

Peace Processes

Negotiating reform of the security sector

About this series

The SSR Backgrounders provide concise introductions to topics in good security sector governance (SSG) and security sector reform (SSR). The series summarizes current debates, explains key terms and exposes central tensions based on a broad range of international experiences. The SSR Backgrounders do not promote specific models, policies or proposals for good governance or reform but do provide further resources that will allow readers to extend their knowledge on each topic. The SSR Backgrounders are a resource for security governance and reform stakeholders seeking to understand and to critically assess current approaches to good SSG and SSR.

About this SSR Backgrounder

This SSR Backgrounder explains how SSR features in peace processes and how it is linked to other aspects of security, justice and democratic governance. It highlights some of the main factors that influence the inclusion of SSR in peace processes, including the roles and strategies of mediators in shaping the negotiations. It also discusses what issues of SSR are typically not addressed in peace processes and some of the principal challenges of SSR negotiation and implementation.

This SSR Backgrounder answers the following questions:

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Why is SSG central to peace processes?

Peace processes are pivotal moments for every society, during which the institutions of the State and its relationship with the population are (re-)defined by the conflict actors, sometimes in consultation with civil society and the general public. Mediators often support this negotiation process by helping the opposing actors to develop agreements they can all accept. Most peace processes address what future SSG in the country will look like. Good SSG seeks to ensure that all sections of the population are protected from violence and other forms of harm and have access to justice mechanisms, and that security and justice providers are managed according to good governance principles and are accountable to democratic oversight (see box).

Considering good SSG in negotiations can support a peace process by:

Brokering power and providing some certainty among state and non-state security actors: Decisions on SSR and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) in a peace process can provide conflict actors with clarity about security guarantees, amnesties and distribution of power in the security sector, which can resolve security dilemmas.

Providing procedural benefits: Discussions about SSG in a peace process also familiarize conflict actors with the benefits of democratic governance for human and state security, and its inclusion in a peace agreement can increase the government's commitment to subsequent SSR implementation.

Addressing conflict drivers: Insecurity, human rights abuses and lack of access to justice are often key mobilizers of armed groups and at the core of the grievances of those sections of the population they claim to represent. Therefore, discussions on how to restore justice and prevent future abuses by changing the way the security sector functions are prominent in many peace processes. Demands for equal treatment and representation of all sections of the population in the security sector are also frequently addressed in negotiations.

Restoring legitimacy of the State and the security sector: Providing more effective and accountable security and justice to all sections of the population may increase the legitimacy of the post-conflict government as a whole, and of the security sector in particular, thereby restoring stability.

► **Good security sector governance (SSG) and security sector reform (SSR)** Good SSG describes how the principles of good governance apply to public security provision, management and oversight. The principles of good SSG are accountability, transparency, the rule of law, participation, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency.

The **security sector** is not just security providers: it includes all the institutions and personnel responsible for security management and oversight at both national and local levels.

Establishing good SSG is the goal of security sector reform. SSR is the political and technical process of improving state and human security by making security provision, management and oversight more effective and more accountable, within a framework of democratic civilian control, the rule of law and respect for human rights. SSR may focus on only one part of public security provision or the way the entire system functions, as long as the goal is always to improve both effectiveness and accountability.

For more information on these core definitions, please refer to the SSR Backgrounders on "Security Sector Governance", "Security Sector Reform" and "The Security Sector".

How can SSR feature in peace processes?

Just as there are various types of peace processes, there are various ways in which SSR is approached in peace processes. Not all peace processes lead to peace agreements – just as not all are mediated. Few peace agreements provide for a comprehensive SSR programme, while most focus on sector-specific SSR components, such as defence, police, justice and intelligence reform. Reform initiatives also distinguish themselves by the extent to which they promote democratic governance.

