FBA and UN Research-Policy Dialogue 2019

SSR in Fragile and Conflict-affected States: Towards the Next Generation?

UN Photo/Isaac Billy

Security Sector Reform (SSR) is a key component of peace and state building in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. In order to promote evidence-based policy and practice, as well as supporting the growing body of scholarly work, FBA together with the United Nations organised a Research-Policy Dialogue (RPD). The RPD gathered leading international experts, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to discuss where SSR stands today and how to improve the connection between policy, practice, and research.

FBA

Introduction

Security sector reform (SSR) has been a key component of the international peace- and state-building agenda in fragile and conflict-affected contexts since the 1990s. This builds on an understanding that remnants of wartime security structures and authoritarian institutions, including but not limited to oversized and abusive security forces with weak civilian control and democratic management, is an obstacle to sustainable peace and the promotion of sustainable development. The aim of SSR is therefore to move towards a more effective, affordable, transparent, and accountable security sector with full respect for human rights and the rule of law.

SSR is a nationally-led process, however, in fragile and conflict-affected States, it is often supported by international actors. Despite decades of experience of the international community in the field of SSR, there is still much to be learned. While policy frameworks concur on the need for a holistic approach to SSR, support often tends to be delivered in a siloed fashion. Many SSR programmes also focus on technical aspects aimed at strengthening operational effectiveness without being anchored in a broader democratic governance framework. Against this background, there are strong calls to develop evidence on what works, what does not, and why in different contexts, and to ensure such research informs policy and practice.

Past and current research on SSR aspires to contribute to policy-making and to resolve the challenges that practitioners are facing in project implementation. However, there are difficulties in establishing communication channels between, and in aligning the priorities of research, policy, and practice. This begs the question of how to ensure research responds to the needs encountered in the field? And how to ensure research results are fed back into SSR planning and implementation?

In order to support the growing body of scholarly work on SSR as well as to promote evidence-based policy and practice, FBA (Folke Bernadotte Academy) and the SSR-Unit at the Office of Rule of Law and Security at the United Nations Department for Peace Operations hosted a Research-Policy Dialogue (RPD) on 6 September 2019 in New York, focusing on SSR in fragile and conflict-affected situations. The RPD attempted to connect senior scholars from leading international universities and institutions with policy-makers and practitioners to engage in a dialogue on research findings and implications for policy and practice. The event brought together representatives of Member States, the United Nations (UN) and other organizations engaged in SSR support.

This report draws on discussions and research presented during the event, which focused on SSR in fragile and conflict-affected situations. It highlights that developing and utilizing evidence requires bridging the research-policy-practitioner gap. Indeed, policy-makers and practitioners need to be better aware of what evidence already exists in support of different approaches. At the same time, researchers need to be more aware of the current and emerging challenges in the field of SSR which would merit in-depth research. Building platforms to contribute to knowledge exchange and transfer among researchers, policy-makers and practitioners is essential.

While the report cannot reflect on the status of SSR research at large, it provides an illustrative snapshot of ongoing research on this topic, and as such, offers an enhanced understanding of where evidence is being built and avenues for future research. The report provides reflections on relevant insights from ongoing research which is of value for policy-makers and practitioners and on the relationship between research-policy-practice. The report concludes with some reflections on the way ahead.

Relevant Insights for Policy and Practice

The RPD focused on research of academic rigour which follows strict methodological underpinnings to ensure its contribution to evidence-based programming. As such, this report cannot speak about the status of SSR research at large but provides an illustrative sample of current thematic and geographic areas covered by scholars.[1] The studies covered a variety of topics related to SSR, ranging from the role of non-state actors, to community policing, or the integration of ex-combatants into the security sector.

At an aggregated level, these studies have identified findings which could support policy-makers and practitioners engaged in SSR support in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, as follows:

Rethinking traditional forms of SSR assistance

International actors are often engaged in providing support to nationally-driven SSR processes. However, past experience has shown that some of these approaches have failed to account for realities on the ground. Moreover, it was cautioned that programmes which are not underpinned by an understanding of the local context, can inadvertently contribute to the perpetuation of violence and fragile state structures.[2] Current international approaches to SSR therefore need to critically reflect on the intended and un-intended consequences of SSR support.

