

Analysis of the Effectiveness of Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan—The Case of 2002 to 2014

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Abstract

The term SSR was coined by Clare Short, the UK Secretary of State for International Development at the end of the 20th century and has since been adopted by various international organisations and development agencies, such as the UN, the EU, and the UNDP. The role of SSR is particularly important in the context of the global war on terror, which brings together decision-makers from different civil and military organisations. However, SSR has been repeatedly criticised in practice as a theory that is sound in theory but problematic in practice, as SSR processes tend to ignore the reform agenda of recipient countries, have overly optimistic estimates of reform structures, and mostly focus on technocratic settings rather than on the political context of recipient countries. This paper aims to analyse the security sector reform in Afghanistan between 2002 and 2014 in terms of the dilemmas faced in reforming the military, police and justice systems and to analyse the effectiveness of this reform in terms of the criteria set by the OECD. It also verifies whether the security sector reform does have these problems. The results show that despite the billions of dollars invested in this reform, there has been limited success. The results are disappointing according to the OECD's criteria and the problems that have arisen.

Keywords: international security, international development, Security Sector Reform, Afghanistan, War on Terror

1. Security Sector Reform

1.1 *What Is Security Sector Reform (SSR)?*

After the end of the Cold War, the security of individuals became a priority for the international community. A liberal-based market economy, multi-party democracy, human rights and good governance were increasingly recognised as necessary for peace and development, and there was a widespread awareness that there should be more than mere restrictions on military spending, and that attention should be paid to matters relating to the governance of security institutions (Albrecht & Stepputat, 2015). The term 'security sector reform (SSR)' was first coined by the UK Secretary of State for International Development, Clare Short, in her speech at the end of the 20th century. Development organisations have tended to avoid SSR in the past, but she sees SSR as a way of bringing security and development issues together in the reform process. Without SSR, core development goals cannot be achieved. (Short, 1999)

In the late 1990s, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) used security sector reform as a means of reducing poverty as well as preventing crime and combating terrorism. In 2000, DFID suggested that unless the security sector could carry out its legitimate functions relatively effectively, development spending in the social and economic sectors might not be fruitful and relatively efficient to fulfil its functions. The World Bank Voices of the Poor survey revealed that the poor consider insecurity a central issue (Deepa et al., 2000). The World Bank and DFID have therefore worked together to identify the need to integrate security into poverty

reduction strategies, arguing that the provision of security and justice is at the heart of the state (Garrasi et al., 2009).

Also given the advantage of SSR is the ability to bring together decision-makers from different civil and military organisations, on the one hand, bringing together the topics of development and peace. It enables a consensus to be reached between the different development agencies on how to deal with security sector issues (Mosse, 2004). On the other hand, it provides a way for development agencies to improve their political status and influence (Albrecht & Stepputat, 2015)

As a result, SSR is gaining traction and many international actors are involved in SSR, including the UK, the US, the UN, the North Atlantic Treaty, the EU and others. (Howk, 2009). According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), security sector reform is about enhancing the capacity of recipient countries to achieve internal security. By creating favourable conditions for the entry of external assistance, it enables recipient countries to provide credible, fair and effective security services (Programme (UNDP), 2003). It is now generally accepted that the OECD Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) *Handbook on SSR* presents the concept that 'Security system reform is another term used to describe the transformation of the security system—which includes all the actors, their roles, responsibilities and actions—working together to manage and operate the system in a manner that is more consistent with democratic norms and sound principles of good governance and this contributes to a well-functioning security framework'. (OECD, 2008)

1.2 What Does the Security Sector Contain?

Short defines the security sector as including the military, paramilitary and intelligence services, as well as the civilian institutions responsible for the oversight and control of the security forces. The police and criminal justice sectors are not included (Short, 1999). Later DFID explicitly included the police and justice sector as an area of intervention (Howlett-Bolton, 2008).

