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African Politics, African Peace charts an agenda for peace in Africa, focusing on how the African Union can implement its norms and use its instruments to prevent and resolve armed conflicts. It is an independent report of the World Peace Foundation, supported by the African Union.

The Report is the most extensive review of the African Union's peace missions ever conducted. It is based on detailed case studies and cross-cutting research, and draws on consultations with leading experts, peacekeepers, and mediators.

This Paper is a summary of research undertaken in support of the Project.

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## The Evolution of Multilateral Post-Conflict SSR in Africa

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### Key Messages:

- The success or failure of security sector reform (SSR, including militaries, police courts, prisons, and others) in nations emerging from war is one of the key determinants of whether lasting peace will take hold. Unfortunately, as yet most SSR efforts fail. This piece argues that reforms will be ineffective unless accompanied by a substantial change in the incentives of recipient governments, such that meeting domestic demand for security becomes a political priority.
- Even at the risk of delaying an agreement, when the AU is involved as a mediator, it should provide support for (and strongly encourage) belligerents to undertake a joint analysis of the security sector and the SSR reforms that will be necessary to maintain stability and provide basic security services during peacetime. To the greatest extent possible, a broader range of "Tier II" actors—local community groups, civil society, etc.—should be encouraged and assisted so that they can contribute their own evaluations of security problems and priorities to this exercise. This is likely to only partially address the tendency of antagonists to treat the security sector as a zero-sum source of spoils, but even modest progress would represent an improvement over recent processes.
- The AU should expend all possible efforts to ensure that, when a DDR program is launched, sufficient funds are available (preferably in a coordinated, pooled fund) to implement that program. Despite the urgency to conduct DDR in post-conflict environments, past cases of delays and gaps in programming have actually exacerbated the conflict and reduced the confidence of participants in the process, making future efforts even more difficult.

## Introduction

Promoting security sector reform (SSR) in nations emerging from war is one of the most critical, but also most difficult, of the new missions the African Union has assumed as part of its expansion of peace support operations in recent years.

SSR has become notorious for its dearth of clear-cut success stories, particularly in post-conflict environments. Despite close to two decades of implementation experiences for scholars and practitioners to draw from, as of 2016 there has been no uptick in the tiny number of post-conflict SSR efforts generally regarded as successful.

This piece examines existing theory, institutional policies, and actual practice regarding SSR (and closely-related DDR – disarmament, demobilization, & reintegration) efforts undertaken as part of multilateral interventions into African nations emerging from conflict, from the emergence of the SSR concept in 1998 to the present. The review identified recurring issues, patterns, and gaps in conceptualization and practice, and finds, overall, that the primary obstacle to effective SSR programming is failed implementation. While some new problems have revealed themselves over time, the core recommendations for SSR practice have remained more or less constant, as has the failure to shape programs to those recommendations. In the specific context of post-conflict African efforts, the gaps in implementation tend to occur at the same points in the SSR process over and over again.

An examination of the available cases suggests that, often, the primary obstacle to reform is that, while there is demand for SSR from the general populations of post-conflict states (as evidenced by the growth of non-state security and justice providers where state providers are seen as corrupt and/or ineffective), the regimes governing these states often face strong countervailing incentives not to meet this demand. These commonly include objections from existing security forces, the desire to keep direct, unmonitored control of security resources, and an unwillingness to dismantle politically useful tools such as semi-formal militias, etc. These regimes have proven very effective at

using a number of techniques, including stalling and playing donors off against one another, to stave off pressure for SSR results from international actors. These techniques are especially effective given that the modus operandi of these external actors – short funding cycles, a focus on easily quantifiable results – is not a match for the long-term efforts that experts believe are the necessary approaches for SSR progress.

Therefore, while this piece includes a non-comprehensive list of policy suggestions for African Union DDR/SSR policy in peace support operations, it also argues that most reforms will be ineffective unless accompanied by a substantial change in the incentives of recipient governments. How to effect this change is a critically necessary area for further research.

