

## *Preventing and resolving conflict: SSR and national security policies, strategies, and plans*

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### **Introduction**

Upon his appointment as United Nations Secretary-General on 1 January 2017, António Guterres began refocusing the Organization and the international community on the priority of conflict prevention.<sup>1</sup> UN support to security sector reform (SSR) emerged in the 1990s, *inter alia*, to better avert and resolve conflict in fragile and conflict-affected states.<sup>2</sup> This support is critical to achieving prevention, and the UN should therefore prioritize and strengthen efforts to develop national security policies, strategies, and plans (NSPSPs).

To date, much of what the UN has done in the area of NSPSPs has come in response to Member State requests<sup>3</sup>. The Organization has focused on providing in-country assistance on the basis of requests from Member States and regional partners, or country-specific mandates issued by the Security Council.<sup>4</sup> Further, it has sought to ensure high-quality, consistent delivery in the field, including through the development of a system-wide policy, articulated in the Integrated Technical Guidance Note (ITGN) on United Nations Support to National Security Policy- and Strategy-Making Processes, and on the basis of UN principles for SSR, such as national ownership.<sup>5</sup> The ITGN includes functional definitions for national security policies and national security strategies, to guide UN staff in their support, but it notably lacks a definition of a national security *plan*.

In general, UN efforts in the area of NSPSPs have had and continue to have positive impacts on conflict prevention and resolution. However, UN engagement has focused entirely on national security policies and strategies, to the exclusion of national security plans. To realize the truly preventative and responsive value of NSPSPs, the UN should help national partners to both *develop* and *coherently implement* national security plans. This is particularly important in fragile and

conflict-affected contexts where threats can swiftly result in, or further contribute to, instability and violence.

This chapter begins by outlining the UN approach to NSPSPs in the framework of SSR. It then highlights select UN experiences in supporting the development of NSPSPs and presents three related challenges and opportunities concerning UN support to NSPSPs generally and to national security planning more specifically. Finally, the chapter concludes with seven recommendations for both prioritizing and strengthening UN support to NSPSPs. This includes the development of a new instrument for preventing and resolving conflict; namely, an accountable, transparent, and cost-neutral 'NSPSP support mechanism' tasked with ensuring the coherent delivery of NSPSP-related assistance to fragile and conflict-affected states.

### **The UN approach to NSPSPs in the framework of SSR**

NSPSPs outline a vision for national security – including associated principles, interests, threats, and challenges – and detail the implementation of this vision at the strategic and tactical levels. In so doing, NSPSPs guide security provision for a state and assist in both preventing and resolving national security threats and, therefore, conflict itself.<sup>6</sup> Yet, effectively implementing them requires a range of initiatives in foreign affairs, environmental protection, development assistance, human rights, gender, child protection, health security, security cooperation and operations, and SSR.

NSPSPs are essential in fragile and conflict-affected contexts to establishing the necessary conditions for successful international assistance in the security, development, and humanitarian spheres. But for SSR, NSPSPs are viewed as *critical* to success,<sup>7</sup> most importantly, because these documents provide the strategic framework required for effective SSR.<sup>8</sup> However, they also guide security sector budgeting and financing,<sup>9</sup> and they help improve the social contract between a state and its people<sup>10</sup> – which contributes to national conflict resolution and can assist in mending negative public perceptions of a once-predatory security sector.<sup>11</sup>

The security and development communities, including the UN, have recognized the need to support national authorities in fragile and conflict-affected states to formulate, promulgate, implement, and monitor and evaluate NSPSPs. The important role of the UN in supporting NSPSPs was acknowledged by the General Assembly in both 2010 and 2011,<sup>12</sup> and was later underscored in 2014 by the Security Council in its first thematic resolution on SSR (S/RES/2151).

As part of the emerging UN approach to SSR, the UN Inter-agency SSR Task Force (IASSRTF) also developed its ITGN on United Nations Support to National Security Policy- and Strategy-Making Processes in 2012.<sup>13</sup> While the ITGN focuses

on national security policies and strategies, it pays only cursory attention to the subject of national security plans. However, it does introduce the term 'national security plans' and stipulates that national security policies and strategies should result in such plans.<sup>14</sup> It also calls on the UN to "highlight the importance of translating a national security policy into a national security strategy and, subsequently, a plan of action for later implementation,"<sup>15</sup> noting that the UN is "well positioned to assist by ... helping develop national security strategies and implementation plans."<sup>16</sup>

The ITGN defines a national security policy as "a formal description of a country's understanding of its guiding principles, values, interests, goals, strategic environment, threats, risks and challenges in view of protecting or promoting national security for the State and its peoples."<sup>17</sup> A national security strategy, on the other hand, is "a formal description of the *methods* to be used by the State and its peoples to realize the vision and goals outlined in national security policy" (emphasis added).<sup>18</sup> While an explicit definition of 'national security plan' is not offered in the ITGN, it can be deduced from the document, and for the purposes of this chapter, is defined as: a formal account by the State of what needs to be done, when, and by whom to *implement* a national security policy/strategy. Importantly, this means that national security plans are not security sector development plans that focus solely on SSR. Rather, they outline the full range of requirements for implementing a national security policy; and depending on the national context, this could include activities in areas ranging from foreign affairs, to health security, to counter-terrorism.

