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CONFERENCE REPORT

Reforming Security Sector Governance in South Asia

MALLIKA JOSEPH

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Research Team :
Maj Gen Dipankar Banerjee – Project Leader
Dr Mallika Joseph A – Project Coordinator & author - India paper
Ms Tonita Murray – author - Afghanistan paper
Dr Jashim Uddin – author - Bangladesh paper
Mr Nishchal Nath Pandey – author - Nepal paper
Asst Prof Salma Malik – author - Pakistan paper
Ms Rosy Cave – author - Sri Lanka paper
Prof Ajay Darshan Behera – author - Cooperative Security
Dr Mohan Guruswamy – author - Defence Expenditure

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THE KEY QUESTION IN SOUTH ASIA IS: CAN BETTER GOVERNANCE OF THE SECURITY SECTOR, AND SECURITY SECTOR REFORMS HELP BUILD PEACE IN THE REGION?

Introduction

The end of the Cold War followed by the events of September 11 has brought about a sea change in the basis and modalities of security and governance, both within and between states and societies. This dilemma of "re-securitization," according to Heiner Hänggi – where on one hand greater 'interconnectedness' and interdependencies have been indicated between security and governance, on the other hand, it has made governance as the main focal issue notwithstanding the primacy of the traditional approach to security. Categorizing state-actors into three groups on the basis of their governance issues, he further states that the better a state is governed, more are the chances of that state to withstand external as well as internal pressures without a fear of breakdown in state system. Conversely, "failed," "rogue" or "hijacked" states which exhibit poor governance are prone to terrorism, militancy, external intervention and a total breakdown of state system. Although, the discourse surrounding the twin concepts of security and governance is familiar in academic and policy studies, "security sector governance" as a singular concept is yet to take a definitive shape.

Security sector governance in South Asia is characterized by governmental control, lack of transparency, excessive powers to state agencies without accountability and the absence of civil society participation. This has led in turn to an over empowerment of the military; military rule for much of its history in Pakistan, long periods of military control in Bangladesh and the independent nature of the Nepal Army outside of democratic political control. There are fairly draconian special powers allowed to the military in India that permits it to exercise undue coercive force without effective supervision in areas specially declared as 'disturbed' within India. The civil war in Sri Lanka again allowed a situation of direct Presidential management where there is inadequate oversight of the defence expenditures or the actual conduct of the Army.

The lack of effective security sector governance has led to tensions between neighbours in South Asia, widespread internal conflicts and nuclear weaponisation without any reference to popular will or internal debate. In turn this may well have made South Asia more conflict prone than any other region in the world and the possible scene of a larger regional conflict.

These factors have led to excessive resources being diverted to the military in all countries of South Asia at the expense of much needed social expenditure. India is the world's highest weapons importer and other countries in the region too spend a disproportionate amount of their national income on acquiring military capabilities. This has impacted very adversely on all indicators of human development, in which the region continues to lag behind the rest of the world. In the absence of universal state provided education it has allowed the growth of madrassas, which in turn have led to radical Islamisation in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

According to accepted definition, the "security sector" includes all agencies concerned with providing security to the nation, including the military and police forces, institutions responsible for making security policy and agencies in charge of oversight responsibilities and supervisory functions. National human rights organizations and civil society organizations monitoring defence expenditures or accounting for use of force are also a part of the sector.

ALTHOUGH, THE DISCOURSE SURROUNDING THE TWIN CONCEPTS OF SECURITY AND GOVERNANCE IS FAMILIAR IN ACADEMIC AND POLICY STUDIES, "SECURITY SECTOR GOVERNANCE" AS A SINGULAR CONCEPT IS YET TO TAKE A DEFINITIVE SHAPE.

Most of South Asia has had a recent history of colonial rule, which has left an imprint on the government structures and their style of governance. There is consequently sensitivity and reluctance to allow external agencies and foreign governments a prying role into security issues. At the same time colonial governance had laid down an effective administrative infrastructure including the management of armed forces that continues to this day largely unaffected. Unlike most African countries, South Asian armed forces have a clear command structure, are generally well trained and have high effectiveness. This has allowed them to participate extensively in UN Peacekeeping activities; in recent decades they have contributed to about forty percent of global UN peacekeeping forces. Even though major countries in South Asia inherited a common colonial legacy of civil control over armed forces and a tradition of an apolitical military, there have been major differences among countries.

