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DCAF Backgrounder

Security Sector Governance and Reform

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Challenges of Security Reform: Institutional E

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What is meant by security sector governance and security sector reform?

What groups and institutions play a role in the security sector?

What factors have driven the emergence and evolution of SSR?

Why does a country need a well-governed and efficient security sector?

What are the main features of the SSR approach?

Who implements and supports the implementation of SSR?

What is meant by security sector governance and security sector reform?


Security Sector Governance (SSG) refers to the structures, processes, values and attitudes that shape decisions about security and their implementation.

Security Sector Reform (SSR) refers to reforms to SSG through the effective and efficient delivery of security under conditions of democratic rule, law, rights and control. SSG offers a framework for conceptualising which actors and factors are relevant to security in a given environment as well as a methodology for exploring the use of available security resources. By establishing the need to take a comprehensive approach to the security sector, SSR can also help integrate a broad variety of actors and processes.

The diversity of involvement in SSR has led to many different, and sometimes conflicting, approaches. However, there is an emerging consensus that governance is an essential component of SSR programmes and that, in the private, sub-sector programmes need to take into account linkages among diverse actors within the security sector and integrate them into programmes. For example, police reform can have significant implications for the operation of courts and prisons. And, in conflict settings, in particular, police and military need to work closely and effectively together if stabilisation and reconstruction programmes are to have a chance of succeeding.

SSR is most often used as a platform for reform in fragile and post-conflict states, and in countries transitioning from authoritarian to constitutional rule. This backgrounder takes a more generic approach by including the efforts of developed democracies to optimise the management, efficiency and accountability of their security sectors.

Different actors involved in SSR often use different terms. Some prefer the term "security system reform." Others juxtapose SSR and nation reform, or consider SSR and rule of law as interdependent variables. This backgrounder will use SSR as shorthand to capture all these different approaches.



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This document is part of the DCAF Knowledge Series, which provides practitioners with concise practical tools for a variety of issues in the field of Security Sector Governance and Security Sector Reform.




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Ideal security sector has:

- **Up-to-date security strategy**, which has been publicly debated and approved by the parliament;
- Relevant to country's security environment **inter-agency arrangements**;
- Adequate arrangements and **access to intelligence**;
- **Credible resource-based plans**, controlled by the Parliament on what is done and how resources are used;
- **Sized, trained and equipped organisations** to meet national and international obligations and objectives;
- **Appropriate legislative underpinning** to support national plans and international objectives;
- **Effective arrangements for public information**, both to ensure transparency in respect of national policies and security forces activities and to respond to points of public and media concern;
- **Accountability** to the national parliament and public.

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Sources of deficits

- Counterproductive traditions within the security sector
- Irrelevant (lack of) political and civilian control
- Chronic underfunding
- Mentality and security culture of the professionals and public, over-secrecy
- Poor legislation
- Corruption and low effectiveness
- Lack of public confidence that security is for the people

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Focus 1: Create reform-focused policy and programmes

- **Developing a relevant SSR strategy:**
 - No single model
 - If the specific political, economic and social context is not taken into account, reform is likely to fail
 - Start from the threat, not with the structures
- **Ownership and inclusiveness:**
 - Are the key security actors willing to reform?
 - Are all relevant actors included in the process?
- **Programmes :**
 - Institutional programmes are easy; sectoral are unique!
 - Capabilities based planning;
 - Management instead of bureaucracy

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Focus 2: Interagency approach

- Arguments:
 - **New threats:** Multiple sources, very dynamic; mixed character: global-regional-national, external-internal; do not attack attributes of the state, but policy, business and the way of life
 - **Boarders are not frontiers:** difficult to secure
 - **Globalised Mongolia:** business first; foreign is now local;
 - **Information is critical:** collection and sharing in real time
 - **Rapid reaction is vital**
- Principles:
 - Synchronised **legislation**
 - Coordinated **goals** and targets assignment
 - Coordinated **capabilities-oriented** programmes
 - **Joint** education and training

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Focus 3: Integrity

SOURCES OF CORRUPTION IN SECURITY SECTORS

- **Lack of political will** to recognise that the problem exist
- Irrelevant autonomy – **no supervision and accountability**
- Irrelevant **secrecy**
- Lack of systematic **education and training** on ethics and counter corruption
- **Poor management** in:
 - Personnel policy
 - Procurement and offset arrangements
 - "Urgent" needs and decisions
 - Peace operations; and security operations
 - Military and police business



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Challenges to democratic security sector reform

- **Conceptual**
 - Difficult to frame national security in terms of scope, depth, time, and actors
 - New roles and missions of the traditional security sector organisations
- **Political**
 - Lack of political will (and capacity) for security sector reform (SSR) while growing public dissatisfaction and expectations
 - Foreign policy is a part of the SSR
 - Too much relay on professional expertise
 - Misbalance between roles, missions, operations and resources
- **Sustainability of reforms:**
 - SSR is more than the institutionalisation of laws and practices: It is a social process that may take a long and complex path
 - Like democracy itself, SSR is an on-going process in which no society will ever achieve perfection