## Policy Recommendations

**Interim Stabilization:** The necessary pre-conditions for SSR and even DDR programs are often not present when a PSO (peace support operation) is deployed. Existing practice documents note the need to build toward these conditions through local capacity building. This piece further recommends -

- The creation of specialist units that can be deployed alongside other PSO forces to engage in systemic data collection (and later, analysis) regarding existing local security and justice arrangements in the PSO area of operations. This data can provide an important baseline for determining how existing structures can be adapted to security needs.
- That PSOs (in coordination with as many as other groups on the ground, local and international, as possible) attempt to build, not just capacity, but local support for and knowledge about SSR in advance of any national dialogue or nation-wide plan. Any increased level of local support and understanding is likely to bolster and improve national efforts when and if they are ultimately undertaken.

### Peace Agreements

- Even at the risk of delaying an agreement, when the AU is involved as a mediator (or advises another mediator), it should provide support for (and strongly encourage) belligerents to undertake a joint analysis of the security sector and the SSR reforms that will be necessary to maintain stability and provide basic security services during peacetime. To the greatest extent possible, a broader range of “Tier II” actors – local community groups, civil society, etc. – should be assisted in injecting their own evaluations of security problems and priorities into this exercise. This is likely to only partially address the tendency of antagonists to treat the security sector as a zero-sum source of spoils, but even modest progress would represent an improvement over recent processes.
- When the organization conducting the mediation and the organization tasked with assisting with the implementation of DDR & SSR provisions are not the same, efforts should be made to make sure they are coordinating closely throughout the mediation process, such that mediators do not encourage agreement on provisions where capacity does not exist to implement them.
- Peace agreements should include the establishment of joint mechanisms between the parties and outside implementers to resolve follow-on issues in such areas as the pace of DDR, eligibility criteria, etc. Experience suggests that not all relevant issues will be resolved in any one agreement, and a lack of an organized way to address them after the fact raises the risk that agreements will fail.

### National Ownership

- As the AU SSR Policy Framework asserts, national governments are responsible for setting their own SSR priorities, and no external intervener should attempt to determine these. However, as the framework further notes, “To be truly national, a Member State will include as many national stakeholders as possible into the SSR process.” Past experience suggests that where non-

government national stakeholders are not included, SSR efforts will not be successful. Further, in the past, inclusive national security plans and assessments have been conducted, but ignored during actual implementation. Therefore, the AU should not support (and encourage other donors not to support) SSR efforts that lack substantial **and ongoing** buy-in from a wide variety of these stakeholders. The AU should further offer support and encouragement for continuing consultations.

### DDR

- The AU should expend all possible efforts to ensure that, when a DDR program is launched, sufficient funds are available (preferably in a coordinated, pooled fund) to implement that program. Despite the urgency to conduct DDR in post-conflict environments, past cases of delays and gaps in programming have actually exacerbated conflict and reduced the confidence of participants in the process, making future efforts even more difficult.
- DDR programs should be accompanied by an education campaign to ensure that potential recipients have information about eligibility and expected benefits from a source other than their group leadership.
- The DDR literature has repeatedly stressed that “R” (i.e. reintegration) programs should be considered a higher priority than disarmament. In many cases, disarmament is a profoundly unrealistic goal until a basic level of stability and security has been achieved and maintained in a given area for some length of time. Given this development, the AU should be open to supporting (and encouraging others to support) programming that acknowledges this and reorders DDR activities accordingly.
- The AU should not support DDR programs that demobilize combatants into the police or other non-military security services without extensive vetting and retraining. When at all possible, local communities should play a role in vetting those who will be providing policing in their regions.

### *Non-State Security and Justice Providers*

- The AU Security Sector Reform unit should, in collaboration with the RECs (regional economic communities) and relevant African NGOs, develop practice notes regarding methods of engaging with non-state security and justice providers, derived from existing successful arrangements.

### *Evaluation & Exit Strategies*

- The AU should push back against the strong tendency for SSR efforts to devolve into train and equip missions by establishing evaluation metrics (likely in collaboration with the UN) that focus on human security, governance, and oversight goals such as:
  - Improved local perceptions of individual and community security;
  - Increased perceptions of the reliability and probity of local police; and
  - Increased civilian oversight over both local and national security providers.
- Use progress on these metrics to help establish an exit strategy and benchmarks for implementing and evaluating that strategy.

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