French tradition (imitated elsewhere) qualifies this distinction by the creation of a large personal staff – the cabinet - which may include seconded officials, which is loyal only to the Minister and sometimes follows him or her around. The US tradition, and that of many African and Balkan countries, includes the award of major state positions to those to whom political or financial favours are owed. Likewise, the clear distinctions posited between the military as part of the state, and civil society, may not exist either; indeed, in African militaries, "informal links and structures of power based on such factors as ethnic, family and political connections count for much more than formal hierarchy and lines of command."[42] It has even been argued that in Africa there is "no genuine disconnection between a structurally differentiated state and a civil society composed of properly organised and politically distinct interest groups."[43]

Civilians

Just as the military vary greatly, so do civilians. Because the original CMR literature was concerned with one simple situation – elected civilian politicians vs. military hierarchies – there has been a tendency to overlook the very large number of different types of civilians involved in the security sector, including, obviously, the police and much of the intelligence services.

The fundamental distinction is between the elected political leadership and their personal advisers (who are temporary) on the one hand, and the permanent

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[42] Eboe Hutchful, "Understanding the African Security Crisis", in Abdel-Fatua Musah and Kayode Fayemi (eds.), *Mercenaries: An African Security Dilemma*, London, Pluto Press, 1999, p. 211.

[43] Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*, Oxford, James Curry, 1999, p. 18.

cadre of civilian officials on the other. There are, of course, many subtleties which complicate this dichotomy, including the use of contractual staff for policy advice, and different practices in the division of jobs between career officials and political appointees. But in essence, the difference is between those jobs which are dependent on the workings of the political process, including elections and changes of government, and those which follow the logic of a permanent administrative structure. The function and responsibilities of each are quite different, which is why it makes no sense to talk about "elected civilian officials" for example.[44] In many political systems, it is these permanent officials, rather than politicians, who are responsible to parliament for the way in which money is spent.

Equally, of course, there are many civilians outside the security sector narrowly defined who nonetheless have an influence. The Foreign Ministry and the President or Prime Minister's office often have a significant influence. The Interior Ministry will often be deeply involved, especially with the police, and the Finance Ministry will be trying to stop any money being spent. Other Ministries – Trade, Environment, Technology – will be involved from time to time. In addition, many civilians outside government will be trying to have an influence; opposition politicians, the media and academic experts, retired military and civilian officials, the rich and powerful generally, civil society groups ranging from military veterans to human rights campaigners, and so forth. Obviously, these groups differ widely as regards objectives and legitimacy.

Two groups are worth noting in particular. Many demands for changes to the security sector come from parliaments, who, naturally, hope to increase their influence as a result. In a previously authoritarian state (not necessarily one where the military have been dominant), the role of parliament in the defence and security transition can be very important (South Africa is an obvious example). But it is not obvious that parliaments, as institutions, can be seen as unitary actors, any more than civilians or the military can. Politics is notoriously factional, and few parliamentarians will believe, in practice, that they have a collective interest that supersedes their political party allegiance unless it involves their salaries. Much also depends on the institutional relationship with government; whether, for example, the government is made up of parliamentarians from various parties, whether it is made up of individuals appointed by an elected president, or whether it is a mixture of both. In any event, it is important to be realistic: security is not an inherently more difficult subject than, say, agriculture or trade, but it is extremely complex, and few politicians will have the time and effort available to develop more than an outline knowledge of the principal issues. But this should enable them to ask intelligent questions, contribute to a debate and require justification for proposed expenditures, which are really the roles of parliament in a democracy. The temptation to try to set up an alternative government, on the confrontational US model, is one to be resisted.

Civil society groups present an analogous problem. Unsurprisingly, there is no consensus within the SSR area about what the term means, and, as we have seen, in Africa anyway, it has been argued that it is not a useful concept. Similar concerns

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44 Richard Downes, "Building New Security Relationships in the Americas: the Critical Next Step", in Donald E. Schultz, (ed.) *The Role of the Armed Forces in the Americas: Civil-Military Relations for the 21st Century*. Conference Report, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 1998, p.25.

have been expressed about parts of the Balkans.[45] For the limited purposes of this essay, it is enough to point to two important distinctions. One is between "civil society" as widely defined (sometimes equated with all adults entitled to vote) on the one hand, and organised groups on the other. Within these groups there are also three important variants. Some groups are voluntary associations with limited objectives, such as peace campaigners or vigilante groups. Some represent attempts to organise groups such as military veterans, victims of crime or relatives of political prisoners into political entities, whilst others assert that they represent, for example, the interests of entire gender or ethnic groups. All of these groups face problems of legitimacy, since they are not elected, and are in some cases self-appointed. They also tend, in practice, to be elite groups whose views are not necessarily widely shared. It should be said, however, that mass civil-society groups such as churches and trades unions have often played a useful role in political transitions. In addition, in countries like South Africa and Ghana, loose associations of individual experts have played a very positive and useful role in making change possible in the defence and security areas.