The balance between military and civilian elements in national decision-making structures is critical, particularly for post-conflict and developing countries that are in the process of rebuilding their security sector. Civilian control not only helps ensure transparency and policy oversight, it can help restore the legitimacy of security institutions among the public. However, it is also important that military viewpoints be effectively represented in decision-making structures. In India and Sri Lanka, the Armed Forces have always remained entirely under civilian control. On the other hand, in Pakistan, the military has always played a major role both in politics and government. Long periods of martial rule has distorted civilian governance and has endowed the security sector a pervasive and dominant role in society. This is apparent in Bangladesh, which experienced long periods of military rule, soon after its emergence as an independent country. The (Royal) Nepal Army, on the other hand, has been an instrument of the Palace and has tended to be answerable only to the monarchy even when the country had democratic rule. In Afghanistan, after decades of war and turbulence, the emergence of governance with a new security sector is slowly coming into place.

In developing countries, transparency and accountability are particularly challenging issues. The existence of a capable, responsible and accountable security sector is often seen as critical, in order to reduce the risk of conflict or ensure sustainable peace, provide security for citizens, and create the right environment for sustainable development. Accountability is not simply about uncovering wrongdoing, but about improving individual and collective behaviour and the overall process of government. The existence of a free media remains an essential component, because it helps to challenge policies, highlight inefficiencies, hold public figures accountable and facilitate informed public debate.

Status of SSR in South Asia

In India, there is no comprehensive single SSR process underway. However, reforms are underway in almost all key security sectors. And these reforms are self driven, born at times out of internal analysis, or other times out of domestic pressure resulting from high-publicity glaring non-performance. The reforms have generally been a reactive process, and piecemeal in nature, rather than resulting from long term strategic planning and needs assessment.

In Bangladesh and Pakistan, some reforms have commenced in some sectors. But the internal political situation is deteriorating at such an alarming phase that unless some radical reforms are introduced either by the state or by donors, the crisis of

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security sector governance is going to cross the threshold.

Both Nepal and Afghanistan have similar reform needs given both countries have just emerged from long periods of conflict. While in Afghanistan, the SSR process has started with donor initiative and commitment, and therefore the reforms that are being undertaken are in a much larger integrated platform, in Nepal, the state and the society is still in transition with absence of committed external donor resources for undertaking fundamental SSR reforms.

The situation is very different and far more challenging in Sri Lanka where there is a conflict underway. It goes without saying that SSR will bring about some level of stability which is much required as a first step towards conflict resolution and peace. But the challenge remains on how to introduce any reforms in a conflict situation.

The key question in South Asia is: Can better governance of the security sector, and security sector reforms help build peace in the region? And within that context some of the related questions are:

- What is the present state of the Security Sector in the region in respect of each country? What are the functionality of each of the different components and segments and how effective are these?

- What are the principal obstacles to developing effective SSR in the region?

- What are the state of oversight mechanisms, transparency in defense expenditure and policies and accountability to civil society and how are these operationalized in the service of SSR?

- Will harmonizing threat perceptions and developing a cooperative security paradigm for South Asia contribute to peace and security and reduced defense spending in the region?

- How can transparency and accountability be introduced in defense planning and expenditure in South Asia?

- How can Security Sector governance be strengthened in Nepal and Bangladesh?

- India is the largest functional democracy in the region and the only country where SSR is self motivated and progressing without donor pressure. Is there a role for India in ushering SSR in the region?

THE LACK OF EFFECTIVE SECURITY SECTOR GOVERNANCE HAS LED TO TENSIONS BETWEEN NEIGHBOURS IN SOUTH ASIA, WIDESPREAD INTERNAL CONFLICTS AND NUCLEAR WEAPONISATION WITHOUT ANY REFERENCE TO POPULAR WILL OR INTERNAL DEBATE.

India

Most, if not all, of the security and defence related reform process has its roots in developments after the nuclear tests. At the basic level, it necessitated the need for policies for controlling the nuclear arsenal, a nuclear doctrine and command and control arrangements. A National Security Council (NSC), a National Security Advice Board (NSAB), an Integrated Defence Structure and a Nuclear Command Authority were put in place within four years of the nuclear tests.