Much research has been dedicated to the normative frameworks used by the international community to define their approach to supporting nationally-driven reform processes, with a particular focus on the western conceptions of the state and security provision. There were calls to challenge the perceptions of Western 'universal truths', and by association the assumptions underpinning internationally-led SSR support. A start could be to question the way priorities in reform programmes are set and to re-consider the current emphasis on state-centred approaches to security.[3] Embracing societal structures beyond the Weberian state model was recognized to be particularly important. For instance, changing the perceptions around the 'good' state and moving towards accepting other hybrid forms of state where formal and informal security sector actors are interconnected was considered vital.[4]

It was highlighted that decisions on SSR can have a direct effect on power distribution within society. This implies that if internationals promote one model, they are de facto automatically dismissing another. It was thus recommended to be more transparent about the decision-making process, as well as to improve efforts to better understand their implications.[5] A more in-depth understanding of the underlying power relations was considered crucial for effective policy and practice. In particular, research has pointed at the importance of analyzing (mis)alignments among the underlying distribution of power, elite bargains, and formal peace agreements as a means to identify opportunities for ending violence.[6] It should also be recognized that any external intervention can have effects on power dynamics.

Finally, national political will is considered a necessary building block for any SSR process. However, it was highlighted that in reality, it is lacking in many of the fragile and conflict-affected contexts. It was advocated that in cases where political will is not prevalent, it should be conceptualized as an outcome and not only as an input to SSR programming.[7] Otherwise, political will becomes an excuse for not engaging, when really, efforts to promote SSR could and should be supported.

Unpacking what supporting inclusive approaches means in practice

A key element of inclusive approaches to SSR centres around the need to engage civil society. Civil society can play an instrumental role in putting pressure on Governments for change, provide crucial insights in the planning of the reforms and the identification of objectives, and play a key role in implementing and overseeing the reform process. Moreover, initial evidence suggests that popular participation in the form of civil society agency (i.e. enabling civil society to provide input to reform negotiations and implementation) and expanded channels for accountability (i.e. establishing institutions that make it easier for citizens to hold security actors accountable, and other strategies) increases demand for reform and creates a social environment enabling reform processes. It was highlighted that there is thus a need to prioritize engagement with civil society in states that may transition to democracy to set the ground for truly democratic reforms with a strong oversight component. At the same time, popular participation was recognized to be a necessary but not sufficient condition in itself for states to achieve significant SSR progress.[8]

While many SSR programmes have integrated a component which promotes engagement with civil society, it was highlighted that this is often approached as a 'tick the box' necessity, rather than being recognized as an essential condition for success. When civil society is included in reforms, it was often perceived to be done as a side project,[9] and not in a comprehensive manner. For participation and inclusion to play a positive role in the SSR process, there is a need to move away from mainly engaging elites who may have their own set of interests in maintaining the status quo, and move towards listening to all layers of society, including those most affected by violence.[10] It was highlighted that such inclusive approaches sometimes require engagement at the micro-level.

An example from Liberia was highlighted which focused on the challenges of those ex-combatants that became motorcycle taxi drivers. The inclusion of the affected population in generating strategies for supporting security (including through cyclist-police workshops) contributed to improving overall livelihood security.[11] Thus, projects aiming at including the needs and views of a specific group directly affected by insecurity, in SSR-related reforms, can have a multiplier effect in building security and social cohesion.

More broadly, it was underlined that inclusion does not matter only for normative reasons, but because it affects real security and political outcomes. Civil society's ability to both support – or undermine – the SSR process needs to be better recognized.

Re-thinking the role of non-state actors

The role of non-state actors in SSR and, more broadly, in the provision of security has often been neglected. Currently, non-state actors are rarely included in institutional reform programmes, even in contexts where they are playing a key role in the effective provision of security.[12] However, there is now a recognition that the SSR community needs to be open to alternative providers of security and collaborate with traditional authorities and other non-state actors. Academics have thus started to explore how these often illegal actors, which are sometimes perceived as legitimate authorities by their communities, can support or endanger the provision of security.[13]

There was a strong call at the RPD for greater focus on local ownership through the consideration of hybrid forms of security. Understanding the role of non-state actors was considered of particular importance in contexts where these actors enjoy a higher level of trust from the population than formal security providers such as the police or the military. [14] During and in the aftermath of conflict, the state is often unable to effectively respond to the needs of the population due to a lack of capacity and resources. Consequently, non-state formations (e.g. armed groups, gangs, traditional authorities, etc.) often fill the vacuum left by the state. As a result, these actors become more legitimate in the eyes of the community.

