



COMMENTARIES on the
**Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations A/62/659-
S/2008/39**
**"Securing Peace and Development: the role of the United Nations in
Supporting Security Sector Reform**

*Dr. Mustapha S. Adib**

**Tudor Hotel at the United Nations – New York
March 17-18, 2008**

**General Director of the Center for Middle-Eastern Strategic Studies (CESMO)
Professor of Public Law, International Relations, and Defense Policies at the Lebanese
University and Beirut War College
Member, GFN-SSR Advisory Group*

In a matter of less than five years, there has been an increasing demand for SSR all over the world as the link between an efficient and accountable security sector and development has become widely acknowledged.

As far as the United Nations are concerned, it soon became clear that peace-keeping operations that would not include an SSR process were bound to fail. Due to the variety of the approaches to SSR, it was more than necessary for the Organization to establish its own.

In consequence, the report of the Secretary General is an honest assessment of the role of the United Nations in supporting SSR which underlines its potential in the world as well of the challenges for member countries and the organization itself and provides useful guidelines as how it should be implemented. Much has obviously to be done to put it in practice but it will certainly be one of the corner stones of the still evolving doctrine of SSR.

1. SSR to foster Peace and Stability

1.1. " A growing demand for SSR in the world"

Over the past few years, there has been a huge change in the security landscape. Two new threats have appeared at are now menacing every country in the world: terror and cyber-criminality. Cyber-based activities can have political, ideological or economic goals, in which case they can usually be classified within the broad framework of organized crime.

These threats have induced a very volatile security situation where threats cannot be precisely identified and which can impair any SSR.

Most countries have reacted to these threats by reinforcing controls but it not only the procedures that must change: it is our very conception of security which must evolve as the globalization of security must confront the globalization of threats, in particular the so-called "internationalization" of *jihad* and cyber-criminality.

To adapt themselves, security sectors must evolve towards:

- The creation of lead security agencies, such as the French "Agence Nationale de Sécurité" (2008), or the not-that-recent American National Security Agency.
- Increased cooperation between the core actors of the security sector, the Judiciary, and the Civil Society.
- Integration of the virtual parts of security.
- Increased flexibility of response
- Increased rapidity of response
- Increased information sharing

The UN themselves have been pressed to include in their organization a unit called "Information and Strategic Analysis Secretariat"¹ in order to allow for strategic planning and early response.

¹ "Brahimi Report" S-2000/809 § 68

1.2. SSR as a condition for development and recovery

Many recent studies have shown that insecurity jeopardizes recovery in transitional and post-conflict countries and prevents development. Therefore, SSR is a crucial step of all peace-keeping operations with tremendous influence upon the future of the country in terms of Democracy, Security, and Economy, thus on its overall stability.

Indeed, the lessons of the past have proven that peace operations without SSR can be compared to what Shakespeare's Beatrice said about wooing, wedding and repentance²: "[War], [peace-process] and [the subsequent unstable situation] is as a Scotch jig, a measure and a cinque-pace : [War] is hot and hasty like a Scotch jig and full as fantastical; [The peace process] mannerly, modest, as a measure, full of state and ancientry; and then comes [an unstable security situation] and with his bad legs falls into the cinque-pace faster and faster, till he sinks into his grave."

2. A comprehensive Approach to SSR

2.1. The "pillars" of SSR

- SSR needs to take into account, not only technical aspects but also economic, social, cultural, religious, political and geostrategic factors.
- It must be tailored to each country-specific context
- It must be based on a "wide national consultation" giving a voice to all the components of the civil society; "Every group needs to be convinced that the State belong to all people"³. This also includes assessing at all stages the consequences of the SSR to the weakest members of the society: women, children, the poor...
Nobody must be left out of the peace -, stabilization – or transition process, whether it is internal or foreign actors (sub-regional, regional or world organizations as well as any country sponsoring one of the belligerent parties) if stable and long-term security is aimed at.
- It must integrate gender into the whole process
- It must be implemented within a broad framework of the rule of law and follow the principles of good governance
- It must aim to promote human rights, strengthen human rights protection bodies and make sure that CSO's engaged in human rights enjoy freedom.
- It must guarantee the accountability of all the members of the security sector, including peace-keeping operations personnel.
- It must enhance the role of the civil society to create better a more representative and accountable security sector.
- It must be based on an early assessment of the needs and gaps of the security sector.
- It must be understood as a long-term process

² *Much Ado for Nothing*, II, 1.