Civilians And The Military

Given the lack of uniformity among both the military and the civilians, it is to be expected that relations between these groups in the security sector will be very complex and very nuanced. Just as it is essential to "go beyond simpleminded dichotomies between civilian and military regimes,[46]" so we have to recognise that there will be shifting patterns of power relationships both within and between these groups.

To begin with, the two groups are not, of course, entirely separate from each other. The military vote and pay taxes, have spouses who work and children in school, and their conditions of work are starting to be influenced by legislation covering the civilian workforce. In many societies, all adult males, and many females, have served in the military, and even professional military officers have families and friends in the civilian sector. These sorts of linkages greatly influence how the SSR process has to be carried out in individual countries. Many SSR programmes take place in transitional states where the position of the military in society is a major political factor affecting the degree of popular support for these programmes. Here, in other words, we are concerned less with civil-military relations than with relations between the military and the civilians in a society. It is helpful to distinguish between those factors which determine this relationship in normal times, and the special factors which apply after a conflict or a period of authoritarian rule.

In normal times, people crave security, and tend to think well of those groups (the police and the military) which provide it. So long as these groups are reasonably competent, heavy-handedness or petty corruption will often be tolerated or even excused. Even repressive behaviour will often be accepted so long as it is directed against marginal groups rather than the population at large, which is normally the case. Excuses are made for the behaviour of the security forces because we feel that the are protecting us: thus, the killing of an entirely innocent young Brazilian man in London in July 2005, by police who apparently considered

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[45] See for example Catherine Götze, "Civil Society Organisations in Failing States: The Red Cross in Bosnia and Albania," *International Peacekeeping*, Vol 11, No 4, Winter 2004.

[46] Fitch, *The Armed Forces*, p. xvi.

he was a dangerous armed Islamic terrorist, has apparently provoked very little concern among the general public. In general terms, the military, in particular, often benefit from a degree of support and tolerance which they do not always deserve. The military incarnate many of our fantasies, fears and desires, they can be idealised models of what we would like to be, if we were only tougher and braver and more disciplined. Those who once served in the Army, or wish they had, those of a traditionalist or authoritarian frame of mind, those who prize history and tradition and worry about the young people of today, will very often be extremely tolerant of the military, and accept a large role for it in society and even in government. Moreover, in most societies, the military (and to some extent the police) tend to be among the most-respected elements of society, and parliamentarians among the least respected.

Sometimes, this positive consensus extends a very long way, as in Latin America, where the supposition of military subordination to the elected government "is false for the civic culture that is predominant", and most ordinary people accept that the military should play a major role in politics.[47] Equally, other regions have very different traditions. Traditional African societies made every adult male a warrior when the need arose; there was thus no problem of relations between the military and civilian society, nor even a civil-military problem until western ways began to be adopted. In the former Communist states of Europe (and today in China) the military was the armed wing of the civilian Party, which dominated it totally, even having political officers in every unit. The military may not have been greatly popular, but they were not seen as oppressors of society in the sense that the civilian security organs were. And there are many other models.

The situation is obviously different when the security forces are themselves dysfunctional, and are incapable of providing the security required, usually because of a simple lack of training and resources. This is the situation in parts of Africa.[48] The security forces there may be poorly perceived, not necessarily because they are brutal and corrupt (though they often are) but because they are useless, and indeed prey on the population they are supposed to protect. They are part of the vampire state in parts of Africa, which exploits the population but provides no security. It is this demand – rather than how sensitively the security is provided - that tends to animate ordinary people, and leads to the rise of vigilante groups where the state cannot cope. Consequently, in transitional situations, the main demand is for effectiveness by the police rather than sensitivity. In South Africa, where crime exploded after the 1994 elections, the discredited apartheid era police proved to be hopeless at actually preventing and detecting it. Community policing policies introduced by the new government had to be substantially modified when it was realised that "the concern with establishing democratic control and civilian supervision had led to a neglect of the social policies and institutional changes needed to tackle crime.[49]"

Actual involvement in politics and the exercise of power may discredit the security forces, but does not always do so. Usually, the military, in particular, is

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47 Luis Tibletti, "Armed Forces Mission and the Strengthening of Democracy in the Americas", in Schulz, (ed), *The Role of the Armed Forces*, p. 77.

