

## SSR in Afghanistan

This month's case study includes four different outlooks on SSR in Afghanistan, providing an in-depth analysis of the situation along with ongoing activities of the European Union, the European Commission and DCAF in the country.

### Dilemmas and Challenges in Afghanistan's Security Sector Reform

Despite military operations and robust political engagement during 2007, Afghanistan continues to face serious, interrelated challenges from insecurity, corruption, and narcotics. SSR across five pillars – military, police, justice, DDR, and counter-narcotics – is a core strategy of international and national stabilisation efforts and longer-term reconstruction. Yet, from the outset, SSR efforts have faced numerous dilemmas.

Since international reengagement in Afghanistan post-9/11, there has been tension between the twin goals of establishing a state capable of maintaining order and resisting terrorism, on the one hand, and of democratic governance, accountability, and respect for human rights on the other. Reliance by the US-led Coalition Forces on factional militias strengthened warlords opposed to the emergence of a strong central state, and ostracised a majority of the population. Political compromises by President Karzai and his international supporters were then needed to ensure that factional leaders stayed within the political process initiated by the Bonn Agreement.

These compromises obstructed DDR and SSR alike. Although Afghans identified DDR as the number one priority for their personal security, the Bonn Agreement deferred the details of disarmament; nearly two years passed until it commenced. In the interim, factional commanders deepened patronage networks and solidified control over subnational administration, as well as the licit and illicit economy.

Consequently, today there are few effective or legitimate governmental institutions through which to deliver security to the population. Citizen engagement with the state is frequently marked by corrupt and predatory officials. Faced with the ongoing insurgency, international emphasis has been on operational capacity, rather than civilian oversight. Many of the parliamentarians elected in 2005 are factional leaders, posing a paradox for accountability. With minimal legitimate

state presence in most of rural Afghanistan, local communities rely on customary systems. This reality has slowly prompted more national attention to hybrid justice models incorporating formal state and informal institutions.

Different concepts of "security" among donors also drive contradictory approaches, of which policing is paradigmatic. A European Union police mission, EUPOL, deployed in June 2006. But Afghan recruits and international trainers have been in short supply, security guarantees for provincially-deployed trainers have been held up, and the mission commander resigned three months into his appointment. Meanwhile, the use by the US of military personnel for police training as part of its US\$2.5 billion reform package has raised concerns about militarisation of the police.

Related, there is a fundamental tension between Afghanistan's security needs and what it can afford. Although sustainability cannot come at the expense of security, neither can the government afford to maintain its security forces at their present size without the international community; support it cannot count on indefinitely.

There is increasing recognition by both the Government of Afghanistan and the international community that security and rule of law cannot be achieved by military means alone. It remains to be seen whether the SSR processes underway will yield tangible results able to positively alter realities on the ground. Yet, without a more holistic, long-term SSR strategy, the current short-term, *ad hoc* approach is unlikely to yield either.

Written by [Jake Sherman](#), Project Coordinator for SSR at the [Center on International Cooperation](#).

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### DCAF Activities in Afghanistan 2007-8

In late October 2007, on a mandate from the Swiss Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sports (DDPS), a DCAF team undertook a fact-finding mission on justice and SSR status and needs in Afghanistan. The team met with civil society representatives, parliamentarians from across the political spectrum, representatives of security sector agencies and international organisations.

Since the team's visit, requests for assistance on democratic oversight capacity building issues have been received from the Afghan National Assembly and Ministry of Defence. Civil society representatives in human rights monitoring, gender and SSR issues have also confirmed interest in cooperation.

As a result, DCAF is seeking funding for parliamentary and civil society capacity building programmes on democratic security sector oversight, as well as defence institution building, for implementation from March 2008 onwards. The capacity building efforts will be complementary to those already underway under UN and ISAF auspices, while at the same time addressing national ownership issues which have been overlooked to date. The programme's core focus will be to address the problems that democratic institutions, the security sector and civil society organisations face in promoting human rights observance and building transparency and accountability into their nascent security architecture.

DCAF will also publish a study on Afghanistan's Democratic Security Sector Governance Status and Needs in July 2008.

For more information please contact [Eden Cole](#), Deputy Head, Operations NIS, DCAF.