It was highlighted that state building practices tend to erase the traditional institutions because they feel threatened by them. Instead, some studies have suggested that seeking complementarity between both types of actors in a way that is mutually supportive can provide legitimacy to state institutions in areas where the state does not have the same reach or capacity. Such practice could be beneficial in building trust among different actors and promoting security and stability.[15] However, the engagement with state and non-state actors needs to be carefully leveraged. Some studies have found that while engaging with the police and ignoring non-state actors poses the risk of backlash, engaging non-state actors while ignoring the police risks vigilantism.[16]

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that dispute resolution should not only be a role of the state but also of civil society and other actors. For instance, communal institutions in Colombia existing for more than 50 years were found to play a key role in leveraging the reconciliation and reconstruction process. Thus, communal institutions in certain contexts can become cost-effective providers of order. It is important to analyze the complementarities between state and non-state actors to reduce demand for armed group governance, decrease dispute severity and increase trust in state and non-state institutions. [17]

Reflecting on how to build trust in the security sector

In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, where security actors have often been involved in serious abuses, a fundamental crisis of trust in the security sector is common. This not only affects the legitimacy of the security sector, but also undermines its role as security provider in the long-term.[18] It is thus important to understand how 'trust' can be built and, more broadly, how the relationship between the community and security actors shapes the provision of security itself.

Much of the research in terms of building trust in the security sector has focused on the police, potentially because it is the institution often closest to the population and in charge of day-to-day security. Trust-building was considered particularly important when engaging in community policing initiatives. By nature of the police's proximity to communities, community police officers are often able to build a

closer relationship to the communities than other police officers. At the same time, developing trust is particularly vital for the sustainability of community-policing initiatives which rely on the communities' engagement with the police to be effective.

It was however highlighted that building trust in the police is often more challenging than changing behaviour. For instance, a case study in Colombia has shown that an increase in civilian's demand for police protection does not necessarily appear due to an improved perception of this institution. In fact, in the context under study, the police was described as more violent and corrupt, notwithstanding the simultaneous growth of calls for police protection as demonstrated by an increase in crime reporting. Paradoxically, both can increase at the same time, making it possible for the police to become more reliable, despite the low levels of trust among the population. This has been confirmed in recent reviews of other community policing programmes (including Liberia and Uganda) which has shown that it is often easier to change behaviour (i.e. increase reporting) rather than to change beliefs (i.e. increase trust). [19]

It was cautioned however that while community police programs aim at reducing crime rates and at strengthening the legitimacy and effectiveness of the service, it is not always a formula for success. Indeed, policy-makers and practitioners need to be aware of the associated risks such as inadvertently encouraging vigilantism or exacerbating power imbalances within the community. Initial research also appears to indicate that in some cases community policing may not improve overall security in terms of crime rates, but has contributed to reducing incidents of mob violence.[20] Thus, it was suggested that as long as the police remains incapable of responding to crimes, insecurity is likely to persist. Additionally, it was noted that mutual distrust between police and civilians is a two-sided problem, therefore, interventions need to address both the general public's and the police officer's concerns.[21] Indeed, in contexts such as Iraq, the police may also have reasons to fear civilians, which has implications for community policing approaches.

Finally, ethnicity was considered to play an important role in building (or undermining) trust between the police and the population. Ethnicity is recognized to influence the behaviour of actors at different levels. For instance, it can shape political authorities' decision on the make-up of the police; it can affect police officers' willingness to solve crimes; and it can affect individuals' engagement with the police based on expectations of whether the police will act as agents of repression or not. Recent evidence confirms that co-ethnic bias affect individuals' willingness to cooperate with the police. In Uganda citizens were found to fear repression more when encountering police officers from another ethnic group. Police officers may also be less willing to repress but more willing to solve crimes on behalf of the members of their own ethnic group.[22] However, it was also acknowledged that in non-conflict affected and fragile contexts, these dynamics might be different and that there are examples of contexts where police officers may be more brutal with their co-ethnics to prove their hard earned positions.