The OECD and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) have played an important role in the conceptualisation and multilateralisation of security system reform. OECD (2005) provides a comprehensive list of institutions covered by security sector reform. Its broad definition of SSR includes core national security actors; regulatory and oversight bodies, including civil society, legislative and political actors, and related institutions; the justice sector and rule of law; and non-statutory security forces. Bridging the gap between policy and practice reflects the breadth of what security sector reform encompasses. (Albrecht & Stepputat, 2015).

The narrow scope of the security sector, therefore, refers to the uniformed services and their oversight, particularly those that have been granted the use of force, and usually refers to the military alone. The broad scope of the security sector also includes non-uniformed services, the judiciary and the entire justice and security system, including private security companies and border guards to the balance of power, intelligence, and governance. As well as the traditional authorities, the courts, and the judicial and penal systems. Security sector reform hopes to improve the capacity of the security sector in recipient countries and improve governance, accountability, and oversight mechanisms. It has now become a means of addressing a range of issues. (UN and World Bank, 2007).

1.3 The Imperfect SSR

However, SSR has been repeatedly criticised in practice. On the one hand, it only emerged as a set of policies and is not a fully-fledged development practice. Broszka notes that SSR may be 'sound in theory but problematic in practice' (Jackson, 2011). In Brzoska's view, he argues first that there is a tendency internationally to perceive a convergence of interests between donors and recipient countries, ignoring the recipient country's reform agenda. Secondly, security sector reform requires the rebuilding of social, political, and economic institutions. However, donor countries tend to be overly optimistic, if better implementation measures and knowledge will necessarily lead to better reform outcomes. Thirdly, much attention has been paid to the composition of the security sector and the technocratic set-up of SSR, with little attention paid to the context in which SSR is implemented. However, failure to focus on the institutional context and political background of SSR will not only not improve the situation but may make a fragile situation worse (Brzoska, 2006).

On the other hand, the broad range of elements has not led to a greater convergence of ideas on security reform. Most donors have failed to establish coherent links and lack coordination. Reform is made up of a confusing pile of ad hoc policies. For example, donors in the DRC support different reform objectives, but all use the same name. (Jackson, 2011, p. 11).

This essay uses the example of Security Sector Reform (SSR) in Afghanistan to analyse whether the reform has these problems through the dilemmas it faces and the OECD criteria. With the announcement that the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was ending its mission at the end of 2014, Afghanistan entered a

whole new dimension. The analysis in this paper, therefore, focuses on the period from 2002 to 2014.

2. The Process of Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan

2.1 Background

The overthrow of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in October 2001 seemed to put an end to more than two decades of conflict and internecine warfare. A security vacuum emerged after the fall of the Taliban regime. Warlords emerged, and in the early days of the Bonn Agreement of December 2001, which led to the establishment of the Afghan Interim Government, warlordism, and insurgent groups continued to threaten security and stability in Afghanistan. SSR was then seen as a panacea for Afghanistan's problems and was proposed and used by local and international stakeholders (Sedra, 2006).

2.2 Process

In 2001, the US worked with NATO, the UN, the EU and other countries to advance its security sector reform in the hope of effectively purging terrorism. The G8 international conference held in Geneva in 2002 marked the official launch of security sector reform in Afghanistan (Murray, 2011). It included the reform and disarmament of the military system, the police system, the judicial system and the fight against drugs, assisted by the United States, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom respectively (Howk, 2009).

In 2006, the International Conference on Afghanistan held in London produced the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS). The strategy consists of three elements: the first is security, with a focus on fully supporting cooperation between programmes such as the International Security Assistance Force and Operation Enduring Peace. The second is governance, rule of law and human rights, with the Afghan Government focusing on developing justice and improving transparency in its work. The third is economic and social development (Sarkozy et al., 2008). Since its official launch in 2002 (Compact, 2006), security sector reform in Afghanistan has focused on three systems: the national army, the police and the judiciary. The following section will focus on these three areas. There is no doubt that among these three pillar elements. Security sector reform with international multi-party assistance and international security cooperation to achieve genuine security and stability in the country and society is considered a fundamental prerequisite for Afghanistan's national development.