In 2004, the Prime Minister set up two Cabinet Committees, one of them on Security. Arrangements have been instituted in recent years to rationalize defence acquisitions and make these more accountable and somewhat transparent; and higher defence organizations have been streamlined and major reorganizations made in the armed forces at higher levels. The Parliament has over 35 Adhoc and Standing Committees with oversight mechanisms. The Committee on Defence and Committee on Home Affairs within the Departmentally Related Standing Committees, along with other specialized committees such as the Public Account Committee are designed to offer an effective oversight of defence activities. The Comptroller and Auditor General, an independent and statutory institution created by the Constitution, submits annual reports to the Parliament including defence related expenditure and make suggestions on effective utilization of funds. Oversight mechanisms are in place and function within the mandate set out to them. The mere presence and functioning of these oversight mechanisms have not ensured greater accountability. For instance, no action was taken on some of the C&AG reports on defence issues. But in an unconnected manner, some of the concerns raised by these report have been addressed by the formulation of the Defence Procurement Procedures. The argument being made is: for the question, has the government done anything with the C&AG reports, the answer is no. But for the question, has the government done anything with the concerns raised in the C&AG reports, the answer is yes. This disconnect is evident in most of the reform process. There are reports that highlight institutional weaknesses. There is no interest shown in these reports. However, new mechanisms are introduced later to address these institutional weaknesses. Eventually the weaknesses have been addressed but not in a linear conscious reform process.

Another development of the nuclearization has been the opening up of the discussion on security issues beyond the higher echelons of the Indian administration to increased pubic participation. The academic and strategic community supported by research institutes and think tanks are yet to initiate a full-scale debate on security sector reforms, though there has been wide ranging discussions on defence expenditure, strategic doctrines, police reforms, etc. However, public debate is yet to crystallize into concrete pressure to initiate any specific reform. Recent findings on defence scandals, by private and government bodies have introduced the necessity for reforms and it is only a matter of time, before a full-scale debate on security sector reforms begin in India. It is important that the international community remains engaged in this endeavour through supporting civil oversight, accountability in defence decisions and transparency.

Media effectively plays the role of watch dog, though often supporting increased capabilities. A series of sting operations, initiated by Tehelka, and public acceptance of the methods used in these sting operations, has exposed corrupt practices and instilled fear among public servants of exposure. The role of the media, particularly with regard to educating the public on the Right to Information Act needs special mention. One of the national dailies, Indian Express, for example, held awareness campaigns in various Resident Welfare Associations over weekends educating the people on their rights under RTI Act and encouraged them to apply. Later by running success stories of the RTI, the media has instilled confidence among the people. Using RTI is seen as not only as a right, but a responsibility. This aggressive media campaigning, coupled with an informed civil society, and democratically evolving government structures, is ensuring that the government finally becomes accountable to the people.

Internal security will continue to be the single biggest challenge to India in the

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coming years. As economic robustness takes India to new heights, it leaves behind a section of people who are unable to tap into the economic success of the country because of poor delivery mechanisms. Good governance has emerged as a key factor in policy, but measures for its implementation remain weak. Though confined to specific pockets, these governance black holes have the potential to cause damage if left unchecked. Protracted conflict over the years has crumbled whatever weak institutions existed to provide governance, though it is equally debatable that poor governance structures were one of the many reasons for the emergence of conflicts in these areas. Notwithstanding the cause and effect, the point being made is: the governance structures in some pockets needs immediate attention to reduce costs of conflicts.

The cost of conflict in India is measured in India only in terms of number of casualties. The economic implications of the conflict are equally high. India spends nearly Rs 15,000 crores for maintaining the nearly half a million troops in Jammu and Kashmir. This figure does not include the costs incurred by the contingents of the Border Security Force, Central Reserve Police Force, Indo-Tibet Border Police, Assam Rifles, India Reserve Battalions, and National Security Guards deployed in the state. The cost of public administration is three times higher than the national average. The grant-in-aid to the conflict zones in nearly 10 times, and in some instances, even 20 times higher than the national average. For example, the all-India average of per capita grant stands at Rs 278 crores. For Nagaland, it is Rs 5873 crores and Jammu and Kashmir, it is Rs. 2669 crores. Similarly the per capita development expenditure in these areas are typically 2-3 times the national average. Consider Jammu and Kashmir's Rs. 8104 crores against the national average of Rs 3171 crores. And in Jammu and Kashmir, the state government accounts have not been audited for years. These are just few of the many economic costs incurred by the country that remains unaccounted within cost of conflict. Much less is known about the effect conflict has on institutions and the costs thereof. These are critical issues which are likely to be highlighted only when a systematic review of the security sector is undertaken. As indicated earlier, various reforms are underway. But they are not connected to each other, though the issues are interconnected. An effective reform process needs to be preceded by a needs assessment. Such an assessment will not only highlight the critical gaps within the reform process, but also help in augmenting the reform process in related sectors. A comprehensive integrated reform process has the potential to maximize the benefits of the reforms. Since the government is not averse to reforms, and many reforms are underway anyway, a study and public debate on security sector reforms could help highlight the reform priorities to the government.