The security sector in fragile and conflict-affected States usually suffers from various deficiencies related to poor SSG. Different components of SSR are carried out to address these governance challenges in war-to-peace transitions:

- **Defence reform** commonly seeks to integrate parts of non-state armed groups into the armed forces, which requires the establishment of human-rights-sensitive and meritocratic vetting and recruitment procedures. Post-conflict States also need to shift from wartime to peacetime defence budgets and capabilities. Executive monopoly of oversight of the armed forces during war should give way to more effective parliamentary and civil society oversight during peacetime.
- **Reform of internal security services** in war-to-peace transitions commonly aims at establishing a civilian and people-serving police and separating the roles of different law enforcement agencies that were previously all engaged in war efforts.
- **Justice reform** in these contexts often has the goal to establish effective and proportional justice mechanisms that distinguish between civilians and combatants and that are accessible to all sections of society, including rural and marginalized populations. Post-conflict governments also frequently need to lift the state of emergency that justified extraordinary measures during crisis. Commonly part of larger constitutional reform processes in the aftermath of war are efforts to align national laws to international human rights standards and

► Mediation styles/strategies

- **Facilitative mediation enables the conflict actors to communicate with each other and have access to all necessary information for estimating their agreement.** Mediators can provide organizational and technical support to the conflict parties but refrain from making substantial recommendations.
- **Mediators may also act as formulators by providing substantial input to the negotiations.** Formulation can help overcome a stalemate by making the conflict actors aware of possible alternative resolutions to the dispute.
- **Power-based mediation attempts to influence the conflict actors' perceived costs and benefits of a solution, compared with continued hostilities, through threats and incentives.** However, the mediator seldom has enough leeway to act in such a manner.

Distinctions between these strategies are not clear cut and they can be used separately or in combinations at different stages of the process.

to provide for institutional checks and balances in the security sector, including independent oversight mechanisms such as a national human rights commission.

- **Prison reform** in transitional contexts often aims at improving the conditions of detention for large wartime prison populations and reducing their number. Another common area of action is the liberation of political prisoners.

How SSG/R features in peace negotiations, their outcome documents and the implementation process typically depend on various factors:

- Positive previous experiences of the security sector with effective democratic control and oversight mechanisms and people-centred mandates can reduce resistance to SSR initiatives in the peace process.
- The type (e.g. coup d'état/popular uprising/insurgency), grievance focus (e.g. security/economic, central government control/secession) and direction (e.g. democratic/authoritarian) of the political transition can influence the conflict actors' political preferences and capacities, and public and international support for SSR.
- The negotiation strategies and mutual trust between the conflict actors can have an impact on the timing and order in which SSR is addressed in a peace process.
- Mediators' strategies to facilitate the bargaining process equally influence the way SSR is discussed and sequenced in a peace process.

Figure 1 SSR is embedded in a broader discussion of security, justice and governance throughout a peace process



How conflict actors discuss SSR/G and related security arrangements (e.g. DDR, Mine Action, SALW control) also depends on the extent to which they feel familiar with these concepts and approaches. Non-state armed groups and local civil society often have different interests and understandings than the government or international actors of how the security sector should be governed. International technical experts and mediators may support conflict actors and civil society in identifying challenges in, and developing alternatives to, existing SSG practices, as well as viable reform strategies for implementing such plans.

What aspects of SSR are often neglected in peace processes?

Intelligence governance: The types of SSR included in peace agreements commonly focus on the reform of the police, military and judiciary. They rarely provide for strengthening good governance of the intelligence sector, although intelligence oversight is crucial for achieving people-centred security (see SSR Backgrounders on “Intelligence Oversight”).

Gender equality and security: While civil society and international actors are often successful in advocating for provisions on women’s and girls’ protection from violence and political empowerment to be included in peace agreements, conflict actors and traditional authorities frequently prevent meaningful implementation of these initiatives.

Implementation provisions: While there is often broad commitment to the need to reform the security sector, conflict actors often disagree on the details of how reform should be implemented. Provisions for SSR in peace agreements therefore often remain vague. However, more general SSR provisions can provide the necessary freedom for stakeholders and implementation partners in designing the SSR processes during the implementation of an agreement. Often, ambitious SSR provisions in peace agreements are not implemented due to poor planning or a lack of political and financial commitment of the government and international partners.

► Confidence-building measures (CBMs)

Conflict actors require a minimal degree of confidence in each other to negotiate mutually acceptable outcomes. Mediators can use different strategies to build this confidence and to normalize the relationship between the actors throughout the peace process. One common aim of CBMs is to “humanize” each party in the view of the other, trying to break down mutual perceptions that the other is simply a “villain”. They also focus on actions rather than words and usually promote equal impact on both sides. CBMs can relate to very different topics, such as political, security, economic, environmental, social and humanitarian issues.