Mapping the dynamics before, during and after violent conflict

As societies are in a state of constant transformation, there is a need to better understand the past and the present in order to better strategize for the future. It was recommended that policy-makers and practitioners improve their understanding of the links between the before and the after-war dynamics at the community level. If these realities are not properly captured, SSR processes can generate unintended consequences and even contribute to an increase of violence, particularly at the intersection with other processes taking place in the aftermath of conflict such as DDR.[23]

One study has shown that the way in which non-state armed groups recruit their members (i.e. locally or non-locally) before or during the war, has a direct impact on several key issues for peacebuilding initiatives, including:

• the geographic distribution of ex-combatants after the peace agreement;

• their resources and networks;

• their communication with other members of the group after the end of the conflict; and

• the risk of re-militarization.

Initial research suggests that members of locally recruited groups surrendering their arms, often stay in the same region and reintegrate within their

families or communities. Hence, they tend to preserve their networks, assets, resources and intelligence information, as they are tied to the civilian population and the geographical area. These circumstances lead to a maintenance of distribution of power, making remilitarization less likely. The international community however has often sought to weaken certain groups (i.e. disband them by sending their combatants far away) and tried to reassert the state presence. However, policy-makers and practitioners should act with caution, as initial evidence drawn from Colombia suggests that interventions aimed at dismantling social support networks can promote incentives for remilitarization.[24]

Another example of how the during-war dynamics can explain the reality after the conflict, relates to the populations' perception of state institutions and the changes among communities regarding tolerance of violence. Evidence has been found that conflict shapes the local preferences for punishing certain crimes (rape, domestic violence, wife beating, stealing) after the conflict. For instance, in the DRC, punishment for rape or stealing was found to be more severe in the after-war than the punishment of domestic violence. That is linked to the traditional gender roles in the communities, i.e. men being perceived as the protector during the war, and women as victims in need of protection. This reality during conflict leads to a widespread call for men to be engaged in more protective behaviour. As rape and stealing are both perceived as public crimes that endanger the community, men and state institutions are expected to react. Domestic violence however is not perceived as affecting the community's safety. Hence, in some cases it is not perceived as a crime that should be dealt with by the state. These realities have direct implications when planning reforms. There is a need to understand contexts where the state can be perceived as legitimate for certain issues (e.g. holding perpetrators accountable of rape and stealing), but incompetent or as illegitimate in others (e.g. holding perpetrators accountable for domestic violence).[25]

Re-considering the relationship between the state and crime/corruption

The reduction of crime and other types of violence is one of the main goals of security institutions. Research suggests that reforms should better consider the relationship that exists between the state, crime, and criminals. Scholars have suggested that in

practice, SSR support has often been provided on the assumption that the state is entirely disconnected from crime. This is due to the widespread belief that crime occurs where the state is absent or weak. However, research shows that this is not always true, and that these dynamics might change from one context to the other.

It was highlighted that organized crime also occurs in areas where the state is strong and exercises effective control. When that happens, the relationship between the state and criminal groups can take different forms: competition, tolerance, or cooperation.

In broad terms, there are three potential scenarios:

1. The state might compete with criminal groups when they pursue opposite goals (e.g. in El Salvador and where authorities aim at eliminating certain criminal communities);

2. The state might not cooperate with criminal groups, but it may tolerate them when it benefits from their very existence (e.g. no investigations into certain homicides in Brazil); or

3. The state might cooperate with criminal groups when they both have the same goals, or when their goals reinforce each other (e.g. war in Guatemala where the military hired non-state armed groups for assassinations; the Taliban in Afghanistan were used for access to illicit markets).[26]

SSR interventions, particularly when addressing governance and accountability aspects of security institutions, need to be carefully designed to take these dynamics into account. Otherwise there is a risk that certain reforms reinforce organized crime and other forms of violence. This may call for better linking SSR to transitional justice processes in order to remove and punish public officials that are connected to criminal groups.[27] It is also well known that crime and corruption are closely inter-linked. Moving forward, some further insights may also be drawn from initial research on the potential implications of the type of revenue stream (e.g. taxation, oil, government transfers, etc.) on the quantity, quality and nature of the security services.[28] The purpose of this research is to reflect on how the paradox of the resource curse, which is often related to corruption among public officials, may extend to explaining differences in security provision.[29]

Exploring venues for enhanced integration of ex-combatants into the security sector

Many peace processes and peace accords have included provisions for the integration of ex-combatants into unified security sector institutions, mainly the military and the police (e.g. El Salvador, Nepal, Kosovo, Philippines, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Liberia Burundi, DRC, etc.). Integration processes aim at reducing the risk of future conflict by providing rebel groups a stake in the security forces, employment opportunities, and a symbol of national unity. More broadly, it has been found that the integration of minorities or other under-represented groups, undermines the rebels' narrative of marginalization. In fact, in conflict affected or post-conflict societies, members of minority groups often feel inherently safer when policed by members of their own group, making them less likely to renew hostilities.