Indeed, according to the ITGN, national security plans should respond to a broad spectrum of issues – requiring a coherent whole-of-government approach to ensure the delivery of immediate security to both the state and its people, as well as a coherent whole-of-system approach to international assistance – addressing:

1. The needs, vision, and objectives of, and threats to national security that are articulated in the related national security policy and/or strategy;
2. Specific SSR activities in response to these elements, ranging from strengthening parliamentary oversight to the development of counter-terrorism capabilities in a national defence force;
3. Specific security operations in response to these elements (for example, to address terrorist threats in rural communities and/or to counter organized crime and related corruption in public service);
4. Crosscutting issues such as human rights, gender equality, and child protection;
5. Clear goals and indicators that encourage measurement of impact and contribute to public communication campaigns that outline the progress of specific reforms; and
6. Information on activities, inter-dependencies, sequencing and timelines, roles and responsibilities, and risk management, as well as financial sustainability.

When it comes to SSR and security operations, the considerations are indelibly linked, and require specific mention. The implementation of a national security policy cannot be pursued without accounting for both. As an example, preventing or resolving a national security threat through a specific security operation may first require that the capacity of a participating agency is strengthened. If an organized criminal network seizes control of a town following a post-conflict gap in national security provision, a country may decide to address the threat militarily, but may first need to implement reforms in the security sector to enhance national oversight mechanisms regarding the adherence of national forces to international humanitarian and human rights law. Alternatively, a desired SSR result may only be achievable following the resolution of an immediate security concern through a security operation. For instance, an SSR effort to build community policing capacities in a village far removed from a nation's capital by focusing on local governance, police training, and police infrastructure may be contingent on the ability of the military to ensure the security environment by addressing threats arising from marauding armed groups in the region.

The UN approach to NSPSPs is based on principles laid out in the Organization's broader approach to SSR, and thus prioritizes national ownership. It also stresses the need to incorporate a human rights perspective and outlines a number of potential support strategies and roles for the UN, such as: facilitation and coordination; communication, awareness raising, and outreach; the provision of technical assistance; and capacity development. A range of challenges and opportunities that may confront the UN and other international actors when supporting NSPSPs are also presented, including: fostering political will and leadership; building trust and confidence; supporting a consultative or governance-driven process; dealing with cultures of secrecy; and addressing capacity shortages. Lastly, the ITGN outlines some UN-specific pitfalls, ranging from short-term mandates, to the risk of undermining national ownership, to ensuring adequate and predictable resources.<sup>19</sup>

### **The UN experience in supporting the development of NSPSPs<sup>20</sup>**

At the continued behest of recipients of UN support, as well as the General Assembly and the Security Council, supporting the development of NSPSPs has become an important element of the UN approach to SSR. This has made it a focus of the UN Secretariat and its peace operations, and of relevant UN agencies, funds, and programmes. The following section briefly summarizes five UN experiences in the area of NSPSP formulation in three countries, led by: the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) starting in 1999; the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2007/8; the UN

Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in the mid to late 2000's; the UN Integrated Mission in East Timor (UNMIT) starting in 2006; and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) from 2014. These cases provide a variety of UN experiences over the past two decades.

### *Timor-Leste*

Following national independence in 1999, and after a brief but severe period of armed violence initiated by pro-Indonesian militias, UNTAET, and subsequently the UN Mission in Support of East Timor (UNMISET), assisted Timor-Leste to develop a range of national institutions, including in the security sector. As noted by Peake, the institutional vacuum following independence meant that the development of national security institutions occurred swiftly and “without much of a policy framework to unite them.”<sup>21</sup> In fact, no national security policy, strategy, or plan were developed. In their absence, reforms in the fledging national security sector proved ineffective.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, these reforms were not designed to deal with immediate operational problems or any others that might arise in the short term. “SSR planning documents placed little to no emphasis on maintaining coherence in building forces that would counteract pressing security threats,”<sup>23</sup> and therefore did little to deliver the safe and secure environment needed by Timor-Leste during its post-independence nation-building process. As Funaki has highlighted, matters were only made worse by the withdrawal of the UN in mid-2005 “before the [security] institutions and capacity were in place for an effective Timorese takeover.”<sup>24</sup> As a result, large parts of the Timorese security sector collapsed in 2006, contributing to a crisis of violence in which thirty-eight people were killed, around 150,000 were displaced, and over 1,650 homes were destroyed.<sup>25</sup>

In response to the crisis, Timor-Leste made a second, more structured and strategic attempt at SSR. Given the lack of an NSPSP framework, Timorese authorities began in 2007 by developing a national security policy. The process was led by the Secretariat of State for Security and the Office of the President, with significant UN support – including from the newly-established UNMIT and UNDP – as well as that of the Australian Timor-Leste Police Development Programme (TLPDP) and the US Embassy. Notably, there was no parallel initiative to develop a national security *plan*, to ensure effective implementation of the national security policy. Still, following a number of fits and starts as conditions, priorities, commitment, and capacity changed over a four-year drafting process, a draft national security policy was sent in February 2011 to the Council of Ministers for approval.