48 See the detailed statistics in *Why Fighting Crime Can Assist Development*. .

49 Gavin Cawthra, "Post-Apartheid South Africa" in Cawthra and Luckham (eds.) *Governing Insecurity*, p. 49. See also 'South Africa's Changing Community Policing Policy' in *Not Everybody's Business*, Institute for Security Studies Monograph 71, Pretoria, 2002.

discredited by failure to address economic and political problems which have defeated civilian governments, and by the corruption and nepotism which often follow. They become seen, in effect, as no better than the civilians they took over from. In cases where authoritarian rule is the result of political divisions within the country, the position is much more complex. As we have seen, the military, and the security sector generally, never intervenes against civilian authority as such. Usually, the military intervenes to support one side in an ideological or political struggle. Unsurprisingly, therefore, large elements of the population supported military regimes in Chile and Argentina, at least initially, not least because the repression by the security forces was directed against their political opponents. It is very unusual, indeed, for an authoritarian regime to have no political support in a country, and so many of the standard SSR measures have to be understood as moves in a domestic political game, which will alienate large sections of the population if they are implemented. For this reason, it is important not to assume an automatic requirement for a "genuine reconciliation between the military and society[50]": the reality is normally much more complex.

Control

Finally, we should look briefly at the issue of Control: what it is for, and who should have it. In principle, the situation is straightforward. In a democracy, the legitimate government requires control of the organs of the state to do its job; it cannot have the police and military deciding for themselves what their priorities are. Yet the presentation of the issue in SSR literature is often much more complex than this. As Brzoska notes, the "behaviour of security forces themselves has often been described as a cause of conflict …. both at regional level and internally,[51]" and that where "control over security forces is weak, these forces can act with impunity."[52]

This is odd at first sight – there is little historical support for the notion. But in fact it is really a modernised form of the old pacifist idea than abolishing armies will end wars. In practice, governments influenced by the military are no more aggressive than civilian ones. (All of the really major criminals of history, after all, were civilians). And armed conflicts these days are seldom between recognised states with formal armies; they are generally between sub-state actors with political militias. Indeed, it is generally true to say that instability produces armed forces, rather than the reverse. There is some confusion, perhaps, with the demobilisation of armed groups during peace negotiations, which is necessary, not to prevent those groups from reigniting conflict, but to remove from their political masters the option of going back to war. Most of such groups, indeed, are entirely politically dominated, with only primitive military hierarchies and little training.

Nor is it true that the security forces, if left uncontrolled, will naturally act as agents of repression. That some security forces behave in this way is not in dispute, but the problems are usually internal ones: a lack of training, discipline and leadership. No police or military college, for example, can possibly teach its recruits to steal from and terrorise the local population; that they do so means that the structure and procedures of the security forces themselves need overhauling –

50 Renée Fregosi, "Présentation" in Fregosi (ed.) *Armées et Pouvoirs*, p.8.

51 Brzoska, *Development Donors*, p.13.

52 *Ibid*, p. 30.

as is currently happening in Sierra Leone, for example. If "control" arises here as an issue, it is internal, rather than external, control which is important.

But of course the restoration of discipline, with good training and leadership, is only part of the solution. In many cases the situation that security force personnel find themselves in naturally encourages this behaviour. For example, an under-equipped and poorly-trained infantry unit sent to control a border area may be incapable of carrying out its task. It may therefore resort to terrorising the local population to prevent them supporting the rebels, and may steal from the same population to compensate for the non-appearance of its pay and rations. It is not clear what can be done about this. Similarly, understaffed and poorly trained police forces under pressure to reduce crime, may resort to brutality to keep the crime rate down, and beating confessions out of habitual criminals to show that they are capable of solving it. Until these structural and technical problems are solved, external controls are irrelevant.