Pakistan

With regards Pakistan, it would be correct to presume, that the need to bring about reforms in the security sector have not been felt or brought about, but the efforts so far have been sparse and piecemeal at best. The very question of defence and security became an exclusive domain of military with no space for others to participate or question. Any issues regarding accountability, audit, and misconduct etc. has been dealt with, but at an intra-institutional level. Therefore, gradually military conduct, operations and performance became a sacred cow; even the yearly allocations and defence budget could not be questioned, or open for public debate.

Another actor in the security sector governance network is the intelligence

THE ONLY MEANS TO HAVE A STRONG SSR AND GOVERNANCE FOR PAKISTAN IS TO FIRST REALISE THE NEED FOR FINISHING THE DEPENDENCE ON MILITARY, SO TO MINIMISE ITS INVOLVEMENT IN THE POLITICAL DOMAIN.

community, which has been used just as much by the power brokers. As in the words of Hassan Abbas, "The many crises faced by Pakistan today, ranging from perennial political instability to the rise of religious extremist forces, are partly a gift of intelligence agencies' various operations (read blunders). Since the 1958 martial law, firstly all the intelligence agencies came under the direct control of the president and the chief martial law administrator. The ISI was now delegated to "(a) safeguard Pakistan's interests, (b) monitor political opposition, and (c) sustain military rule in Pakistan." Toward the 1980s, ISI became infamous for its alleged anti-India operations and was extremely proactive during the Afghan jihad, and later post-9/11 global war on terror with the CIA in training and running the Jihad and later in the hunt for the same mujahideens turned rogue Taliban and Al Qaeda leadership. ISI further gained notoriety due to its torture, arrest and disappearance tactics, and its alleged support to radical as well as extremist elements. This has also a lot to do with the fact that during the Afghan Jihad, the Western powers using Pakistan as well as ISI as their willing conduit, empowered the agency with unaccounted for money, weapons and authority to choose and run the anti-Communist operation on their behalf. Without any doubt the need to depoliticise and reform intelligence agencies is urgently required, which becomes very difficult given Pakistan's involvement in the US led war on terror.

The Judiciary is another sector requiring reforms. Given the extended military rules, judiciary has always remained subservient to the whims of the ruling elite, adapting it to changing political trends under doctrines of necessity, judiciary's autonomy and independent stature has been questioned many times. The positive outcome of the current mobilization of the civil society representatives along with the lawyer community may help restore the image and stature of the judiciary.

A very important player in the recent years in raising awareness about the functional anomalies and enhancing transparency is the highly proactive and independent media, specially the broadcast media. The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) was set up to monitor the quality and standards of private broadcast companies, however even this authority was used excessively in the past one year, which had to be revised as a result of civil society and media campaigning.

The problem of effective security sector reforms and governance in Pakistan is inextricably linked to the country's current political dilemma. It arises from immediate political circumstances yet it is rooted in its six decades of history as a state. The security of the state, whether the internal or external dynamics are interlinked, and the entire gamut of security centres on the military security of the state. From the day of inception, the entire social formation of the state has been dominated by the military, thus making security relations, foreign policy formulation and civil military relations all entwined with each other. That is why whenever there was a breach in the civil military balance of the state, whether during the Cold War or post 9/11 scenario, the domestic discourse on security and governance was always over shadowed by demands exerted by external actors, namely the US, in a typical parent client relation, and the military rule found a ready ally in the shape of US. These foreign actors given their interests have positively engaged with the military through large amounts of aid, whether it is military or economic.

This has led to a situation where at present the over arching US interests have severely shrunk the space for an effective and workable SSR agenda suitable for the country.

There is a critical need for Pakistan to assess its options and bring about reforms to

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ensure sustainable security sector governance. Given the South Asian security problematique, the mutual patterns of acrimony are hard to iron out. However, what is critically required is to have wide sweeping reforms that are uniformly applied on all institutions with transparency and all institutions whether civil or military are held accountable for any excesses. In such scenarios, think tanks, research bodies and practitioners in the field can play a key role in ushering and implementing these reforms.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh suffers from both external and internal insecurities. However, today it is not too much to say that the internal security problems have become the main security threats to both human security and national security of Bangladesh. Dysfunctional politics, disregard for rule of law, a lack of transparency and accountability in public affairs, corrupt security officials, political patronization of security forces, using security agencies as the tool of the rulers, difficulties in the management of scarce resources, as well as inadequate civilian capacity to manage and monitor the security forces have been evident in Bangladesh. The country has also suffered from outbursts of extremist violence and terrorism in recent times.