The development of the country's first national security policy was a significant milestone, but the Government of Timor-Leste never elaborated a national security plan to ensure its successful implementation. One explanation for this could be that

the perceived urgency for thorough implementation of the national security policy, in a period of relative calm four years after the policy development process began and 12 years after independence, had simply evaporated. Or, Timorese leaders may have viewed a national Strategic Development Plan that was submitted to the Council of Ministers a few months after the draft national security policy, in July 2011, as a sufficiently suitable substitute. That Plan offered a “twenty year vision . . . to create a prosperous and strong nation”<sup>26</sup> and included general targets for security and defence, but was not focused specifically on operationalizing the national security policy. In 2011, one year before UNMIT liquidated, the mood among national and international authorities was buoyant: Timor-Leste was finally on the path to stability.<sup>27</sup>

However, the country’s journey to stability following independence was not without challenges. Some security threats were not prevented, including those that led to the 2006 crisis and to the reported attempted assassination of the President and Prime Minister in 2008, and came close to crippling the fledging nation during its first decade of existence. Both the Timorese Government, in its decision to develop a national security policy after the 2006 crisis, and the UN, in its 2006 report on Timor-Leste,<sup>28</sup> recognized the error in not drafting such a policy upon independence. Yet, to ensure effective implementation, there should also have been a corresponding national security plan, which could have made the path to peace in Timor-Leste less challenging and investments in SSR – and in the development process more generally – more effective. As noted by Funaki, the primary obstacle to donor coordination in the area of SSR during Timor-Leste’s peacebuilding process, and thus to effective SSR and national security, had indeed been “the lack of a shared strategic framework, with above all an agreed national security policy.”<sup>29</sup>

### *Liberia*

Liberia was plagued by civil war from December 1989 until August 2003. A return to violence in the country after an original 1996 peace agreement has been linked to a failure to initiate an effective SSR process, which would itself have required the development of an NSPSP framework.<sup>30</sup> As such, at the end of conflict in 2003, SSR was considered central to ensuring the country’s future stability, including its economic prosperity.<sup>31</sup> Stakeholders agreed that SSR was a priority during the signing of the 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Accra, Ghana, but the need for a national security strategy was not explicitly articulated until 2006 at a conference organized by the Liberia Governance Commission (GC), an entity established by the Liberian Government to promote good governance and reforms in the Liberian public sector.<sup>32</sup> This led to an assessment of the national security sector by the GC, resulting in recommendations for developing a national security strategy.

Following a period of national dialogue based on nation-wide consultations and policy seminars, Liberia's first National Security Strategy was approved by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and the National Security Council in January 2008. The landmark document, which contains elements of both policy and strategy per UN definitions, represented an outcome of the SSR process as well as a guide for further implementation of that process. It called for the development of an "integrated National Security Strategy of the Republic of Liberia Implementation Matrix (NSSRL-IM)."<sup>33</sup> Contrary to Liberia's 150-day action plan, which identified the need to "develop a national security plan,"<sup>34</sup> the NSSRL-IM was designed to be a "security system development plan showing how each agency can sustainably attain the expertise and other resources required to fulfil its remit together with suggested sustainable financial commitments from the Government and its international partners."<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, it was not designed to be a national security plan outlining the full range of actions required to effectively implement the National Security Strategy.

Nevertheless, the National Security Strategy did include a one-page Implementation Schedule (ISL) that, while brief, took rudimentary steps towards charting out what needed to be done, when, and by whom, to fully implement the Strategy. Step three, for example, was to develop the NSSRL-IM and step four was to prepare a security sector budget. Later steps addressed more operational tasks, such as step nine, to deploy "national security officers throughout Liberia" and step thirteen to hold "national security exercises to prepare for the takeover of security responsibilities."<sup>36</sup> Still, the ISL lacks alignment with the Strategy, failing to include actions to address almost every threat – and cause of conflict – and security dilemma listed in the Strategy. These pertain to land and property disputes, ethnic tensions, poverty and unemployment, and poor natural resource management. This ISL is not, therefore, a national security plan in form or in name.