³ *Secretary-General Millenium Report – A/54/2000 §204*

- It must be understood as an ever-ongoing process, where actual achievements are compared to pre-defined objectives and "fine-tuned" in consequence.
- It can be implemented step-by-step when global SSR is impossible due to a very weak State (Lebanon, Palestine) and where community or sectarian tensions prevent a national consensus on SSR.
- It must pay special attention to hiring and retaining the adequate staff in all security bodies, in especial through screening, recruitment and capacity building.
- It must pay special attention to setting up a coherent security sector by preventing the creation of competing agencies that can be used by one party to serve its interests and generate Competence crossings. This is unfortunately currently the case in Lebanon, where the system was built to prevent information sharing, and cooperation, particularly regarding intelligence and border surveillance.
- It must reinforce civilian oversight and ensure that security bodies, in especial the army, stay within the boundaries set by law.
- It must also reform the judiciary, especially in transitional and post-conflict countries.
- It must reforms the defense budgeting and procurement policies and laws towards greater efficiency, transparency and accountability of the security sector.
- It must perform a DDR and professionalize security personnel: "Security forces that are untrained, ill-equipped, mismanaged and irregularly paid are often part of the problem, and perpetrate serious violations of human rights".
- It must reduce the number of SALW
- It must be implemented during the 6 to 12 week window defined by the Brahimi Report, before the situation "solidifies" and before some of the ex-belligerent parties start having second thoughts.

2.2. Social factors that can undermine SSR

2.2.1. The need to address insecurity and a general climate of violence as part of the SSR

"Core" SSR reorganizes the security sector for it to provide effective, efficient, affordable and sustainable security to the citizens of a particular country.

However, it must be remembered that SSR does not only address the needs of security bodies: when implemented under the auspices of the United Nations, it must – more than ever - address the needs of the individuals and fulfill its primary mission of establishing the rule of law and creating a system that respects human rights.

A nation being made of individuals, SSR is intertwined with a number of social matters that, if not addressed, can undermine the whole reform.

Insecurity and violence take a high toll on civilian populations. But it also impedes the future economic, social and democratic recovery / development of the country; Indeed, the cost of violence⁴ includes economic multiplier effects - such as lower employment ratio, lower work productivity, lower income and intergenerational impact on productivity, at the macroeconomic level, less saving and investment – as well as social multiplier effects such as intergenerational transmission of violence and poverty, privatization of public services, social capital erosion, lower quality of life and less participation in democratic processes. All this in turn, undermines SSR.

In addition, preventive actions are always much more cost-effective than corrective ones.

This reinforces the statement of the report that insecurity must be addressed at the earliest stages of the post-conflict period, while UN agencies are still present in the country at the onset of the peace process.

2.2.2. The need to integrate gender into any SSR policy:

"Rather than an exercise in political correctness, the integration of gender issues is being recognized as a key to operational effectiveness, local ownership and strengthened oversight. For example, increasing the recruitment of female staff, preventing human rights violations and collaborating with women's organizations contributes to creating an efficient, accountable and participatory security sector, which responds to the specific needs of men, women, girls and boys.⁵

Integrating a gender perspective in SSR is the best means to prevent gender-based violence, in particular violence to women and girls, who are the most at risk to suffer from armed conflicts and insecurity.

We must keep in mind that violations of human rights are not only perpetrated by criminals but also by members of the security forces. In many countries, it is a common phenomenon and even peace-keeping personnel on UN operations are concerned.

A code of conduct must therefore be imposed by the UN to the troops provided by member Countries as well as to the ones in host countries.

It has been widely demonstrated by research that the more women are included in security bodies, the more likely these are to respect human rights. In addition, more attention is being paid to gender-based violence.

Security forces where women are represented are also more representative of the whole population, thus enjoy greater credibility as demonstrated by the success of the integration of women in the police forces in Nicaragua, where they account for 26% of the personnel.

⁴ LIC. EDGAR ALFREDO BALSELLS CONDE, *El costo economico de la violencia in Guatemala*, PNUD Guatemala, 2006, p. 20

⁵ KRISTIN VALASEK & MEGAN BASTICK, *Security Sector Reform and Gender*, DCAF, 2008, p.1

Addressing the needs of women and girls can be done through two complementary approaches: gender mainstreaming and promotion of the equal participation of men and women.

This means that the impact of any SSR policy on women and girls must be assessed during each of the stages of SSR: planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It also means that gender specialists must be included in the panel of experts in charge of any SSR process.

2.2.3. The Need to Address Economic Problems

Economic factors are crucial in any SSR. If overlooked, it is very likely that they will prevent any positive evolution in the very short term.

Precarious economic conditions clearly foster violence, corruption, lower levels of education, social exclusion and a decrease in democratic participation, all of which renders SSR useless. Terrorism itself, although allegedly based on ideology, often roots in poverty, social exclusion, ignorance and, in short, no perspectives of any other future than the one offered by extremist preachers.

Equally, a lack of accountable and effective security institutions impedes the establishment of the rule of law and the economic recovery / development of a country.