To promote the overall security situation in Bangladesh, a constructive role played by the security sectors is a fundamental requirement. However, it is evident that the security sectors especially Police and the other organizations assigned to ensure internal security failed to perform their constitutional and respective duties. Most of the governments took various initiatives for reforming the security agencies in their respective periods to improve the security situation. Nevertheless, the measures did not bring any real change in the security situation. The ordinary people were not benefited from the change or reform. The opposition political parties tend to oppose the reform taken by the government regardless it is good or bad for the people. One concrete example is the creation of RAB. Since the formation of RAB, most of the opposition political parties have been critical to the organization. The opposition leaders claim that RAB is created to oppress their leaders and activists. Human rights organizations and civil society have seriously raised questions about the extra-judicial killing of the top criminals by RAB. Nonetheless, many ordinary people gave their moral support to RAB's actions in promoting the law and order. It is argued that as a whole the security situation has been better since the elite force was created. A large segment of Bangladeshi people tend to believe that for some reasons these criminals will never get punished by the existing laws. Sometimes people ask: who's rights are more important? The human rights of the criminals who kill and violate others' rights, or the rights of majority people who are the victims of a few criminals patronized by some political leaders or ministers. However, without any doubt, criminals or terrorists should be punished according to the law of the country. If the existing law is not enough to punish them, then policy makers and legislators regardless their political identity should come forward to change the law.

For a holistic reform in the security sectors including the institutions related to the policy making, a long term plan rather than sudden change in the name of reforms is necessary. Since we have limited resources, if the policy makers failed to take effective reform policy, it will become a big burden for the poor people of this country. Transparency, accountability and impartiality of the security sectors need to be ensured. According to some scholars security sector reform has political, economic, policing, judicial, communications, financial, foreign policy, and

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intelligence components, all of which are interrelated. Perhaps the idea is too broad to identify the important components or organizations for taking reform in security sectors. Therefore, priority should be given to the segments directly related to security of a country.

In order to promote internal security, priority should be given to change the existing laws, policy and activities of Police, RAB and related ministry such as Home Ministry of Bangladesh government. Weak political institutions and failed leadership prevent long-term strategic planning in the security sectors. Hence, a radical change is necessary in the mindset of our leaders to introduce people-centric security system. It should be noted here that since January 11, 2007 a caretaker government backed by Army has ruled the country. It is not too much to say that since then the law and order has been better than any other time in the history of Bangladesh. The caretaker government has taken various measures to reform public sectors. The separation of the judiciary has been the most significant job this government has initiated, which will help ensure people's security. The anti-corruption measures taken by the government have also been notable and highly appreciated by the ordinary people. As early mentioned the caretaker government has taken a comprehensive measure to reform Bangladesh police forces. Although the role the Police Station led by an Officer in Charge (OC) is very important to secure citizen's rights and security, people have a very negative impression about most of the OC or the police officers for their misbehave, corruption and abuse of power. The current government is committed to reform the police station so that people can get better service from police.

WHEN THE POLITICAL AND CONFLICT CONTEXT ALLOWS, THE CHANCES OF EFFECTING SECURITY SECTOR DEVELOPMENT, IN LINE WITH INTERNATIONAL PRINCIPLES AND NORMS, ARE GOOD.

On the other hand, the role of BDR is important to protect borders from any aggression and prevent smuggling, human trafficking and other unlawful acts. Due to the illegal border crossing, violation of international border law and humanitarian norm tensions rise between BDR and the Indian Border Security Forces (BSF) which can lead to a serious conflict. Both BDR and BSF should be more responsible and show mutual tolerance in their respective duties. Increasing the level of accountability and transparency of BDR will contribute to the promotion of security conditions in the border area.

Concerning the Bangladesh Armed Forces, statistics indicate that the per capita GDP for military spending in Bangladesh is the lowest in South Asia. Therefore, arguments to reduce the military budget for Bangladesh Army may not be a feasible idea. Rather, how these forces can be a tool for further development and security should be the subject of research. For promoting democracy and ensuring good governance, the civil-military relations especially transparency between civilian and military is vital.

Sri Lanka

It is clear that the conflict situation cannot be sustained for a long time and that it will end sooner rather than later. There will then be a whole series of security sector challenges which will be absolutely critical for the future prospects of Sri Lanka. Depending on the final post-conflict settlement these could include: demobilisation and reintegration of government forces into civilian life; and, a broader process of military reform that could include some form of integration process for the former LTTE.

