



**AFRICA CENTER  
FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES**

**NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY  
DEVELOPMENT**

**Gambia Case Study**

**Working Paper**

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# **THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IN THE GAMBIA**

## **INTRODUCTION**

What necessitated the reform process in The Gambia can be better understood with a clinical review of the pre-reform period. The security sector in the Gambia was to a great extent besieged by poor management, ineffective regulation and an appalling record of statutory oversight. The Ministry of Defence for a greater part of our history since independence was embedded under the Presidency where the President doubles as the prospective holder of the Minister of Defence portfolio. The Ministry of Interior exercises oversight over the remaining security institutions with the exception of the State Intelligence Service (SIS) which is under the Office of the President. There were either inadequate or no sector specific frameworks to direct the management and operations of the various security institutions. Serious policy deficiencies and the lack of regulations to guide the sector created a context where the executive is left to weigh in.

This illogical and unorthodox approach to oversight coupled with the authoritarian tendencies of former President Jammeh bequeathed a security sector that was ill-managed, highly polarized and conveniently used as a tool for oppressing those considered to be political foes. These developments coupled with other factors effectively led to the weakening of public institutions, triggered heightened political animosity and subjected to the political space to intense antagonism and instability. This moment was the beginning of the dark period in the history of the security establishments. Security institutions were advertently used to facilitate state induced arrests, extra-judicial executions and the forced disappearances of political adversaries. Interestingly, all these developments were unfolding at a time when it was not quite fashionable to challenge or even question executive decision.

## **THE SECURITY SECTOR REFORM AGENDA**

The new dispensation under the stewardship of His Excellency President Adama Barrow deemed it necessary to reform the security sector to make it functional and effective. The reform agenda is intended to increase responsiveness, public trust and confidence of the people in the security sector. To this end, a Security Sector Reform

Assessment was conducted in 2017 the report of which highlighted serious policy deficiencies, ineffective regulation and poor statutory oversight alluded to in the preceding paragraphs. These reforms are designed to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of service to the public, enhance compliance with existing regulations and laws in public security service delivery and entrench a culture of accountability, transparency and ethics in security provisions, management and oversight.

This culminated in the drafting of the first ever National Security Policy (NSP) - launched in June 2019- which sets out the directions the government will take to safeguard the Gambian people and natural resources. The NSP sufficiently provides a robust, coherent and strategic approach to respond collectively to national security threats through swift decision-making processes, clear lines of accountability and responsibility, prompt execution of action and commitment to building the nation's resilience to crime. The national security policy underwent a vigorous scrutiny, detailed the current and future risks, threats and opportunities and challenges the country faces and identified basic areas of national security including the instruments of national power.

## **THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY**

The National Security Strategy (NSS) provides the framework for implementation of the NSP. It integrates security policies, goals and responsibilities into a roadmap for fulfillment of the national security vision. The strategy provided a broad framework for addressing urgent national security concerns. NSS will be relevant for all planning and decision making matters relating to national security.

## **LIST OF NSS DRAFTING TEAM**

ASP Amat Sallah (GID/ONS )	-	Team Leader
LT CDR Adama Trawalleh (MoD)	-	Member
Commissioner Keita M Saidu (GPS)	-	Member
MR Salifu O Joof (MOICI)	-	Member
MR Bubacarr Cham (Geology)	-	Member
MRS Binta Samura (MOJ)	-	Member
ASP Abdoulie Touray (GPF)	-	Member
MR Abubacarr DM Gibba (MOI)	-	Member
DFO Momodou S Bah (GFRS)	-	Member
NCO 1 Karamba Jawla (DLEAG)	-	Member
MR Musa Kinteh (GRA)	-	Member

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The following were some of the Terms of Reference of the Drafting Committee:

- a. Draft a strategy that will maximize the safety and security of all people living in the Gambia.
- b. Suggest a national security architecture that will be able to meet the safety and security needs of the Gambia.
- c. Develop a strategy that will improve the capacity and efficiency of the security sector to maintain peace and stability and facilitate economic development as well as the maximization of national prosperity.
- d. Develop a strategy that will help to detect arrest and dismantle criminal syndicates and their networks to rid the country of criminals and their ability to cause mischief.
- e. Develop a strategy that will enhance the capacity of the security sector to defend the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country in the face of all forms of aggression.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The Drafting Committee was guided by the National Security Vision, Goals of the NSS, the National Values, the National Security Priorities and National Security Interest which are contained in the NSP. The Drafters first reviewed the threats specified in the NSP-they looked at the Strategic Security Environment, the National Security Challenges and also invited various institutions and Ministries to give account of perceived threats and challenges from the perspective of their respective institutions. The threats were then grouped under different pillars and activities suggested for each of them that addressed the threats. The Zero draft was produced and reviewed by the National Security Adviser and the Security Sector Reform Steering Committee under the stewardship of the Honorable Attorney General and Minister of Justice before finally presenting it to the National Security Council for review and adoption.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

The following were some of the lessons learned:

- a. There were no basic institutional frameworks to guide the reform process. Security institutions lack policy and statutory frameworks to guide their operations and administrative routines.
- b. The Office of the National Security that is coordinating the reforms is yet to be legally instituted. Additionally, the role of the ONS is limited to coordination. It lacks the authority to compel other institutions to act. It would have paid much dividend if the reform process was embedded under the Office of the President or Vice President.
- c. Most of the stakeholder Ministries are domiciled under the presidency and naturally all directives from line departments and Ministries are subordinate to executive orders.
- d. Too many advisers, due to the diversity of their backgrounds and the different schools of thought they subscribed to, leads to avoidable friction.
- e. Lack allocated budget for SSR and all major and capital-intensive activities under the reform agenda are tight to national ownership.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

The NSS was produced locally with support of members of the International Advisory Group (AIG) on SSR in the Gambia. It is much to the credit of the AIGs, ONS and the Drafters in particular that we were able to develop local capacity to draft the strategy instead of resorting to the hiring of a consultant.

## **CONCLUSION**

The reforms provide opportunity to properly structure and realign the security sector with democratic aspiration of the new dispensation. Putting the right legal frameworks in place and subjecting the security sectors to democratic civilian oversight will enhance accountability and improve efficiency in service delivery.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following are some of the recommendations:

- a. Basic institutional frameworks should be in place in all security institutions to guide reform processes. All security institutions should have the requisite policy and statutory frameworks to guide their operations and administrative routines.

- b. Security Sector Reform as a process should be embedded under the Office of the President or Vice President or Ministries that have the legal authority to compel things to happen.
- c. All security institutions should be placed under line Ministries for the purpose of efficient oversight. Having them domiciled under the presidency gives them enormous power and influence that when not properly checked could be misused
- d. Countries are better off by determining the nature and form they want their reform process to take. Other countries identified lead countries to assist them in the reform process. Too many advisers from different schools of thoughts and diverse backgrounds in almost all instances lead to confusion.
- e. Finally, and most importantly for SSR to make sense there should be a budget allocated for the process. Reforms can stretch a country financially because capacity building and infrastructural development which are important components of SSR are capital intensive.