'Control' is a slippery concept anyway, especially if interpreted in the narrow and adversarial Anglo-Saxon fashion of direction and authority. Really, what we are talking about here has more to do with the wider concept of control; that of inspection and oversight. In effect, 'control' if it has much meaning, refers to the establishment of a hierarchy of status and function, rather than day-to-day hands on management. It refers to the position that the military and the security sector have with regard to other parts of the political system. Since a number of different formulae have been put forward, and different terms are often used, sometimes with the same apparent meaning, a few simple definitions may help.

As we have seen, the word civil in this context refers to the state, of which the security sector is a part, at the disposal of the elected government provided it acts in a legal and constitutional fashion. Thus:

- *Civil* Control exists when the government controls the budgets, administration and operations of the agencies of the security sector, and these agencies act according to the government's direction. Civil control can exist in any political system, whether democratic or not.

This is often confused with *civilian,* control, a concept which is difficult to define and not very helpful. There is, after all, no reason of logic or ethics why civilians should be in control of military forces rather than the military. Civilians are not inherently nicer or more democratic than the military are. Moreover, 'civilian' control of the wider security sector is a messy and awkward concept, since many parts of that sector are run by civilians anyway. And many policemen would be uncomfortable with a definition which implies that they existed in a category apart from the community they serve. If the concept has any utility, it is probably in reminding us of the practical importance, in a democracy, of having elected politicians, properly advised by civilian political experts, in control of the security apparatus. It is also desirable that a government should have such people answerable to parliament across the whole range of government activities, including security. Thus:

- *Civilian* Control exists when major decisions about the functioning of the security sector are taken, or at least endorsed, by civilians. Again, this does not imply that the state concerned is a democracy.

Finally, *democratic* control is another slippery concept, which cannot imply that parliament *controls* the security forces in any real sense; that would be not only practically impossible, but doubtful constitutionally. What is really at issue here is the *way* in which the government runs the security sector, which should in principle be the same as it runs any other part of the state in a democracy. Thus,

- *Democratic* Control exists when the security sector is subject to broadly the same pattern of checks and balances as any other organ of government in a democracy.

Ownership And Rent

The concept of local 'ownership' of SSR projects is ell-accepted now, and frankly very difficult to argue against. The difficulty arises when we have to decide who, in practice, does the owning, especially in regions like the Balkans, where, as Simon Chesterman notes, the concept is analogous to that of owning a car. [53] Even in peacetime, ordinary people do not greatly worry about the security sector very much unless it impacts on them directly. In a time of political crisis, ordinary people will mostly be preoccupied with survival, and so in practical terms there will be a tendency for local elites, often wealthier and more secure than average, to dominate the local debate. Their objectives, which may include personal ones, will not necessarily be the same as that of the population at large.

Indeed, SSR is a good example of a subject which is bound always to be dominated by elites, and so it is important to avoid SSR programmes turning into elite and anti-democratic bargains made over the heads of the local population. That population, when its views can be ascertained, usually seems to care more about its personal security than questions of the control of the security forces, for example, which is hardly surprising. In South-East Europe, anyway, it is not "externally-directed threats or unreformed militaries or police" which are a concern, but rather "weak states unable to provide internal security" and protection against economic crisis."[54] Moreover, a process such as SSR has enormous domestic political ramifications: strengthening and enriching some, and weakening and impoverishing others. It can never be an entirely objective process, and certainly will never be perceived as such locally.

It also has to be recognised that SSR programmes can have the effect of substituting new elites for old ones, and enabling new forms of rent-seeking to arise. Civilian officials appointed for political reasons may try to get control of the security sector for the political and financial benefit of their masters, parliamentarians may seek to exploit their influence over procurement decisions for personal gain, unhealthy relationships may grow up between politically-appointed officials and think-tanks linked to political parties. So part of SSR has to be a new generation of oversight mechanisms: investigations into the private financial affairs of politicians, audit of contracts given by Ministries to NGOs.

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[53] Simon Chesterman, *You, The People: The United Nations, Transitional Administration and State-Building*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 196.

[54] Susan Woodward, "In Whose Interest is Security Sector Reform: Lessons from the Balkans", in Cawthra and Luckham (eds.) *Governing Insecurity*, p.10

A flawed concept?