There would also need to be a significant improvement in the ability of the police

to tackle what will almost inevitably be an increase in violent crime, potentially fuelled by SALW proliferation and by the needs of former combatants to provide for themselves and their families in the context in which may not be easy to obtain. In order for security sector development, as perceived by the OECD and others, to be effective, a systems-wide approach needs to be taken right from the initial stages. There will need to be the development of a security sector reform concept which outlines contingencies and complementarities between the various elements and actors in the sector. Given Sri Lanka's parliamentary system, this may take the form of a defence and security sector white paper. Lessons from other places suggest success or otherwise of future reforms depend to a large extent on preparation taken prior to reforms being initiated. It seems right that that thinking should start to take place now in Sri Lanka.

Although there is a fairly pessimistic overview of the security sector in Sri Lanka now, there are two positive counters. First, there still remains considerable interest in ensuring Sri Lanka is supported in its attempts to improve the conditions for peace and security by other governments and international organisations. And in this case it is extremely important that those international actors currently involved stay involved during the hard times to ensure progress. Second, and most importantly, Sri Lanka is not Somalia. It has a long and proud tradition of democracy, rule of law, parliamentary governance, a strong legislative basis, a well-educated civil service including a well-trained and motivated senior cadre of politicians and military personnel, and some excellent civil society actors. So in many ways, when the political and conflict context allows, the chances of effecting security sector development, in line with international principles and norms, are good.

Nepal

For a country just limping back to life from a decade of bloody insurgency, assistance in the areas of disarmament, demobilization, small arms reduction, IDPs and security sector management is extremely vital. By placing greater emphasis on strengthening civil overseeing and governance of the overall security apparatus, reforms must be promoted in an institutionalized manner. With the UNMIN preparing to leave, dozens of representatives of the international community and donor agencies including the EU, DFID, GTZ, USAID, etc. need to bring about a synthesis in SSR and good governance. Not only Nepal but most countries of South Asia are currently having to face conflict situations but ironically, this fragile region has taken the lead in shouldering the task of global peace operations. Today Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Nepal are amongst the top five manpower contributors to UN led peace operations. If Sri-Lanka were to be added to this list, 37.6% of the total manpower for UN peace operations is currently fielded by the South Asian region. Therefore, there is no reason why experts from within this region itself cannot assist and provide their services to the SSR debate of Nepal. The government must also give due attention to increasing dialogue between members of the security system and the general public as only a broad based approach and a system wide framework is key to an effective SSR. So too is the warm relations between PLA and N.A. officer core which afterall is a prerequisite for the successful implementation of any SSR model(s). And by integrating the security system into wider government planning, the government must eventually aim for an over-arching national security policy for the country.

NO OTHER AREA IS MORE SENSITIVE AND IMPORTANT IN THE CURRENT SSR DISCOURSE IN NEPAL THAN THE IDEA OF INTEGRATING THE FORMER MAOIST REBELS INTO THE NEPAL ARMY

Afghanistan

Afghan society has a strong tribal character, so even today and local social structures, institutions and loyalties are stronger than national government laws and institutions. Tribal and local influences account for much of the factionalism and instability which exists in Afghanistan and for some of the corruption, since Afghan social relations are permeated by a client-patron ethos. While these factors are often antithetical to the formation of a modern national state, they nevertheless contribute to a cohesive communal society where collective rights and family obligations are more important than individual rights.

The transition from Taliban control to the situation today was accomplished with massive support from the international community under the Bonn Agreement of 2001. The United Nations provided leadership but insisted on a 'light footprint' so major nations took responsibility for different aspects of reconstruction. In the security sector, the United States took the lead in rebuilding the national army, Germany the lead for police reform, Italy for justice, Japan for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and the United Kingdom for counter-narcotics. Other nations supported different aspects of security sector reform according to their preferences and resources, but without any degree of coordination. This arrangement resulted in some floundering and a lack of momentum. The US therefore turned more attention and resources to police reform, but its injection of generous funds was accompanied by firm ideas on how security sector reform should be accomplished. One decision was to put US police reform under the direction of the US military. German efforts were thus dwarfed. As a result, German police reformers were absorbed into a larger European police mission; however, even EUPOL has had difficulty finding clear direction, so the US approach prevails, even in the face of some reticence from the Afghan Ministry of the Interior. The most striking feature of the approach is that police are being trained and tasked as a counter-insurgency force rather than a civilian police organization.

