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SECURITY SECTOR REFORM: FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS, DEVELOPMENTS AND MOD ENGAGEMENT

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On 19 January 2020, 16 states and organisations agreed on a roadmap for peace at the Libya Summit in Berlin. Among other things, the participants committed themselves to “addressing structural problems in the government and security sector”. This IFK Monitor International takes the current context as an opportunity to present some fundamental aspects of the topic security sector reform (SSR), to outline how it is anchored in selected international organisations and to give an overview of the activities of the Federal Ministry of Defence (MoD) in this field.

What does security sector reform mean?

SSR – in the context of this paper – is a political and, at the same time, technical process that aims at improving state and human security and at complying with the principles of good governance (democratic and civil control, rule of law and respect for human rights) in the security sector. The security sector comprises all state and non-state actors that perform various security functions (e.g. regular and irregular armed forces, police, border protection units, intelligence services, courts, penal institutions, private security providers), control and administer (e.g. government, ministries) and supervise (e.g. parliament, specific supervisory institutions, constitutional courts, civil society, media, trade unions). The criterion for a functioning security sector is, to put it simply, that citizens have confidence in the effectiveness and accountability of the various state institutions and do not turn away from them. For a reform to succeed, the principle of national ownership has to be observed.

Only the participation or empowerment of the usually diverse local, state and non-state actors and interest groups offers a way of identifying the needs of the local population and the chance for a sustainable, stable solution. Security sector reform is valuable not only as an instrument in conflict-prevention and post-conflict management, but it also fulfils an important task in a transformation process.

What levels and activities does a reform involve?

Activities at various levels are necessary to achieve the SSR objectives of effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and respect for international norms, standards and human rights in a sustainable manner.

At the strategic level, for example, it is necessary to create the legal basis for the primacy of the democratic and civil exercise of power as well as control of the security sector and the judiciary, to ensure their effectiveness through independent supervisory mechanisms, and promote the involvement of civil society in these processes. Activities at the operational level are aimed, among other things, at creating or adapting organisational structures, internal standards and control mechanisms or at improving transparency. Activities at the tactical level include, for example, the implementation of recognised standards, the introduction of adequate training and equipment, as well as ensuring regulated and equal access to security and justice, i.e. public involvement.

What is the origin of SSR?

The idea of security sector reform dates back to the 1990s, when the concept of security acquired a new, additional connotation, particularly with regard to the end of the Cold War and the increasing number of intra-state conflicts resulting from it. Until then, security had been understood primarily in an interstate context and was usually only associated with the protection of the state and the population from external military threats. This changed and the so-called human security also focused on the domestic situation and the well-being of the population. It was realised that security is closely linked to a sustainable and prosperous economic, social and political development in a country. It is therefore no coincidence that the 2005 definition issued by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is still widely used. It sees SSR as a transformation of the security sector/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 thus contributes to a well-functioning security framework*”.

International Organisations (IOs) and SSR

The commitment of the presented IOs to SSR is expressed in various ways: The UN and OSCE are active in their member or participating states, NATO in its member and partner states, and the EU exclusively in third countries. The sometimes-controversial international discussion on SSR takes place also because the security sector is politically highly sensitive and because activities are sometimes perceived as a projection of strategic interests from outside.

United Nations (UN)

In the United Nations, the *UN Inter-Agency Task Force (IASSRTF)* set up in 2007 and the establishment of a *Security Sector Reform Unit in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)* in 2009 are milestones at the institutional level. The political efforts were most prominently expressed in Security Council Resolution 2151/2014. This first Security Council resolution, which was devoted exclusively to SSR, underlined, among others, its fundamental importance for peace and sustainable development. A major step in making the issue part of a broader context at the UN was the decision to mandate SSR activities within the framework of peacekeeping missions (PSOs) and thus elevate it to the category of operational tasks. Another current point of reference is the “Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development” and, in particular, Goal 16 “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions”. Missions based on a specific SSR mandate, i.e. targeted support actions, are currently taking place in four Peacekeeping Operations (Mali, Central African Republic, Southern Sudan, DR Congo) and six *Special Political Missions* (Libya, West Africa & Sahel, Yemen, Somalia, African Union, Burundi).