2.2.1 Military

In December 2001, the Bonn Agreement was proposed and adopted on the initiative of the United Nations. In 2001, the UN authorised NATO to form the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to maintain stability in Kabul and the surrounding areas (Andersson & Weigand, 2015, p. 523). US and NATO forces are responsible for training, and in 2011 95% of the Afghan army included Western troops (NATO, 2012). The international community began to support the Afghan government in building an armed force to address the situation that had been largely controlled by the 'Northern Alliance' since the fall of the Taliban regime in April 2003, the United Nations Development Programme launched the Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme (ANBP), aimed at abolishing 100,000 soldiers from the 'Northern Alliance' (Survey, 2009). In January and July 2010, international conferences on Afghanistan were held in London and Kabul respectively. The conferences provided for the Afghan army to take over responsibility for internal security by the end of 2014, marking a shift from international leadership to a new model of Afghan government-led security in Afghanistan. (Wardak et al., 2007).

2.2.2 Police Sector

The reform of the police system has suffered many setbacks. There have been problems of non-disbursement of funds and ineffective training in the course of assistance from international donors, led by the US and NATO. In 2002, the US allocated only US\$24 million for the reform of the Afghan National Police, and almost nothing more was allocated in 2003. It was not until 2004 that the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) was launched, and it was not until 2005 that significant assistance was provided for the reform of the Afghan National Police. This resulted in its early development falling significantly behind its intended objectives. Secondly, training programmes were mostly inefficient. In 2002, German programmes were unable to keep up with the needs of the police at the grassroots level and there was a serious imbalance in training resources (Cordesman et al., 2009). To alleviate the shortage of trainers, the EU's EUPOL programme was launched in June 2007 and according to the CSTC-A project report, by the end of 2006 the basic police training programme had lasted only two to four weeks and the average annual attrition rate of the police system was still as high as 15-30%. It can be argued that the EU's involvement has not fundamentally changed the situation. (Group, 2007).

By November 2007, the US launched the Focused District Development (FDD) program, designed to address issues such as capacity building, personnel training, and corruption in the Afghan National Police. Subsequently, all former police personnel were temporarily separated for an eight-week training period and were allowed to

return to their former positions after passing a test. The US Department of Defence reported in January 2009 that the reform of the Afghan National Police had been effective thanks to the FDD. Between March and November 2008, the Afghan National Police increased from zero to 18 personnel at the CM1 level, and specialist training was also provided for border police officers (Sopko, 2013).

2.2.3 Judicial System

In 2004, the Afghan National Constitution was adopted, which essentially succeeded the 1964 Constitution in its entirety and became the jurisprudential framework for justice reform in Afghanistan, and the reform of the Afghan judiciary began under the joint guidance of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, the National Justice Sector Strategy, and the National Justice Program (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2008, p. 65).

3. Assessment of Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan

3.1 Difficulties

An examination of the Afghan security sector reform process from 2002 to 2014 reveals that while it has been effective, it is more often perceived as facing various dilemmas.

The Afghan National Army (ANA) has traditionally been seen as the highlight of the process and an area where real progress has been made. At first, there was widespread optimism that warlords, local armed forces, and tribes would be able to integrate smoothly into the nascent national system. But even so, its performance in actual combat has been questioned by some NATO trainers and military officials, and the 2010 NATO operation in Marjah, Helmand Province, clearly demonstrated that the army could not do the job alone. At the same time, drug dealing, illegal arms sales and corruption continue to exist in the Afghan National Army. (Sedra, 2006). The low morale within the force and the low number of soldiers who chose to re-enlist after the initial three-year service contract expired made the army unsustainable.