Remnants of the Taliban remained after their 2001 defeat and Osama bin Laden was believed still to be free. The US army therefore mounted a military mission, Operation Enduring Freedom, mainly to continue the pressure against the Taliban and search for Al Qaeda members. This mission is still in existence with its original mandate. In addition various countries including the US contributed to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to establish security so that development could take place. At first it was confined to Kabul but by 2008, with the creation of military-civilian 'provincial reconstruction teams' (PRTs), ISAF extended its reach to 26 of the 34 provinces. There are now two military forces: the ISAF force led by NATO, and Operation Enduring Freedom.

The resurgence of the Taliban in southern Afghanistan, and particularly in the provinces of Kandahar, Helmand and Uruzgan also engages NATO contingents from Canada, the UK and the Netherlands in offensive campaigns. This has led to considerable public concern in their individual countries and protests on the part of their governments that some NATO partners are bearing more of the burden of protecting Afghanistan than others. There is some fear that the tensions in NATO may have an adverse effect on the situation in Afghanistan and on NATO itself.

Meanwhile work continues to rescue Afghanistan from what was nearly complete devastation after 25 years of war and neglect. The physical infrastructure, and the economic, educational, health, and security systems were completely destroyed. Considerable progress has been made in rebuilding the government and the

THE MOST STRIKING FEATURE OF THE APPROACH IS THAT POLICE ARE BEING TRAINED AND TASKED AS A COUNTER-INSURGENCY FORCE RATHER THAN A CIVILIAN POLICE ORGANIZATION.

economy. Taxes are being collected, the GDP is rising, laws are being written or revised and applied, access to health is improving, maternal and infant deaths diminishing, five million children are back in school, and the Afghan National Assembly contains 17 per cent women.

The sector that lags behind is security, so despite progress elsewhere, stability still hangs in the balance. This is further exacerbated by poppy cultivation and the traffic in opium. Afghanistan produces 90 per cent of the world supply of opium and much of the trade finances the Taliban insurgency. Owing largely to this precarious security situation, Afghanistan is still regarded as a fragile state, and one that is even on the verge of becoming a failed state.

Conclusions

The idea of SSR is yet to percolate within the region. Various reforms are underway in various sectors. Because there is no understanding of SSR, the benefits obtainable through a systematic and comprehensive approach to SSR is lost.

Mismatch in the capacity of the various security institutions can create challenges to the security of the state. As one institution becomes more powerful than another, the chances of it taking over the administration of the state is more likely, especially if that institution happens to be the military.

One of the key issues that is apparent in the region is the challenge to undertake any reform during ongoing conflict. The question is: how can reform take place when conflict is raging? A related question is: when to initiate reform in a state undergoing conflict? These questions are very pertinent in the case of Afghanistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

THE IDEA OF SSR IS YET TO PERCOLATE WITHIN THE REGION. VARIOUS REFORMS ARE UNDERWAY IN VARIOUS SECTORS. BECAUSE THERE IS NO UNDERSTANDING OF SSR, THE BENEFITS OBTAINABLE THROUGH A SYSTEMATIC AND COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO SSR IS LOST.

List of Participants

AFGHANISTAN

MS TONITA MURRAY
Gender and Police Advisor, CANADEM
73 Morphy Street, Carleton Place, Ontario
K7C 2B7, CANADA
Fax: 1-613-257-7208
Canadian Embassy, Wazir Akbar Khan Street 15
Kabul, AFGHANISTAN

Email: tonita_murray@hotmail.com
Tel: 93-799-810336
Mobile: 93-700-230420

BANGLADESH

DR JASHIM UDDIN
Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of
International and Strategic Studies (BIISS)
198 Elephant Road, Dhanmondi
Dhaka 1205, BANGLADESH

Email: jashim50@hotmail.com
Tel: 8802-8626240
Mobile: 88-01720611280

LT GEN (RETD.) M HARUN-AR-RASHID
Former Chief of Army Staff
House No 415, Road No 30, Dohs Mohakhali
Dhaka 1206, BANGLADESH

Email: mharun48@yahoo.com.au
m.harun@bdcom.com
Tel: 8802-8821588
Fax: 8802-9880717
Mobile: 88-01711560078

INDIA

MAJ GEN (RETD.) DIPANKAR BANERJEE
Director, Institute of Peace and
Conflict Studies, B 7/3 Safdarjung Encalve
New Delhi 110029
INDIA

Email: dbanerjee@ipcs.org
Tel: 91-11-41652556 until 59
Fax: 91-11-41652560
Mobile: 91-9818588855