While the adoption of the National Security Strategy and the development of the ISL and the NSSRL-IM represented real achievements for Liberia, successful implementation proved difficult. One challenge came from the time it took to develop the Strategy and any accompanying tools,<sup>37</sup> which caused a number of important decisions to mount, including some needed to address both root causes of the conflict and the threats outlined in the Strategy. Additionally, as the Strategy started taking shape, the attention of national authorities was largely elsewhere. Jaye has noted that "a lack of political will may also [have been] a factor" along with "diverging visions of the process, a lack of resources, and difficulties in securing an adequate role for the government."<sup>38</sup> As a consequence, while Liberia's path to stability in the period after approval of the National Security Strategy has been characterized by a number of significant accomplishments – including peaceful presidential elections in 2011 and 2017, legislative elections in both 2011 and 2014,

and the transfer of security responsibilities from UNMIL to the Government on 30 June 2016 – various issues identified as root causes of Liberia’s 14-year civil war have remained unaddressed,<sup>39</sup> some of which must be better articulated within the Strategy.

The inclusive process through which the Liberian National Security Strategy was developed represents a positive legacy, on one hand, including through the introduction of oversight by parliament and civil society as part of security sector governance. Yet, on the other hand, implementation of the Strategy was largely ineffective, which is not surprising in the light of the fact that the NSSRL-IM came to be seen as the strategy’s implementation plan, and was effectively considered synonymous with a national security plan. By focusing on only a portion of what was needed to implement the National Security Strategy (i.e., SSR elements), the Government of Liberia missed opportunities. And as Shilue and Fagen observed, “although the government of Liberia has made great efforts to set up and develop its internal security apparatus, the country would have relapsed into conflict without the significant external assistance to displaced people and the role played by the international community in helping to preserve peace.”<sup>40</sup> Chillingly, Shilue and Fagen conclude, therefore, that “current prospects for sustainable peace in Liberia remain weak.”<sup>41</sup>

### *Central African Republic*

CAR has struggled with severe instability since it formally gained independence from France in 1960. Following a coup led by General François Bozizé in 2003 and his subsequent democratic election in 2005, the country faced an armed rebellion in the northwest and then, six months later, another in the northeast.<sup>42</sup> Within this context, President Bozizé asked international partners, including the UN, for help in organizing a national seminar on SSR in 2007, with the hope of improving security and fulfilling an important campaign pledge. The four-day event, held in April 2008, brought together over 150 participants from both national and local government, the judiciary, defence and security forces, customs, immigration services, parliament and civil society (NGOs, media, and religious groups), as well as representatives from the international community. It culminated in a two-year National Security Sector Reform Plan (NSSRP), known as the chronogram, which was formally adopted by President Bozizé and Prime Minister Faustin Touadéra during the seminar’s closing ceremony. The Plan outlined objectives and activities for SSR in the areas of border management, defence, justice, intelligence, and public security.<sup>43</sup>

While national authorities in CAR had considered preparing a national security policy and/or strategy before the NSSRP was adopted, they ultimately decided against it, largely due to an apathy among national and international stakeholders alike for



the lengthy process the development of these documents was expected to entail.<sup>44</sup> Instead, national authorities, with significant encouragement from international donors, opted for a document that would be “immediately operational and allowed for clear assigning of responsibility to different national actors/institutions”.<sup>45</sup>

By 2010, little of the NSSRP had been realized. As N’Diaye explained, “promising, although limited, progress achieved by the ... national seminar on SSR ... unravelled.”<sup>46</sup> Fuior and Law similarly noted that, “notwithstanding initial successes, SSR implementation soon stalled and was then effectively abandoned.”<sup>47</sup> Attempting to explain this outcome, More contended that the NSSRP may have been too ambitious for CAR at the time,<sup>48</sup> both the scope and timeline of which were considered “set in stone” by CAR authorities. This resulted in a lack of adaptability to changing circumstances, and the support of international partners was either not forthcoming or swiftly waned. Additionally, a lack of national political will was an impediment to effective implementation of not only the NSSRP but of SSR processes more generally.<sup>49</sup>

According to N’Diaye, implementation of the NSSRP was also hampered by the resumption of armed violence in February 2009, which itself was due to “the failure to implement SSR.”<sup>50</sup> The connection between the lack of a more robust NSPSP framework, a failed SSR process, and the return of violence in the CAR was further spelled out in a more recent report from London-based Conciliation Resources, which noted that “poor governance of the security sector and the government’s consequent inability to ensure citizens’ security and ultimately the security of the Bozizé regime itself was directly responsible for the onset of the [2013/2015] crisis and Seleka’s takeover in March 2013.”<sup>51</sup> Indeed, N’Diaye warned in 2009 that SSR implementation in CAR – and thus national security overall – would continue to fall flat until the country, with the help of international partners, manages to get “the framework and the overarching features right.”<sup>52</sup> In this respect, as evidenced from the earlier examples of Liberia and Timor-Leste as well, the most important framework and overarching feature of any successful SSR endeavour, and for national security more generally, is that provided by an NSPSP.