The Afghan National Police (ANP) is the most failed of the security forces and the process of its reform has been particularly tortuous. Most of the Afghan police are involved in corruption, from illegal fees to drug dealing. Similarly, figures show that as of 2010, up to 47% leave the police force each year. The reason for this is that donor countries have mostly decided to work with the existing police, most of whom are former militia fighters who have re-hatted after the fall of the Taliban, rather than build a new force from scratch, as the Afghan National Army has done. As well, the police have been one of the main targets of Taliban attacks, resulting in an extremely high attrition rate. (Sedra, 2010, p. 234).

Regarding justice reform. Afghanistan's justice reform has not achieved its intended objectives and it typically receives less than 5% of all contributions. Justice reform is poorly coordinated and lacks strategy. Firstly, Italy promotes national legal principles in line with its legal traditions, while the US promotes its common law system, which has created confusion in the structure of justice in Afghanistan. Secondly, 80% of disputes are resolved through the informal system and only 20% of cases are resolved through the courts. Most Afghans do not trust the government and see the national legal system as corrupt, expensive, and out of touch with reality. The most glaring obstacle is the severe lack of training and educational resources for the legal profession. As late as 2011, the Supreme Court still had many judges who lacked judicial literacy, not only in terms of experience in the enforcement of Islamic law but also in terms of common-sense judicial work experience (Wardak et al., 2007).

3.2 Success or Failure

This essay argues that, overall, security sector reform in Afghanistan has failed. The four core objectives of security sector reform proposed by the OECD, which will be used to analyse the case, are: establishing effective governance and accountability in the security system; improving security and justice service delivery; developing local leadership and ownership of the process; and sustainability. (OECD, 2008).

Regarding governance and justice. Little attention has been paid to building the capacity of Afghanistan's security and justice institutions, whether it is the executive branch that can develop security policies or the institutions that can effectively apply those policies or oversee their implementation. The police and army remain rife with corruption, and even many key positions are available to the highest bidder. At the same time, the emphasis is only on training and equipping militarised security forces, with little attention paid to the state of governance in Afghanistan.

The problems faced by judicial reform and corrections have already been mentioned. Following the reforms, the rule of law has still not taken root in much of Afghanistan. The need to professionalise the security forces has overshadowed the need to reform and strengthen the national legal system. This has not only left deep gaps in the security sector reform process but has also offset some of the successes that have been achieved.

Concerning ownership, the leadership of the recipient government is crucial. First, the experience of Sierra Leone shows that a group of determined leaders can drive reform even when international staff are regularly involved in the country's affairs (Albrecht & Jackson, 2009). Second, the absence of government ownership can

lead to the creation of a “shell” government that eventually becomes a donor dictatorship. Secondly, the lack of government ownership can lead to the creation of a ‘hollow’ government, which may eventually become a ‘donor dictatorship’. Afghanistan has problems controlling the police and judiciary, the Ministry of Defence and parliamentary oversight. This allows external donors to exercise real oversight. Another way of exercising ownership is to involve civil society in the development of national security plans. Sierra Leone has succeeded in improving popular perceptions of the military and security sector as a threat (Albrecht & Jackson, 2009). However, Afghanistan’s focus on training the police as a counter-insurgency force has seriously undermined efforts to create a transparent and accountable police service.

On the issue of sustainability, although the US is the leading donor to Afghanistan, too many international actors are not conducive to coherence. And there can be conflicts between donor and recipient countries, as everyone has a different understanding of the exact scope and content of sustainability. Furthermore, SSR interventions are expensive, with Sedra noting that the recurrent costs of the Afghan National Army alone amounted to US\$171 million between 2004 and 2005 (Hodes & Sedra, 2013), representing roughly half of the country’s domestic revenue for that year. Afghanistan does not have the economic capacity to sustain this process without external support.

4. Conclusion

In summary, despite the billions of dollars invested in this comprehensive process aimed at transforming the country’s security and justice structures, achievements have been limited. It has turned out to be disappointing by OECD standards and by the problems that have arisen. The example of Afghanistan proves that security and development may not be mutual. The inappropriateness of security sector reform for practice, the neglect of the recipient country context, the lack of coordination among donors and the overbreadth of what it encompassed were all brought to light.

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