MS MALLIKA JOSEPH
Assistant Director, Institute of
Peace and Conflict Studies, B 7/3 Safdarjung
Encalve, New Delhi 110029, INDIA

Email: mallikajoseph@gmail.com
Tel: 91-11-41652556 until 59
Fax: 91-11-41652560
Mobile: 91-9350859839

DR AJAY DARSHAN BEHERA
Professor, Jamia Milia Islamia
Academy of Third World Studies
Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi 110025, INDIA

Email: ad_behera@hotmail.com
Mobile: 91-9810523880

MR MOHAN GURUSWAMY
Chairman, Centre for Policy Alternatives
94 Uday Park, New Delhi 110049, INDIA

Email: mohan.guruswamy@yahoo.co.in
Tel: 91-11-41650995
Fax: 91-11-41650997
Mobile: 91-9811303955

DR RAJESH RAJAGOPALAN
Professor, CIPOD, School of International Studies,
Jawaharlal Nehru University,
New Delhi 110067, INDIA

Email: r_rajesh@mail.jnu.ac.in
Mobile: 91-9810540863

DR P SAHADEVAN
Professor, CSCSEAS,
School of International Studies,
Jawaharlal Nehru University,
New Delhi 110067, INDIA

Email: saha62@yahoo.co.in
sahadevan@mail.jnu.ac.in
Tel: 91-11-26741345
Mobile: 91-9818400993

MR R SRIDHAR
Assistant Professor, Madras Christian College
10 Sivagami Street, Anandapuram,

East Tambaram, Chennai 600059, INDIA

Email: sridharmcc@yahoo.co.in
Tel: 91-11-22390417
Mobile: 91-9381042597

NEPAL

MR NISHCHAL NATH PANDEY
Director, South Asia Foundation
Pragati Tole, Bishalnagar 5, Kathmandu, NEPAL

Email: nina@ntc.net.np
pandeynishchal@hotmail.com
Tel: 977-1-4432079
Fax: 977-1-4430996
Mobile:977-9851058622

LT GEN (RETD) SADIP SHAH
Royal Nepal Army, 592/42 Narayan Gopal Marg
Lazimpat, Kathmandu 2, NEPAL

Email: sadipshah@hotmail.com
Tel: 977-1-4429098
Mobile: 977-9851086582

PAKISTAN

MS SALMA MALIK
Lecturer, Quaid-e-Azam University
Apt 1, Ground Floor, Block 8,
Askari Nazir Apartments,
Kashmir Road, Rawalpindi Cantt, PAKISTAN

Email: salmamalik@gmail.com
salmamehr@yahoo.com
Tel: 92-51-90643076
Mobile: 92-3008501590

MR BABAR SATTAR
AJURIS, Advocates & Corporate Counsel
51 A, Street 63, F 8/4, Islamabad, PAKISTAN

Email: sattar@post.harvard.edu
Tel: 92-51-2852067/87
Fax: 92-51-2852015
Mobile: 92-321-5171197

DR RIFAAT HUSSAIN
Executive Director,
Regional Centre for Strategic Studies
410/27 Bauddoloka, Mawatha,

Colombo, SRI LANKA 00700

Email: rifaathussain@gmail.com
Tel: 94-11-2690764
Fax: 94-11-2690769
Mobile: 94-0-777667485

SRILANKA

MS ROSY CAVE
Head of Asia Program, Saferworld
The Grayston Centre, 28 Charles Square
London Night, UNITED KINGDOM

Email: rcave@saferworld.org.uk
Tel: 44-20-73244646
Fax: 44-20-73244647
Mobile: 44-7957369016

GEN SRILAL WEERASOORIYA
Former Chief of Army Staff and Former High
Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Pakistan
40/14 Perera Mawatha
Pelawatte, Battaramulla, SRI LANKA

Email: srilal43@hotmail.com
Tel: 94-11-2786192
Mobile: 94-775974524

IDRC

MR STEPHEN MCGURK
Regional Director for South Asia and China
International Development Research Centre
208 Jor Bagh, New Delhi 110003, INDIA

Email: smcgurk@idrc.org.in
Tel: 91-11-24619411

MS NAVSHARAN SINGH
Senior Program Specialist
International Development Research Centre
208 Jor Bagh, New Delhi 110003, INDIA

Email: nsingh@idrc.org.in
Tel: 91-11-24619411
Mobile: 91-9910171888

South Asia Regional Conference on Reforming
Security Sector Governance in South Asia, April 2008

INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES

B 7/3 Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi 110029 INDIA
www.ipcs.org