While significant support has been provided to these processes over the years, one of the challenges involved concerns the lack of clarity on what should be considered a successful or unsuccessful integration process. Nonetheless, ongoing research suggests that integration is most likely to reduce the risk of future conflicts when it is anchored in a political agreement, as this process is important in terms of conflict-resolution. Hence, peace agreements should ideally outline the explicit provisions on integration, while details can be specified either in the same agreement or in complementary protocols. Nevertheless, it was highlighted that the most carefully crafted peace agreements are not a guarantee for success. Initial research suggests that some of the key parameters that will either support successful integration or lead to failure, are:

- the integration model selected,

- clarity on number of caseloads, and

- agreement on rank harmonization and eligibility criteria.

Additionally, comprehensive communication strategies that manage expectations of the scope and opportunities of integration were considered important building blocks of a successful process. However, research suggests that even when robust integration parameters are agreed and implemented, integration is often only seen as a source of personal economic security without resulting in a direct effect on personal political attitudes of those integrated.

Initial research also points to numerous good practices when seeking to handle the political dimension of integration. One such issue is rank harmonization which is a sensitive issue as it can lead to disenfranchising ex-combatants who do not fulfil criteria or can undermine existing senior officials in the security sector. An interesting example to help overcome this dilemma was identified in the Philippines, where a programme was established to enable ex-combatants to overcome literacy barriers and to pursue education at university almost immediately after integration. The program helped avoid disenfranchising minority groups without education, while still enabling justification for their eligibility to certain ranks. However, it was suggested that while units where combatants had been integrated can achieve high levels of operational and social cohesion, integration might have little effect on the political commitments and beliefs of the individual. Notwithstanding, initial evidence has been found that opportunities for military career achievements has had positive results in this regard. For instance, in the Philippines, ex-combatants integrated in higher ranks hold more pro-unification views.

Finally, it was highlighted that while policy-makers often focus on integration of ex-combatants into the military or police, more efforts should be made to consider integration into other security institutions. Similarly, further attention should be given to the integration of ex-combatants into private security companies. This form of integration is often done in an indirect manner (i.e. without being regulated under the integration agreement). Thus, the private security sector seems to serve as a safety valve absorbing former combatants voluntarily or forcibly leaving the state integration process. This may call for more consideration during the design, planning and implementation process to ensure radical elements excluded from integration do not become spoilers through unregulated private security.

FBA

The Research-Policy-Practice Relationship

While rigorous research is important to move towards enhanced evidence of what works, what does not, and why in the area of SSR, its uptake by policy-makers and practitioners is limited. Difficulties in translating research outcomes into actionable and concrete recommendations, combined with the existing evidence gaps in many important areas of SSR, has resulted in policy-making and practice often advancing without the much-needed support of empirical evidence. There is therefore a need to develop strengthened synergies between research, policy and practice.

Policy-makers and practitioners have underlined that they are looking for broad strategies which can be generalized and extrapolated to other contexts and regions. From their perspective research is useful to the extent that it informs policy and practice and is designed for that purpose. However, research is not often designed to feed directly into operational support. There are also a number of challenges to conducting empirically-based research. First, data availability is a recurrent problem due to the sensitive nature of security institutions. Consequently, data availability rather than security itself often seem to determine the focus of a research project as well as the choice of case studies. This evidently has direct implications on the intent, design, results and audience of the research. Second, given the difficult political contexts in which some of the research takes place, the very real risk of endangering respondents (and researchers) was acknowledged. For instance, key individuals may not wish to be interviewed at all, or else may avoid giving frank answers for fear of retaliation. Finally, it was recognized that research in this field is difficult work, straddling the dual and often competing need to produce evidence that is highly context specific as well as able to say something more generalizable that will advance the SSR field.

The responsibility also lies on policy-makers and practitioners to engage more proactively with researchers. To ensure that challenges on the ground are driving future research studies, policy-makers and practitioners must clearly articulate and communicate their needs. The reality is that policy-makers and practitioners struggle to find the time to do this. At the same time, it was recognised that research often has long timeframes which challenges the ability to connect real-time needs to research deliverables.