In 2013, five years after the SSR seminar, a coup led by Michel Djotodia’s Séléka rebel coalition ended François Bozizé’s decade-old rule and plunged the country into yet another crisis.<sup>53</sup> By early January 2014, more than 600 civilians had been killed in Bangui,<sup>54</sup> the number of internally displaced persons had reached approximately 838,000, and the number of those forced to seek refuge in neighbouring countries had risen to 86,000.<sup>55</sup> With pressure from President Idriss Déby of Chad, the Economic Community of Central African States, and France, Djotodia and his government were forced to resign. On 23 January 2014, Catherine Samba-Panza was appointed President by the Transitional Assembly.

In 2014, the International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA) was transformed into MINUSCA, pursuant to UN Security Council resolution 2149, and planning began for a new national dialogue (i.e., the Bangui Forum) meant to return CAR to the path of peace and stability. In May 2015, prospects for successful SSR were somewhat enhanced when the Bangui Forum was hosted by the CAR Government, with assistance from MINUSCA and the Mission's SSR Unit, and resulted in a Republican Pact for Peace, National Reconciliation and Reconstruction. The Pact reflected "the full commitment of the participants in the Forum to a comprehensive reform of the security sector, including the establishment of accountable, multi-ethnic, professional and republican defence and internal security forces."<sup>56</sup>

In December 2015, the Government, again with MINUSCA's assistance, held a roundtable on national security, which led to a Declaration on the Principles of National Security and eventually to a March 2016 draft national security policy. On 2 February 2017, CAR's National Security Policy was finally adopted by the Council of Ministers.<sup>57</sup> Subsequently, a National SSR Strategy (for the period of 2017–2022) was prepared on the basis of the Policy, and was adopted by the Government on 10 March 2017. The Strategy focuses on: strengthening the capacity of the security sector; reinforcing the security of people and goods, and the restoration of State authority; and good governance and the rule of law.

Though the Government has adopted security sector development plans for defence, internal security, and corrections, with a justice policy and plan to follow, it has not indicated that it will produce an overall national security plan that details the what, when, and who of implementation for the National Security Policy and National SSR Strategy.

The National Security Policy of CAR is undoubtedly a positive and hopeful development, but it is not a guarantor of national security and stability on its own. Instead, as illustrated by other country examples discussed above, a national security *plan* would greatly assist implementation. Yet, given the specific national context in CAR and the lessons learned from the failure of the NSSRP, even a comprehensive NSPSP framework will not alone rectify the country's decades-long tendency towards insecurity. To be successful in CAR, an NSPSP framework must be matched by unwavering national will, substantial and real financial and in-kind international commitment for at least a decade, UN support based on a thorough understanding of the national and international interests shaping CAR's national security environment, and well-managed national security.

## UN Support to NSPSP development: Challenges and opportunities

The cases of Timor-Leste, Liberia, and CAR, coupled with the developments at UN Headquarters, highlight three important challenges and opportunities for UN support to NSPSP development in fragile and conflict-affected contexts: first, there is a clear need to develop NSPSP frameworks; second, NSPSP frameworks should be developed without delay; and third, the development and implementation of national security plans should be extended beyond SSR.

### *The need to develop NSPSP frameworks, and without delay*

In the absence of a NSPSP framework in Timor-Leste, from its independence in 1999 through the 2006 security crisis, reforms in the security sector proved ineffective, which ultimately contributed to further instability. Further, if a comprehensive NSPSP framework had been swiftly prepared immediately after the 2006 crisis, as opposed to undertaking the four-year process that led to only a national security *policy*, the country's path to peace might well have been less challenging and national and international investments in SSR (as well as other sectors) might well have been more effective.

In Liberia, the country's return to violence after the original peace agreement in 1996 was due in part to a failure to undertake effective SSR at the first opportunity. Subsequent efforts to develop the National Security Strategy, an implementation schedule (ISM), and an SSR implementation plan (NSSRL-IM) took five years, which was too long. Additionally, without a national security *plan* to ensure the effective implementation of the national security strategy, successful implementation and sustainable peace was ill-fated from the outset. And so, predictably, the National Security Strategy has not been effectively implemented, leaving a number of the root causes of Liberia's 14-year civil war still unaddressed.

In CAR, the national decision not to prepare a national security policy and/or strategy in 2008 also meant the causes of conflict were not addressed; and as national will waned, international support evaporated, SSR implementation failed, and national security broke down, the crisis returned. If an NSPSP framework had been established initially, the situation might have been significantly different, including in terms of preventing successive crises. The country's 2017 National Security Policy is thus a promising development. However, it too is unlikely to be successfully implemented without a national security plan, national will, and international and UN support.