Therefore, development and SSR must be carried out jointly and fighting violence and conflict takes a holistic approach with SSR being combined with a set of social policies aimed at tackling poverty, school drop-out, domestic violence, poor housing (in especial slums), and unemployment...

3. The specific role of the United Nations

The UN is a supra-national organization that enjoys high credibility as well as universally-recognized legitimacy.

Its neutrality enables it to take up a crucial role in:

3.1. Preventing conflicts

Although peace-keeping operations are the most visible part of the work of the United Nations, the primary mission of the organization is, as stated in the Millenium Goals, to ensure that every human being stands on their own two feet.

By doing this, it can substantially reduce the risk of conflict and violations of human rights, which "is far more preferable for those who would otherwise suffer the consequences of war, and is a less costly option for the international community than military action, emergency humanitarian relief and reconstruction after a war has run its course"⁶

⁶ "Brahimi report" A/55/305-S/2000/809 § 29

This approach is valid also against terrorism, which is one of the main threats against peace and stability in the world and which, due to its very nature, is very difficult to fight but possible to prevent.

3.2. DDR

Among all SSR steps, DDR is obviously one of the most important ones as it allows to concentrate security forces in the hands of the State and virtually put an end to many violations of human rights. The UN therefore need a "Consolidation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs into the assessed budgets of complex peace operations in their first phase"⁷ It is also the UN duty to make sure that both genders have the same access to this kind of programs, which has not been the case in the recent African peace operations.

3.3. Fostering National Dialogue and Consensus around SSR

Again, it is the supra-national and neutral nature of the UN that enables the organization to act as a mediator in transitional or post-conflict countries between the various forces competing for the power.

It has the ability to foster national dialogue and inclusion of all parties in the peace-building and peace-keeping processes, as well as to ensure the needs of all groups are met.

If this step is overlooked, it can lead to internal tensions, insecurity and a quite likely, to a revival of the conflict.

3.4. Creating the Conditions for a Quicker and more Efficient Response

In the past years, despite the successful role of the United Nations in building peace, long-term stability has not always been achieved.

SSR is a crucial step to reach this goal. However, it must be established at the onset of the peace-process, when everything is still possible and the longing for peace partly overcomes individual interests.

To provide this fast and efficient response, the Millenium and "Brahimi" Reports offer many very useful proposals among which:

3.4.1. Mobilizing sufficient resources

This includes securing the funds and the troops provided by Member States before starting any peace operation, rather than being left without the means to fulfill one's mission.

It is also necessary to promote more coordination with and between Member States, in order to increase responsiveness.

⁷ "Brahimi report" A/55/305-S/2000/809 § 47

3.4.2. Adapt the internal structure of the Organization

This can be achieved through:

- Having standing reserves of military, civilian police and civilian expertise, materiel and financing as well as extremely reliable standby capacities to be called upon on short notice, in order to take advantage of the 6-12 week window following a ceasefire or peace accord and when significant reforms can occur."⁸ This is also true after free elections in any transitional State coming out of dictatorship.
- Promoting closer cooperation between peace-building and peace-keeping actors.
- Creating integrated planning and support cells gathering specialists of political analysis, military operations, civilian police, electoral assistance, human rights, development, humanitarian assistance, refugees and displaced persons, public information, logistics, finance and personnel recruitment...⁹

CONCLUSION

It is clear that SSR is a necessary step towards long-term peace building. It is also a key condition to development and the promotion of human rights.

However, it is by no means a clearly-cut, easy to implement process. It concentrates many challenges, the most important of which being **balance**. It is what the Report of the Secretary-General calls a "flexible yet consistent approach"

The participation of CSO's, although crucial to ensure a representative and accountable newly-created security sector, must not overcome the role of the State, which is the most important actor of SSR. Actually, nothing can be done without a strong central State.

Equally, there must be a balance between the "core" - or technical - aspects of SSR and the social policies that create a favorable environment for it.

An equilibrium must also be reached between local ownership – which is a key condition to successful SSR and the need for external assistance and for supra-national arbitration, in especial when the government of the host country does not enjoy sufficient internal legitimacy.¹⁰

It is also very important to remember that SSR is an ever-ongoing process, monitoring and evaluation leading to "fine-tuning", which; in turn, leads to minor or major changes in the design and implementation of security policies...

SSR is also very sensitive to changes in the security environment, which is why its adaptability guarantees its sustainability.

⁸ *Brahimi Report* §89

⁹ *Id.* §198

¹⁰ *The Tswalu Protocol, Principles and Guidelines for Peace-building Missions*, 2008, p. 8

Eventually - although there cannot be a last word as far as SSR is concerned - we should remark that however flexible and locally-owned, SSR is simply not always possible. In the Middle-Eastern context, which gathers either countries where the security sector is "locked" by the power or, on the contrary, where the State is extremely weak, a Strategic Management of the Security Sector should be preferred.