Moreover, the narrow window of opportunity to initiate SSR processes in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, combined with the often-limited human and financial resources available, prevent practitioners from taking a step back and reflecting on existing evidence on the potential intended and un-intended consequences of implementing a specific strategy. Hence, policy-makers and practitioners do not have the time to read and digest material which is not written in a way that targets them specifically. There is thus a need to overcome the language barriers and, in particular, address the reality that academic texts are often not presented in a way that can directly resonate with policy-makers or practitioners. It was acknowledged that events, such as the RPD, which bring these communities together, are vital in making the findings from research more accessible to policy-makers and practitioners.

In sum, strengthening the research-policy-practice relationship should come around full circle. Researchers could benefit from the experience of policy-makers and practitioners (for empirical purposes), and they could benefit from the latter's practical problem-analysis for defining new research questions. Researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners should aim for regular exchange of experiences, knowledge and reflections. Increased engagement could facilitate an improved understanding of each community's language, needs, and methods of work, enabling more successful SSR projects to be implemented. Moreover, opportunities should be identified to more systematically disseminate research findings, particularly within the SSR community of policy-makers and practitioners.

Bridging the gap: identifying the research needs

To take a step forward in bringing policy-makers, practitioners and researchers together, some research gaps have been identified. Filling these gaps is a priority for policy-makers and practitioners as they are directly linked to some of the challenges faced when planning and implementing SSR. Future research in these areas would directly support their work and build bridges between research, policy and practice.

In the general field of SSR, there is a call for scholars to challenge some of the assumptions on which the international community is basing the design of their interventions. A fundamental question

remains whether the state-centred approach is the only appropriate model to follow in the provision of security. Thus, there is interest in further insights on the feasibility of supporting alternatives to state-centred institutions, and on hybrid forms of security provision. As practitioners and policy-makers realize the shortcomings of past approaches, scholars could be encouraged to challenge the state-centred security template often applied.[40]

Building a common understanding on what constitutes success or failure in the SSR field was identified as another priority. It was highlighted for instance that there are cases which have been labelled as a success, but where population surveys show that there is still not confidence in the security sector. The literature has often considered success to be the lack of 'relapse into violent conflict'. But is negative peace enough to contribute to institutional building and sustainable development, both key elements of sustaining peace? Moreover, SSR does not succeed or fail in isolation. What other institutional reforms or processes have a direct effect on security provision? It was underlined that if SSR is perceived to be a key instrument for peacebuilding in conflict-affected and fragile contexts, there is a need to better understand what outcomes the reforms should aim for, so they contribute to a comprehensive approach to development and sustainable peace.

While there are systematic references to 'national and/or local ownership' in policy frameworks, there is little academic work unpacking that concept. Calls were made to develop a better understanding on how local ownership unfolds, particularly in the fast-changing environments that often characterize fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Related to that, further research is needed on multi-stakeholder approaches which support inclusive processes (e.g. developing network analysis methodologies to understand distribution of power).

Regarding the need for enhanced understanding on building trust between the population and security sector institutions, much has been done. However, it was noted that previous research has focused heavily on the civilians' perception, omitting the fact that dis-trust is a two-sided problem that cannot be addressed without also examining the perspective of the security providers themselves.[41] When examining community policing, there were also calls for better understanding the conditions for the sustainability of these efforts. It was recognized that

in many cases efforts to bring together the police and the communities have broken down after a few years.

In terms of the reforms of specific security institutions, much ongoing research is concentrated on the military and the police. While there is a tendency to examine the process of militarization of the police (linked to current security developments which are taking place across the globe), little work has been done on how to reverse these processes. There is a need to look ahead and examine what could be the intended and un-intended outcomes or even potential spill overs of demilitarization processes, as this could influence how policy-makers and practitioners consider militarization in the first place. Calls were also made to increase research on the reform of other security institutions, such as intelligence services.

Integration of ex-combatants into the security sector was recognized to be an area where the international community is increasingly involved. However, practitioners have revealed that there are still many aspects which could benefit from further research. For instance, there were calls to move towards developing evidence of the results of different approaches to integration (e.g. 'en bloc' or 'individual' integration). Additionally, there is a need to think about integration beyond the military and the police. More efforts are required to explore the advantages and disadvantages of integrating ex-combatants into other security institutions such as the penitentiary or the intelligence services.