This has been a very brief skim through some of the more obvious problems and difficulties of conducting SSR projects in practice. When taken together though, these factors, familiar as they are, may prompt the question of whether SSR is actually a viable activity at all, or at least one to which so many resources should be dedicated.

Some would certainly argue so, and point to the western origin of SSR ideas, and to the linkage of SSR with the Development ideology sold to non-western states from the 1960s onwards,[55]as well as more recent neo-liberal prescriptions for economic success and political restructuring. Africans, in particular, have doubted whether it really engages with their security problems.[56] This is too big an issue to go into here,[57] but SSR practitioners have to accept, as a matter of practical politics, that what they offer is generally seen, not as dispassionate technical advice, altruistically offered, but part of a programme of domination and submission by which rich nations seek to determine the policies of poor ones. We are strong and They are weak, and ultimately They have little choice but to do what We want, whether or not the peoples of their now-western style democracies approve.

Two points can be made in response. Firstly, it is not disputed that there are many cases in the world where the security sector of a country is dysfunctional and behaves undemocratically. The problem is not, therefore, an invention of the West. Secondly, in Africa anyway, the desire to reform the sector arose independently of donor pressure, and indeed many of the broad assumptions of SSR are similar to ideas espoused previously by African liberation movements.[58] It is also true that the initiative for many SSR projects today comes from governments themselves ; albeit that they are usually seeking the kind of technical assistance only other governments can provide.

All this suggests a degree of moderation and humility in SSR projects and in attempts to draw up theoretical schemes to explain them. It is generally important to avoid sets of objectives that are too extensive or too all embracing, not least because they often depend (as in the Balkans) on factors over which SSR practitioners themselves have no control, and precious little influence. There is little point, either, in producing neat "Before" and "After" lists of what security sectors should look like, not least because the same objective (say, a civilian defence minister) represents something fundamentally different, in say, Bolivia to what it means in Bulgaria.

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55 On which see for example Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1996, and Basil Davidson, *Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State*, London, 1991

56 See for example J. 'Kayode Fayemi, *Comments on the Human Security Aspect of the Poverty Reduction Guidelines*, Centre for Democracy and Development, Lagos and London, 2000.

57 Cross reference to other paper.

58 Rocklyn Williams, 'Africa and the Challenges of Security Sector Reform.' In*: Challenges for the New Millennium*, IIS Monograph Series 46, Pretoria, Institute for Security Studies, 2000.

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It is also necessary to avoid Utopian normative aspirations. Corruption, for example, the currently fashionable explanation for Africa's problems, will never be entirely eradicated as long as large amounts of money and human weakness occasionally intersect. Nor will it be eradicated as long as, in some countries, control of the state represents the only way to acquire wealth. The issue is really the seriousness with which corruption is taken and the energy that goes into combating it. These problems were not solved quickly by western states during their own development, nor are such states (the proponents of SSR) immune from such problems even today.[59] Likewise, there is no one thing called "secrecy" and another called "transparency": there is a large continuum covering many different situations. Transparency is a potentially huge burden, as anyone who has worked in government will attest, and, quite properly, is unlikely to be the first priority of a state in transition. So, objectives framed in terms, for example, of *increased* transparency or *greater* accountability make much more sense, as a number of writers have recognised.

It is also necessary to recognise that not everything can be done at once, and indeed that it is positively dangerous to try. An effective security sector which meets the aspirations of the people has to be the first priority: before you can have oversight, you first have to have something to oversee.

Finally, if we are to go on using the term Security Sector Reform, we must take care to define it in terms sufficiently general to be useful, and not risk paralysis by detail. The kind of lists reviewed earlier are best seen as convenient summaries of what might be worth doing: an illustrative menu, perhaps, to act as a memory-jogger once studies are underway. The easiest way to proceed to a definition is perhaps through a syllogism. Most people, if asked, would probably agree that a security sector in a democracy should have two major characteristics:

- It should provide the security that people want, as effectively and efficiently as possible.
- It should be managed with procedures normally used in a parliamentary democracy.

The rest is largely footnotes. To the extent that the security sector of a state is not meeting these criteria, then there is scope to consider whether initiatives need to be taken to improve the situation. If a formal definition is required, then it could be something like:

a generic name for measures which might be taken, often with international assistance, to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the security sector, and to make its management more responsive to the requirements of a parliamentary democracy.

An appropriate point, perhaps, on which to conclude.