

Plenary Session 1: Principles of Security Sector Governance

Format: Plenary presentation
Discussion groups

Objectives:

- Consider the wider definitions of security, justice, transparency, accountability, and legitimacy in constitutional frameworks.
- Examine security governance oversight (policy, budgetary, administrative, etc.) principles, organizations, stakeholders, and processes.
- Define civil control of the security sector and examine the role and relationship of civil society with security governance institutions.

Background:

Throughout much of the post-colonial period, African leaders defined security in terms of state and regime survival. This approach was imbued with the logic of force projection and hard power, and yielded highly personalized regimes headed either by men in uniform, or by those with enduring ties to military institutions. During this period, much of the continent's state security apparatus was concerned with supporting and extending regime control over the public and private sphere. Over the past few decades, however, the notion of security has evolved to include "human security," which promotes the protection of the individual over regime security. This period has seen an expansion of democratic, civilian control over Africa's security sector, with constitutionally-mandated presidential term limits gradually becoming the norm. Thus, in addition to the state's preoccupation with hard security, there is now a greater focus on citizen-centric and community well-being.

The changing nature of African insecurity demands a recalibration of the roles and missions of the security sector, both internally and with respect to civilian institutions, communities, and individuals. Efforts to enhance security have therefore been undertaken within a broader context of good governance, citizen security, and effective conflict management. This process, known as security sector reform (SSR), calls for an integrated approach to transforming institutions responsible for state and human security, drawing on a range of stakeholders from across the government, civil society, and the private sector.

Local ownership of reform—whereby initiatives are locally or nationally conceived of and led—is one of the bedrocks of SSR. While external donors or partner countries can provide support for institutional change, reform efforts should ultimately originate from within. Ownership of SSR cannot be operationalized unless a broad range of local, regional, and national interests are captured and reflected in the process. This means

engaging local and non-state organizations—civil society, the media, political and religious groups, etc. – to identify citizen preferences and priorities and convey them to policymakers.

The subordination of the security sector to sovereign, civilian institutions is another crucial feature of security sector reform. And while issues central to security governance—transparency, accountability, and legitimacy chief among them— have long since entered common parlance in the field, military exceptionalism and excessive secrecy remain problematic in Africa.

Within a framework of democratic civilian control, security sector institutions play a crucial role in overseeing the planning and execution of security sector policy directives in Africa. In the aggregate, these oversight bodies provide for greater security sector transparency and accountability, ultimately reducing levels of corruption and impunity, minimizing cronyism, and ensuring human rights are respected. Transparency also guards against fiscal indiscipline and misappropriation, promotes operational effectiveness, and enhances overall levels of professionalism and trust. Because of the state’s monopoly on the use of force, democratic civilian control is necessary to ensure that this power is used effectively and accountably to provide for state and human security.

Discussion Questions:

- How has the definition of “security” evolved in Africa to reflect the changed security environment?
- How does legitimacy and accountability in security governance impact institutions and individuals? Why does it matter?
- What are some of the most pressing security governance challenges? How have these challenges evolved over time?
- Beyond the traditional security establishment (e.g., military, police, gendarmerie, and intelligence services), what other stakeholders and institutions should be included in the national debate over defining security governance interests?

Recommended Readings:

Julie Chalfin and Linda Thomas-Greenfield, "The Security Governance Initiative," *PRISM*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2017.

http://cco.ndu.edu/Portals/96/Documents/prism/prism_6-4/5-Chalfin_Thomas-Greenfield.pdf?ver=2017-05-12-110304-557

Emile Ouédraogo, "Advancing Military Professionalism in Africa," Africa Center for Strategic Studies, Africa Center Research Paper No. 6, July 2014. In English and French:

<https://africacenter.org/publication/advancing-military-professionalism-in-africa/>

World Development Report 2011 Overview: Conflict, Security, and Development, World Bank, 2011. In English and French:

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/806531468161369474/World-development-report-2011-conflict-security-and-development-overview>

Security Sector Governance SSR Backgrounder, Geneva Center for the Democratic control of Armed Forces (DCAF), 2015. In English and French: <http://www.dcaf.ch/security-sector-governance-applying-principles-good-governance-security-sector-0>