Another key area where policy-makers and practitioners are looking to uncover insights is on the potential role of SSR in relation to new security threats. This includes issues such as the challenges faced by the rapid urbanization of populations across the globe, the militarization of the security sector, cyber security, and violent extremism. Questions regarding how these threats affect SSR were posed. There were also calls to further explore the relationship between SSR and other processes which often take place in the aftermath of conflict. In particular, interest was shown on mediation, peace processes and DDR. It was highlighted that the lack of understanding of the linkages among these processes and on how they affect one another can contribute to failure, particularly, in fragile states.

FBA

Conclusion: Research gaps and way ahead

Given the important role that SSR plays in sustaining peace and supporting sustainable development, efforts should be made to learn from experience. To date, SSR practice has often been based on assumptions as opposed to evidence on what works, what does not, and why. And even when evidence exists, time-constraints, budget challenges and the need to provide quick results, prevent practitioners from fully integrating the knowledge available in the field of SSR into the strategic planning of support to nationally-driven reform processes. Investing in methodologically sound research on SSR, and bridging research, policy and practice, is thus essential to fill this gap and move towards improved reform processes.

While there are a large number of studies looking at SSR-related issues in conflict-affected and fragile contexts, the RPD highlighted that there is still untapped research in this field. For instance, it was recognized that there is much to be learnt from studies which are not necessarily labelled as 'SSR' but that have direct implications in this field. The RPD therefore provided the opportunity to think in more broad terms about what are current trends in SSR research today, drawing on research undertaken both with a strong focus on the security sector and its components, but also research focused on related issues which affect the security sector.

Way ahead

The RPD provided an opportunity to shed light on the state of the art of research in the field of SSR and the relationship among the researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners. While recent and ongoing research has the potential to positively influence the way SSR is being implemented across the globe, more needs to be done to ensure findings are fed into planning and implementation. As a first step, the RPD highlighted areas of ongoing research which policy-makers and practitioners should be aware of, while also highlighting the gaps which researchers should seek to fill.

Based on discussions at the RPD, there is a broad spectrum of thematic areas of interest across current research in the field of SSR ranging from analyzing the technical and normative assumptions behind international approaches to SSR, to the more amorphous and less codified role of non-state actors in security provision, as well as hybrid forms of security provision. With regards to research on the actors and institutions within the security sector, much research is currently focused on the police with an emphasis on community policing.

While the research presented at the event tackled many different themes and issues related to SSR, there are some broad messages on promoting more effective approaches to SSR support which were recurring. This includes, among others:

- Ensuring that international approaches to SSR are regularly questioned, particularly those which are state-centred and not sufficiently anchored in inclusive approaches;

- Conducting in-depth analysis in a more systematic manner, both conflict analysis which reflects on how pre-conflict dynamics can affect post-conflict dynamics, and political economy analysis which examines power and resource distribution;

- Reflecting further on the composition of institutions, both in terms of ethnicity of different entities (e.g. police units) and representation of minority groups or ex-combatants in security institutions more broadly.

- The organization of the RPD has proved to be a useful tool to support the dissemination of research findings among practitioners and policy-makers, support the exchange of impressions and concerns around SSR approaches and their outcomes, identify areas where further research would be needed, and advocate for the implementation of better practices based on empirical evidence. Moving forward, efforts should be made to continue facilitating the exchange of ideas within and between research, policy, and practice in order to ensure that SSR programmes respond in an effective and efficient way to the needs they aim to meet.

FBA

Endnotes

[1] Some studies presented were still ongoing, while others were in the final stages before being published

[2] Ansorg, N. (2019), Rethinking Security Sector Reform in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Cheng, C. (2019), Ex-combatants and the Legacies of War Economies, Presentation, 6 September, New York

[5] Ansorg, N. (2019), Rethinking Security Sector Reform in Fragile and Conflict-affected States, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[6] Cheng, C. (2019), Ex-combatants and the Legacies of War Economies, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[7] Blair, R. (2019), SSR and Police-Community Relations in Post-Conflict Settings, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[8] Other factors which affect success include the existence of a significant amount of societal disruption which enables a clear-cut change in behaviour and the absence of major drug routes which would imply reliance on external money which does not encourage security sector accountability to citizens. Detzner, S. (2019), From "Train & Equip" to SSR as a Political Process, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[9] Ansorg, N. (2019), Rethinking Security Sector Reform in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States, Presentation, 6 September, New York