Mediators can apply the logic of CBMs by creating a working relationship between the adversaries based on the thematic area of security. For example, conflict actors may receive joint training in SSG, they may exchange prisoners or engage in joint mine clearance missions or joint monitoring teams that verify ceasefire violations.

What other security arrangements in peace processes are relevant to SSR?

SSR is not the only type of security arrangement negotiated in peace processes. Related approaches include:

- Ceasefire/cessation of hostilities;
- DDR of non-state armed groups and government forces;
- Integration of non-state armed groups into government forces;
- Mechanisms to control the availability of small arms and light weapons (SALW); as well as
- Measures to neutralize mines and other explosive remnants of war (Mine Action).

To varying extents, all these security arrangements touch on the means to either engage in armed violence or be protected from it – the State’s monopoly on the legitimate use of force. When focusing on the humanitarian goals and the technical aspects of Mine Action and SALW control, it is sometimes easier for conflict actors to discuss these issues during negotiations. In contrast, DDR and SSR are considered as politically more sensitive as they entail significant obligations and have ramifications on their safety and political and economic power. It is, therefore, often more difficult to achieve consensus on these types of security arrangements and to convince the conflict actors to work towards their implementation. At the same time, armed groups and governments often show a strong interest in engaging DDR and SSR, respectively, when they expect significant material benefits and training.

The different types of security arrangements can realize important synergies in the peace process and beyond: DDR, Mine Action and SALW control may lead to short-term security gains for the population and state institutions and to development of local capacities and institutions, and shift the balance of power in favour of legitimate and accountable state security forces. SSR seeks to build on these gains to enhance state capacity to provide security and legitimize government rule through democratic SSG.

► Gender-inclusive peace processes and SSR

The United Nations’ “Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies” (2017) has highlighted several advantages of making peace processes more gender inclusive:

- Women’s participation can expand the range of domestic constituencies engaged in a peace process, strengthening its legitimacy and credibility.
- Women’s perspectives bring a different understanding of the causes and consequences of conflict, generating more comprehensive and potentially targeted proposals for its resolution.
- Peace agreements that are responsive to the specific needs of women and girls, men and boys contribute to sustainable peace.

Gender inclusivity at all stages of a peace process can increase “local ownership” of security arrangements and create awareness about the specific security needs of people with different gender identities and sexual orientations. This must feed into the assessment, design and planning of SSR. Gender-inclusive peace processes can also form the basis for equal participation of women and LGBTIQ people in security sector institutions.

What are the challenges of including SSR in peace processes?

Mediators, SSR stakeholders and implementing partners can face various challenges when discussing SSR during a peace process:

Conflict actors may not have sufficient trust in each other, or in the mediator, to be willing to discuss security arrangements that limit their protection and political and economic power. The sensitive and political nature of SSR itself can be an obstacle to generating trust between the conflict actors and create unrealistic expectations on the part of non-state armed groups and the general public.

Peace agreements may not be built on the political consensus of key stakeholders. A minimal political consensus between conflict actors and public buy-in are, however, necessary to successfully implement SSR and other security arrangements.

Governments may not want to commit to SSR before their opponents have started to disarm and demobilize. Equally, armed groups may resist DDR because they feel deprived of the military capabilities that they can use both for protection and as political leverage.

Ongoing violence may prevent the conflict actors from implementing SSR and other security arrangements. This can be the case when some of the opposing groups see more benefits in continued conflict than in peaceful settlement, or when a conflict actor's leadership does not have sufficient control over the entire group to enforce the provisions of the peace agreement.

Approaches to end conflict violence in the short run may contradict SSR's long-term goal to build accountable, inclusive and transparent security and justice sector institutions. For instance, the prospects of amnesty or the integration of armed groups into government forces provide incentives for combatants to cease hostilities. At the same time, these measures undermine respect for human rights and the rule of law in the security sector and can decrease the legitimacy of the security forces in the eyes of the population.

