Security Sector Development in the Asia-Pacific:

Enabling effective governance in a complex security environment

By Dr. Rouben Azizian

Introduction

One of the fundamental vehicles of promoting effective and accountable security governance is a process referred to as Security Sector Development (SSD).

Since 2006, the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS) has been regularly conducting SSD workshops in and with a number of Asia-Pacific nations. The first such workshop was held in Kathmandu and was titled Security Sector Reform (SSR) in Nepal. The workshop's focus and content were consistent with the conventional perception of security sector reform as a process that primarily applies to post-conflict, crisis-affected or post-

authoritarian environments. The subsequent APCSS workshops, titled "Security Sector Development," have been much broader and long-term.

SSD and SSR: similarities and differences

The terms SSD and SSR are often used interchangeably. Sometimes they can be, as in the stated example of the Nepal workshop, but they can also reflect significantly different approaches. The concepts 'security sector' and 'security sector reform' first appeared in the late 1990s and were very much shaped by the transformation of security institutions in post-communist East Europe and peace operations in Africa. In response to a growing global demand

Integrated Maoists being commissioned and graduating from the Nepalese Military Academy in the summer of 2013.

and debate, the United Nations produced a number of guidelines for SSR and established an SSR Unit in its Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). The United Nations Secretary-General in its 2008 report refers to security sector reform as, "a process of assessment, review and implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation of the security sector, led by national authorities, and that has as its goal the enhancement of effective and accountable security for the State and its peoples, without discrimination and with full respect of human rights and the rule of law." (http://unssr.unlb.org/SSR/Definitions.aspx)

The above conceptual definitions easily apply to most countries in the world but the United Nations' practical implementation of SSR is limited to post-conflict

environments and is administratively positioned primarily within its Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). The UN's SSR, therefore, is more of a reactive and crisis management tool rather than an everyday responsibility. It is also a very much donor-driven process. Such an approach is consistent with the role of the United Nations and its agencies. Several countries in the Asia-Pacific fall under the category of post-conflict nations and have benefited from the United Nations' SSR support, Timor-Leste perhaps being the most prominent example.

Should, however, the goal of effective and accountable security governance be limited only to post-conflict, post-authoritarian or so-called failed or failing nations? Do the security sectors of countries that don't

U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and Japan's Minister of Defense Itsunori Onodera review an honor guard prior the Japan and U.S. Defense Ministerial meeting at the Defense Ministry in Tokyo, Japan. (DoD Photo)

Ms. Dominica Mai, First Assistant Secretary, Policy Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, Papua-New Guinea, gives her national perspective during plenary.

fall under the category meet that goal? Based on regular anonymous surveys and open discussions conducted at APCSS among course and workshop participants, most national security sectors are not sufficiently tuned and resourced to deal with the new complex international and domestic security environments.

Is it still true in the Asia-Pacific today that the most likely conflicts will originate from weak states, as was suggested in the post 9-11 period? The recent events in the East China Sea and South China Sea question that assumption. Accountable, inclusive and professional security sectors could mitigate potential conflicts between Asia-Pacific states by reducing unpredictable or arbitrary action.

Unlike the term SSR, SSD emphasizes a proactive, locally-driven and evolutionary set of actions that is expected of every national security sector,

large or small, developed or underdeveloped. SSD is a long-term process; it should be nationally-owned and rooted in the particular needs and conditions of the country in question.

SSD in the Asia-Pacific: key challenges and trends

SSD in the Asia-Pacific region has seen some progress as well as retreat.

While security is almost unanimously viewed in the region as broad and comprehensive, the security sector definition remains narrow and focused primarily on

the uniformed forces. This greatly inhibits its adaptation to dealing with security challenges of the 21st century. The apparent dissonance indicates a significant gap between overall security awareness and political or bureaucratic willingness to self-reform as well as a fear among the security forces to lose preeminence in security affairs.

The relationship between security and development remains controversial. There is stronger recognition in the region today of the key relevance of security for successful development. Less appreciated, however, is the fact that without successful national development, security sector capabilities would be limited or ineffective.

The legal basis for the functioning of security forces remains weak and incomplete. Challenges include controversial provisions in constitutions or gaps between constitutional and legal frameworks as well as agency-specific norms. Sequencing between legal and policy decisions is an-

other conundrum. The inter-agency discourse, generally very weak in the region, is almost absent at the stage of law formulation.

Authoritarian and corrupt democratic regimes significantly obstruct or delay the reformation of security forces. Democratization sometimes leads to the politicization of security forces through unauthorized political intervention in security forces' internal affairs.

The military in the region is increasingly reluctant to get involved in domestic politics but is often pressured by rival political parties to do so. Politicization of intelligence services is another wide-spread phenomenon. At the same time, government bodies that should be providing professional guidance and supervision, such as Ministries of Defense, are understaffed and under-resourced.

Inclusion of civil society, especially the non-governmental organizations, in the security sector remains problematic. Non-governmental organizations are viewed by many security practitioners as politicized, incompetent and often manipulated by foreign interests.

Correlation between the military and police forces is changing with the relative decline of military and the rise of police. Many regional countries seem unprepared to deal with this

Dr. Rouben Azizian chats with a workshop participant.

Security Sector Development in the Asia-Pacific *(Continued)*

reality. Attempts to retain strong militaries often lead to tasking them with duties outside of traditional defense role. Professionalization of police meanwhile is lagging far behind that of the military.