[10] Detzner, S. (2019), From "Train & Equip" to SSR as a Political Process, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[11] McMullin, J. (2019), Community-Motorcyclist-Police Tensions and Insecurity in Liberia, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[12] Ansorg, N. (2019), Rethinking Security Sector Reform in Fragile and Conflict-affected States, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[13] Cheng (2019) The Double -Edged Sword of Strengthening State Capacity, Presentation, 4 September, New York.; Weintraub, M. (2019), Restoring the Rule of Law After Civil War: A Field Experiment in Security and Justice Provision in Rural Colombia, Presentation, 5 September, New York.

[14] Ansorg, N. (2019), Rethinking Security Sector Reform in Fragile and Conflict-affected States, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[15] Weintraub, M. (2019), Restoring the Rule of Law After Civil War, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[16] Blair, R. (2019), SSR and Police-Community Relations in Post-Conflict Settings, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Alexander Mayer-Rieckh, Dealing with the Past in Security Sector Reform, SSR Paper 10, DCAF, 2013.

[19] Blair, R. (2019), SSR and Police-Community Relations in Post-Conflict Settings, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[20] Morse, B. (2019), Reducing vigilantism in Fragile States: Evidence from a Field Experiment with the Liberian National Police, Presentation, 4 September, New York;

[21] Revkin, M. (2019), Community Policing as a Tool for Security Sector Reform in Iraq, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[22] Curtice, T. (2019), The Impact of Authoritarian Politics on Policing in Uganda, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[23] McMullin, J. (2019), Community-Motorcyclist-Police Tensions and Insecurity in Liberia, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[24] Daly, S. (2019), Organized Violence After Civil War, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[25] Lindsey, S. (2019), Violence against women and Community tolerance in eastern DRC, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[26] Tiscornia, L. (2019), SSR and Organized Criminal Violence, a missing link?, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Daly, S. (2019), Land Rights & Security Provision in Colombia, Presentation, 5 September, New York.

[29] The resource curse refers to the paradox that countries with an abundance of natural resources, tend to fare less well in terms of economic development and democracy than countries with less natural resources.

[30] Oppenheim, B. (2019), Does Rebel-Military work?, Presentation, 6 September, New York; Scherrer, V. (2019), Integration of Ex-combatants into the Security Sector, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[31] Nanes, M. (2019), Minority Inclusion in Post-Conflict Policing, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[32] Burihabwa, N. (2019), International Support to Integration process in Peace Operations, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Scherrer, V. (2019), Integration of Ex-combatants into the Security Sector, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[35] Oppenheim, B. (2019), Does Rebel-Military work?, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[36] Scherrer, V. (2019), Integration of Ex-combatants into the Security Sector, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[37] Oppenheim, B. (2019), Does Rebel-Military work?, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[38] Scherrer, V. (2019), Integration of Ex-combatants into the Security Sector, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[39] For instance, it was raised that while policy frameworks are increasingly calling for police reform processes to be increasingly coupled with justice sector and prison reform, there is still no evidence that such an approach works. Blair, R. (2019), Building Peace with an Iron Fist: An Experimental Evaluation of the Plan Fortaleza Program in Cali, Presentation, 4 September, New York;

[40] Tiscornia, L. (2019), SSR and Organized Criminal Violence, a missing link?, Presentation, 6 September, New York.

[41] Revkin, M. (2019), Can Community Policing Increase State Legitimacy? Research Design for a Quasi-Experiment in Iraq, Presentation, 4 September, New York.

Annex: Researchers present during the RPD

Name	Affiliation
Ben Oppenheim	New York University
Benjamin Morse	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Christine Cheng	King's College London
Cyrus Samii	New York University
Jaremey McMullin	University of St Andrews
Lucía Tiscornia	Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE)
Mara Revkin	Yale University
Matthew Nanes	Saint Louis University
Michael Weintraub	Universidad de los Andes
Nadine Ansorg	University of Kent & GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies
Ntagahoraho Burihabwa	United Nations Department of Peace Operations
Robert Blair	Brown University
Sarah Detzner	Tuft University
Sarah Z. Daly	Columbia University
Scherrer Vincenza	Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF)
Summer Lindsey	Rutgers University
Travis B. Curtice	Emory University