These examples illustrate firstly that NSPSPs are critical to successful SSR and to preventing and resolving conflict. UN support to this area should therefore persist. Secondly, NSPSPs need to be prepared within months of identifying significant

threats to a state or following the cessation of conflict, not after several years have passed. National authorities should lead the development of NSPSPs, and in all cases their preparation should involve some degree of national consultation. In instances involving extreme security threats, for instance, national consultations may span just days, versus environments without immediate threats, where they could span months. Ultimately, determining the length of national consultations and thus the timeline for the completion of an NSPSP framework should involve an awareness that, for many national stakeholders, this is a question of life or death.

*The development and implementation of national security plans: extending beyond SSR*

On paper, at least and as evidenced in resolutions of both the General Assembly and the Security Council as well as the ITGN on Support to National Security Policy- and Strategy-Making Processes, the UN is committed to supporting national authorities in developing and implementing national security plans. However, as all of the cases discussed above reflect, the reality on the ground is that the UN has yet to actually support the development and/or implementation of such a plan. There seems to be a tendency within the UN, and also within the broader international community, to view national security policies and/or strategies as SSR instruments. Hence, SSR plans are often considered the only plans needed to ensure effective implementation of a national security policy and/or strategy. As experience tells us, this is ineffective.

Indeed, in the absence of national security plans and their effective implementation, national security threats often result in, or further contribute to, unstable and increasingly violent environments. In some cases, this has led to or precipitated a return to conflict. Such extreme environments make SSR implementation increasingly more difficult, to the point that both national and international investments are stifled, or entirely lost, as programmes are forced to conclude prematurely. Thus, while national security plans are critical to preventing and resolving conflict in fragile and conflict-affected states, they are also central to protecting national and international investments in SSR as well as contributions made to sustainable peace across the pillars of peace and security, human rights, and development. In other words, if the UN is to realize the truly preventative and responsive value of NSPSPs, it must help national partners to both develop and coherently implement national security plans.

However, NSPSP frameworks will only be successful if they are not viewed through the lens of SSR alone. This tends to reduce national security policies and/or strategies to little more than “SSR instruments” that can be effectively implemented through SSR planning mechanisms. This misunderstanding impedes NSPSP frameworks from the outset and contributes to failed implementation. Instead, NSPSP frameworks should be viewed first and foremost through the lens

of prevention and should therefore receive analysis-based, whole-of-government (or in the case of the UN, whole-of-system) attention.

## Conclusion

NSPSPs are critical to preventing and resolving conflict, both directly through their attention to addressing national security threats, and indirectly through their centrality to successful SSR. Indeed, as the cases above illustrate, national security threats often result in or exacerbate instability and violence in the absence of NSPSP frameworks, and can even precipitate a return to conflict. To take advantage of the full breadth of preventative and responsive elements of NSPSPs, the UN must assist national authorities in *developing* and *coherently implementing* national security plans. In this respect, both SSR and security operations should be seen as *sine qua non*. In fact, lacking a national security plan and the actions it prescribes, the chance that a national security policy or strategy can be successfully implemented is significantly diminished, if not erased.

To be effective, it is clear that NSPSPs should be prepared swiftly – within months of when significant threats to a state are identified, or immediately following the cessation of conflict, not after several years. Success in developing and implementing NSPSPs will also require that they are viewed from a prevention perspective, beyond the narrower context of SSR. National security policies and strategies are not developed for the purposes of SSR alone, and the misunderstanding that they are hampers many NSPSP frameworks from the start. Finally, success will require a whole-of-government (or whole-of-system) approach and a staunch commitment to analysis-driven and context-specific delivery over the medium-to-long term. To this end, delivery should prioritize national ownership while balancing the need to provide immediate tangible results in the areas of national, community, and individual security.

The experiences discussed above have generated seven recommendations that might prove useful in ongoing efforts to reform the UN peace and security architecture, as well as for national and international efforts to both prevent and resolve conflict:

1. Prioritize SSR, recalling its original aims as an important facet of any conflict prevention strategy and/or programme.
2. Strengthen support to ensure the swift development of NSPSPs. In situations where support to the elaboration of national security policies and/or strategies is impossible (for example, in particularly fragile or dangerous operating environments), priority should be given to the rapid development of national security *plans*. Specific technical assistance to the development of national security plans should include:

- analysis and threat assessment;
  - national consultation, appropriate to the security context and immediate security needs;
  - options identification and drafting;
  - coordination of national and international partners; and
  - resource mobilization.
3. Support national authorities to implement national security plans, with a priority in the areas of both SSR and security operations. However, other forms of thematic expertise will also be required, for example in:
- development assistance;
  - environmental protection;
  - foreign affairs;
  - human rights;
  - gender;
  - health security;
  - child protection; and
  - security cooperation.
4. In order to operationalize recommendations two (2) and three (3) above, establish a support mechanism at UN Headquarters in New York, tasked with ensuring the coherent delivery of NSPSP-related assistance to fragile and conflict-affected states across the UN system, together with international partners, in both the development and implementation of NSPSP frameworks. The Secretary-General could, for example, establish a NSPSP coordination structure, which could be used proactively to help states prevent conflict, or reactively to assist countries in or emerging from conflict. Such a coordination structure would be cost-neutral, transparent, and accountable to both the Secretary-General and UN Member States;
5. Strengthen UN SSR capacities in the field and at Headquarters, to support the development and implementation of national security plans;
6. Provide further support to the development of a UN approach to SSR, including through the creation (and/or strengthening) of UN SSR funds, structures, and capacities for support to NSPSPs; and
7. Prepare guidance, knowledge management, research, and training on UN support to the development of national security plans, as well as knowledge management, research, and training on national security policies and strategies.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> See United Nations, “At Security Council, UN chief Guterres makes case for new efforts to build and sustain peace,” press release, 10 January 2017; United Nations Secretary-General, “Priorities: Prevention,” n/d, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/priorities/prevention.shtml>; United Nations, “Guterres highlights importance of recognizing the links between peace and sustainable development,” press release, 24 January 2017; United Nations Secretary-General, “Remarks at UN Reform Event,” 18 September 2017, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2017-09-18/secretary-generals-reform-remarks>.
- <sup>2</sup> Nicole Ball, “The Evolution of the Security Sector Reform Agenda” in *The Future of Security Sector Reform*, edited by Mark Sedra (Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2010), 29–44; Nicole Ball, *Evaluation of the Conflict Prevention Pools: The Security Sector Reform Strategy*, DFID Evaluation Report EV 647, March 2004; and DCAF, *The contribution and role of SSR in the prevention of violent conflict*, April 2017.
- <sup>3</sup> United Nations, Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, 2010 substantive session (A/64/19), 22 February–19 March 2010; United Nations, Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, 2011 substantive session (A/65/19), 22 February – 18 March 2011 and 9 May 2011; United Nations, Security Council Resolution 2151 (S/RES/2151), 28 April 2014.
- <sup>4</sup> United Nations, *SSR Perspective*, May 2012; Vincenza Scherrer, “UN Support to National Security Policy-Making from an Institution-Building Perspective,” *Sicherheit und Frieden / Security and Peace* 30, no. 3, (2012), 141–147.
- <sup>5</sup> United Nations, Integrated Technical Guidance Notes: United Nations Support to National Security Policy- and Strategy-Making Processes (2012).
- <sup>6</sup> “National Security Policies,” SSR Backgrounder Series (Geneva: DCAF, 2015), 2 and 8; Alix Julia Boucher, “National Security Policies and Strategies: A Note on Current Practice,” Henry L. Stimson Center, 1 and 8; and Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*, 2nd ed. (Prentice Hall, 1991), 104 and 118.
- <sup>7</sup> Ann Fitz-Gerald, “Stabilization Operations and Post-Conflict Security Sector Reform: Strange Bedfellows or Close Allies?” in *The Future of Security Sector Reform*, ed. Mark Sedra (Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2010), 159; William A. Byrd, “The Financial Dimension of Security Sector Reform” in *The Future of Security Sector Reform*, ed. Mark Sedra (Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2010), 305 and 307; “National Security Policies,” SSR Backgrounder Series, 1 and 4; United Nations, ITGN on Support to National Security Policy- and Strategy-Making Processes, 118; Albrecht Schnabel, “Ideal Requirements versus Real Environments in Security Sector Reform” in *Security Sector Reform in Challenging Environments*, eds. Hans Born and Albrecht Schnabel (Geneva: DCAF, 2009), 6 and 11.
- <sup>8</sup> Fitz-Gerald, “Stabilization Operations and Post-Conflict Security Sector Reform: Strange Bedfellows or Close Allies?,” 159.
- <sup>9</sup> Byrd, “The Financial Dimension of Security Sector Reform,” 310.
- <sup>10</sup> United Nations, ITGN on Support to National Security Policy- and Strategy-Making Processes, 118.
- <sup>11</sup> OECD, “OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform,” 2011, 18.
- <sup>12</sup> United Nations, Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/64/19), para. 110; United Nations, Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/65/19), para. 126.
- <sup>13</sup> United Nations, ITGN on Support to National Security Policy- and Strategy-Making Processes.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 124.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 123.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