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

As the largest regional security organisation, the OSCE always deals with security comprehensively, regarding it as a three-dimensional politico-military, economic and environmental, and human factor. At a very early stage, in 1994, the then *Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE)* created the *Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security*, a politically binding basic document for the democratic control of military, paramilitary and security forces, which is still valid today. Through its 15 field missions and institutions, SSR has promoted various aspects of SSR since its inception. There is a regular exchange of expertise and, if requested, of advice and assistance concerning the reform of national security institutions and the strengthening of good governance. The organisation aims at supporting the 57 participating states in their national processes regarding structural conflict prevention and the development of resilient, responsible institutions. Although attempts have been made since the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship in 2014 to advance a common understanding of *Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R)* and a strategic approach to it within the OSCE framework, these efforts have not yet been realised, due to differences in political understanding. With the *Security Sector Governance and Reform Guidelines (SSG/R) for OSCE Staff*, a recognized internal implementation tool was created in 2016 to be applied contingency-related by mission staff.

European Union (EU)

Due to EU engagement within the *Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)* as well as in development cooperation - it is currently participating in 11 civilian and six military operations - it has a lot of mission experience. The so-called *Policy Framework for Security Sector Reform* was adopted in 2006, bringing together the civil and military aspects of SSR in a comprehensi-

ve and interdisciplinary approach and acknowledging the holistic, long-term, multi-sectoral dimension of SSR as an important contribution to EU foreign policy. The most recent strategic framework document dates from 2016. The main objective of the so-called *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Elements for an EU-wide strategic framework to support security sector reform* aims at increasing the effectiveness of the EU and its Member States in supporting SSR efforts for third countries. With the parallel expansion of the *Instrument for Peace and Stability (IPS)*, the EU has a foreign policy instrument for financing measures throughout the conflict cycle. Between 2014 and 2020, the OSCE thus financed some 200 projects in over 75 third countries to the tune of €2.3 billion. Another recent development is the establishment of the *Civilian CSDP Compact*, which was adopted in 2018 and is aimed in particular at building internal EU capacity.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

In the context of SSR, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) focuses on the effective and transparent organisation of the defence sector and the democratic control of armed forces. In addition to the *Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP)*, the *Partnership Action Plan on Defence Institution Building (PAP-DIB)* adopted in 2004, for example, there is another foundation document governing security sector and armed forces reform in partner states. Initiatives usually aim at interoperability and capacity building of armed forces. In addition, the *Building Integrity (BI) Programme*, launched in 2007 by the *Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC)*, aims at strengthening integrity, transparency, accountability and anti-corruption in the defence and security sector. SSR is assigned an important role within the concept of military contribution to stabilisation and reconstruction (AJP-3.4.5). The three pillars of military contribution are *Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR)*, *Stability Policing (SP)* and *Security Force Assistance (SFA)*.

In the Federal Ministry of Defence, the strategic control of SSR in the central office is carried out by the *Military Policy Division*. SSR implementation is in the responsibility of the *Office for the Implementation of Arms Control & International Stabilisation Measures*, directly subordinate to the MoD. Activities mainly concentrate on supporting capacity building. This includes steering EU training activities through a leading role in the *Executive Academic Board in support of SSR training (EAB) of the European Security and Defence College (ESDC)*. Since 2009, the ESDC-certified *Core Course on SSR* has taken place in cooperation with the *Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR)*. In addition, the development of responsible and trustworthy armed forces as well as, for example, advising the Ministry of Defence of Mali are part of the agenda. Austria, as a host state, and the Federal Ministry of Defence support the OSCE, in particular, and make a considerable contribution in spite of their limited capacities. Since 2011, the Republic of Armenia has been a focus of Austrian foreign and security policy and development cooperation. After consultation with the *Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, the Austrian Development Agency (ADA)* and the *MoD*, it was agreed that an SSR project be launched in 2012. Since then, this project has included numerous activities in the field of awareness raising, exchange of expertise and democratic control of armed forces. Since Austria's OSCE Chairmanship in 2017, experts of the Federal Ministry of Defence have also regularly supported the OSCE at regional SSG/R workshops of the individual field missions, including in Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Uzbekistan, Northern Macedonia and Belarus.

Conclusions & recommendations for the MoD

- SSR contributes to the promotion of comprehensive security throughout the area surrounding Austria. With comparatively limited resources, the Federal Ministry of Defence can substantially contribute to the interests of the state as a whole. This should be continued.
- SSR tasks have gained considerable operational relevance, which is reflected in changed mission profiles. This should be anchored in all the areas concerned.
- SSR supports states in a transformation process. All measures undertaken are conducive to stabilisation.
- The establishment of a pool of experts for special tasks, which began in 2014, enables the Federal Ministry of Defence to use them effectively. These experts are a valuable resource in international crisis management.
- The systematic transfer of the experience gained in the course of concrete assignments to the MoD/Austrian Armed Forces increases the knowledge in various specialist areas. This creates an additional value through international networking and contributes to the development of cooperation partnerships.

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