States in which the executive branch of government traditionally holds all oversight power over the security services do not want to cede this power to parliament, the judiciary and civil society. Even if the government

► Justice mechanisms in peace processes

Peace agreements frequently provide for transitional justice mechanisms. Some of these mechanisms provide for amnesty under certain conditions, others aim at bringing to justice those who committed abuses and some promote reconciliation between victims and perpetrators. Peace processes often include:

- (Partial) amnesties;
- Establishment of an ad hoc criminal court;
- Establishment of an independent truth/human rights commission;
- Reform of the police, criminal justice or the judiciary;
- Reconciliation mechanisms;
- Mechanisms to support victims.

Conflict actors who have violated human rights and humanitarian law before or during armed conflict naturally seek to avoid being subject to criminal investigation and punishment. In contrast, international actors and the general population often reject amnesty and demand some form of justice as well as strong vetting procedures for people entering public security and justice services. Mechanisms of transitional justice can contribute to state legitimacy and be part of larger efforts to reform the justice system. Accommodating claims for amnesty in order to quickly end the violence can contradict the goal of SSR/G to strengthen the accountability and transparency of the security sector.

has agreed to undergo SSR to increase its legitimacy, receive funding and make the security forces a more effective tool against opponents, it may try to undermine efforts to increase its own accountability and decrease its control over the security sector.

Conflict actors who are engaged in illicit businesses and corruption before and during the war are not interested in ceasing these activities and being subjected to independent control and oversight, or even possible prosecution. Just as non-state armed groups do, security services use their position of force to gain material benefits, for instance by imposing illegal taxes on the population or engaging in the trade in natural resources.

Powerful international actors may push for types of SSR that do not align with the interests, expectations and strategies of local stakeholders. If these approaches are brought to the negotiation table or even included in a peace agreement, local stakeholders might not feel committed to them and implementation will be poor. At the same time, actors from countries with similar experiences of addressing security and justice issues in peace processes can share lessons learned with local actors.

What to read next

For an overview of mediation styles and strategies:

- United Nations
United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation
United Nations, 2012.
- Kyle C. Beardsley, David M. Quinn, Bidisha Biswas and Jonathan Wilkenfeld
Mediation Style and Crisis Outcomes
Journal of Conflict Resolution, 50(1), 2006: 58-86.
- Simon J. A. Mason and Matthias Siegfried
Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in Peace Processes in Managing Peace Processes: A Handbook for AU Practitioners, Vol 1: Process Related Questions: 57-77
African Union and Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2013.

For an overview of SSR in peace processes:

- UN SSR Taskforce
Peace Processes and Security Sector Reform in Security Sector Reform Integrated Technical Guidance Notes
United Nations, 2012.
- Eboe Hutchful
Security Sector Reform Provisions in Peace Agreements
Birmingham: University of Birmingham GFN-SSR, 2009.
- Simon J. A. Mason
Why Security Sector Reform has to be Negotiated
CSS Analyses in Security Policy 194. Zürich: ETH, Center for Security Studies, June 2016.

For more information on different types of security arrangements in peace processes:

- Jeremy Brickhill
Mediating Security Arrangements in Peace Processes: Critical Perspectives from the Field
Zürich: ETH, Center for Security Studies, 2018.
- Mark Sedra and Geoff Burt
Integrating SSR and SALW Programming
SSR Paper 16. London: Ubiquity Press, 2016.

- Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining and swisspeace
Mine Action and Peace Mediation
Geneva: GICHD and swisspeace, 2016.
- Kelvin Ong
Managing Fighting Forces: DDR in Peace Processes
Washington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace, 2012.
- Christine Bell
Peace Agreements and Human Rights
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

For further information on gender and peace processes:

- Christine Bell and Catherine O'Rourke
UN Security Council 1325 and Peace Negotiations and Agreements
Women at the Peace Table: Asia Pacific Opinion Series 4. Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, March 2011.
- United Nations Department of Political Affairs
Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies
United Nations, 2017.

More DCAF resources

- DCAF publishes a wide variety of tools, handbooks and guidance on all aspects of SSR and good SSG, available free-for-download at www.dcaf.ch
Many resources are also available in languages other than English.
- The DCAF-ISSAT Community of Practice website makes available a range of online learning resources for SSR practitioners at <http://issat.dcaf.ch>

DCAF, the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, is an international foundation whose mission is to assist the international community in pursuing good governance and reform of the security sector. DCAF develops and promotes norms and standards, conducts tailored policy research, identifies good practices and recommendations to promote democratic security sector governance and provides in-country advisory support and practical assistance programmes.

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