- <sup>17</sup> Ibid, 122.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid, 123.
- <sup>19</sup> United Nations, ITGN on Support to National Security Policy- and Strategy-Making Processes, 134–137.
- <sup>20</sup> This section draws on three unpublished case studies that were commissioned by DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance to support the development of the ITGN on Support to National Security Policy- and Strategy-Making Processes.
- <sup>21</sup> Gordon Peake, “A lot of talk but not a lot of action: the difficulty of implementing SSR in Timor-Leste” in *Security Sector Reform in Challenging Environments*, eds. Hans Born and Albrecht Schnabel (Geneva: DCAF, 2009), 218.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid., 210. See also Björn Hofmann, “Timor-Leste: Development of the National Security Policy,” draft case study report, 2011 (DCAF, unpublished), 1–2; and United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/628), 7 August 2006, para. 58.
- <sup>23</sup> Nicholas J. Armstrong, Jacqueline Chura-Beaver, and Isaac Kfir, *Security Sector Reform in Timor-Leste: Missed Opportunities and Hard Lessons in Empowering the Host-Nation*, PKSOI Papers, US Army Peacekeeping & Stability Operations Institute, April 2012, 17.
- <sup>24</sup> Yoshino Funaki, “The UN and Security Sector Reform in Timor-Leste: A Widening Credibility Gap,” May 2009, 2. Available from <https://fundasaunmahein.files.wordpress.com/2009/07/funaki-timor-ssr-final.pdf>.
- <sup>25</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Report of the United Nations Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste (Geneva: OHCHR, 2006), paras 100–101.
- <sup>26</sup> Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, *Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030* (version submitted to the National Parliament), 2011, 7.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., 53.
- <sup>28</sup> United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/628), para. 58.
- <sup>29</sup> Funaki, “The UN and Security Sector Reform in Timor-Leste: A Widening Credibility Gap,” 7.
- <sup>30</sup> Thomas Jaye, “Liberia: Development of the National Security Strategy,” draft case study report, 2011 (DCAF, unpublished), 2–3.
- <sup>31</sup> Mark Malan, *Security Sector Reform in Liberia: Mixed Results from Humble Beginnings* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2008), 6; International Monetary Fund, *Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy: Republic of Liberia*, IMF Country Report No. 07/60, February 2007, 31.
- <sup>32</sup> Jaye, “Liberia: Development of the National Security Strategy,” 4.
- <sup>33</sup> Republic of Liberia, *National Security Strategy*, 2008, 19.
- <sup>34</sup> Government of Liberia, *150 Day Action Plan: A Working Document for a New Liberia* (2006), 1. Available from <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/4B6D32CC99BB6DE785257154006EAEAE-govlbr-lbr-18apr.pdf>.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid., 3.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid., 19.
- <sup>37</sup> International Crisis Group, “Liberia: Uneven Progress in Security Sector Reform,” Africa Report No. 148, 13 January 2009, 16.
- <sup>38</sup> Jaye, “Liberia: Development of the National Security Strategy,” 11.
- <sup>39</sup> Republic of Liberia and the United Nations Mission in Liberia, “Sustaining Peace and Securing Development: Liberia Peacebuilding Plan,” 20 March 2017, 4.
- <sup>40</sup> James Shilue and Patricia Fagen, “Liberia: Links between Peacebuilding, Conflict Prevention and Durable Solutions to Displacement,” Brookings Institute Report, 5 September 2014, i.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>42</sup> International Crisis Group, “Anatomy of a Phantom State,” Africa Report No. 136, 13 December 2007.



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- <sup>44</sup> Sylvie More, “The Central African Republic: Development of the National Security Sector Reform Plan,” draft case study report, 2011 (DCAF, unpublished), 5.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>46</sup> Boubacar N’Diaye, “Security Sector Reform in the Central African Republic,” in *Security Sector Reform in Challenging Environments*, eds. Hans Born and Albrecht Schnabel (Geneva: DCAF, 2009), 61.
- <sup>47</sup> Teodora Fuior and David Law, “Security Sector Reform in the Central African Republic: Chronicle of a Death Foretold,” Centre for Security Governance, *SSR 2.0 Brief 1* (2014), 1.
- <sup>48</sup> More, “The Central African Republic: Development of the National Security Sector Reform Plan,” 20–21.
- <sup>49</sup> Fuior and Law, “Security Sector Reform in the Central African Republic: Chronicle of a Death Foretold,” 5; and N’Diaye, “Security Sector Reform in the Central African Republic,” 57.
- <sup>50</sup> N’Diaye, “Security Sector Reform in the Central African Republic,” 62.
- <sup>51</sup> Conciliation Resources, Analysis of conflict and peacebuilding in the Central African Republic, November 2015, 9.
- <sup>52</sup> N’Diaye, “Security Sector Reform in the Central African Republic,” 62.
- <sup>53</sup> International Crisis Group, “Central African Republic: Priorities of the Transition,” Africa Report No. 203, 11 June 2013.
- <sup>54</sup> See United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA), “Over 600 people killed, 159,000 displaced in Central African Republic,” press release, 20 December 2013. Available from <https://binuca.unmissions.org/en/over-600-people-killed-159000-displaced-central-african-republic---un-0>.
- <sup>55</sup> See UNHCR, Central African Republic Fact Sheet, 31 January 2014.
- <sup>56</sup> United Nations, Security Sector Reform Unit, Security Sector Reform in the Central African Republic: Challenges and Priorities (2016), p. 9.
- <sup>57</sup> United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2017/473 (2 June 2017), p. 9.