National security forces are increasingly involved in international and regional security operations. And yet the regional sharing of SSD information is very modest and well below the radar. It has to do with a traditional sense of sovereignty and a lack of trust with neighbors as well as the limited role of regional institutions.

SSD in the Asia-Pacific: recent accomplishments and best practices

Civil-Military Relations

There has been notable improvement in the civil-military relations of a number of regional countries.

Myanmar is in a period of transition from direct military rule to civilian control. The adoption of the 2008 Constitution, which mandated the creation of a parliament, legalized political participation, and instigated regularly-held elections, has transformed Myanmar's political system from a military junta to a presidential republic. If Myanmar is to

Elements of Effective & Accountable Security Sector

Legal and/or Constitutional Framework — Institutional System of Governance & Management — Capacities for Effective Security — Mechanism for Interaction Among Security Actors

Culture of Service

Source: UN SG Report, 13 Feb 2008

continue to evolve into a free and democratic system, civil-military relations must be fundamentally transformed. But encouraging the military's continued retrenchment from politics will be a challenging and long-term process. *(For a more detailed discussion of governance in Myanmar, see Dr. Alfred Oehlers' article in this issue)*

Five and a half years on from the coup d'état which brought Commodore Frank Bainimarama to power, and three years on from the abrogation of the country's constitution, the government of Fiji launched the process that should return Fiji to an elected constitutional democracy in 2014.

In September 2013, Fiji passed a new Constitution, a step raising both hopes and concerns among many who want democracy restored to the South Pacific island nation. The regime that seized power in a 2006 coup says the constitution is another step towards holding free elections next year. But critics say the constitution also curtails freedoms and is self-serving to the regime.

To prevent political manipulation of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), lawmakers in the Philippines are pushing legislation to shield military officers from political pressures. The Senate has passed a bill prescribing fixed terms for AFP chiefs of staff and

major service commanders and is keen to exempt lower-ranking officers from confirmation by the Commission on Appointments to ensure that appointments and promotions in the AFP are based on merit, fitness and qualifications instead of political connections.

Changes are looming in China's civil-military relations as well. Some analysts say the PLA's outspokenness reflects a need for structural overhauls to allow greater dialogue between civilian and military leaders and quicker, unified responses during crises. One suggestion is the creation of a U.S.-style National Security Council to better coordinate among different

What are the top 2 challenges to the effective functioning of your country's security institutions?

1. Lack of professionalism
2. Lack of security governance framework/rule of law
3. Lack of long-term security vision
4. Lack of public trust and/or understanding
5. Inadequate whole-of-government coordination
6. Other
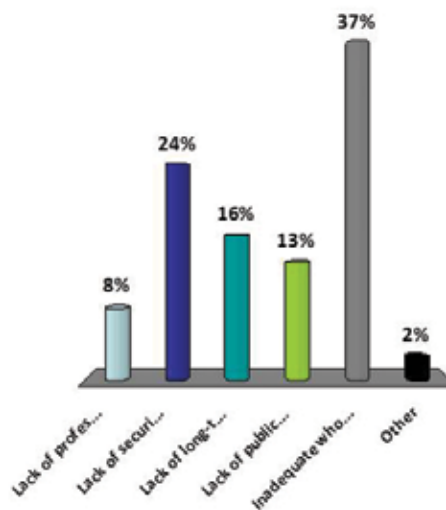
Poll from Security Sectory Development Workshop held at APCSS in 2013.

branches of government. Another proposal advocates more civilians on the Military Commission. Several Chinese academics have mentioned the desirability of gradually shifting the Communist Party control of the military to the executive branch.

Security Strategy and Law Development

More and more Asia-Pacific countries are embracing long-term and integrated security thinking by launching national security strategies or policies, as well as security legislation.

The Indonesian government has been pushing to get a wide-ranging national security bill passed by the House of Representatives. The draft law defines national security as efforts to protect "all aspects of national life." The legislation seeks to oblige the government to provide workable solutions to such problems as food, water and energy shortages; and destruction of the environment. Social issues such as poverty, injustice and corruption are also listed as threats in the draft.

The opposition lawmakers have been, however, showing reluctance to deliberate on the National Security Law over persistent fears that, if passed, the law would revive militarism and subvert democracy. Several of them have questioned the Government's definitions of what constitutes a threat to national security, as well as the President's right to define threats through decrees.

On June 7, 2013, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe approved legislation to create a National Security Council (NSC), which will replace the existing Security Council. Prime Minister Abe wants to ensure that the NSC will be able to make prompt decisions when necessary, but also that it properly deliberates long-term policy. The 2013 bill makes two major changes. First, it strengthens the role of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Office in national security policy-making. The bill also creates a new position, national security advisor, and establishes a sec-

retariat for the council. The second objective is to make the NSC the 'headquarters' for intelligence on national security and crisis management. Japan experts argue however that it is still unclear whether the NSC will become a central decision-making body or remain just an advisory institution. The increased membership of the Cabinet Office may prevent the prompt decision-making that the bill seeks.

The Indian Government has decided to order a reappraisal of its security architecture. The government-formed National Task Force (NTF) is to assess the current state of the country's national security management system, project the threats to national security that could be expected in the future, examine whether India has the required capabilities to be able to meet those threats, identify existing deficiencies in capabilities, recommend action to remove them, and suggest a time frame for removing them. However, several Indian defense and security analysts have pointed out the need to convince the serving officers of the necessity of changes, reforms, new thinking, and new concepts and ideas to achieve the desired end results. Unless that happens, any review will just end up being an exercise in futility.

Security Sector Development in the Asia-Pacific *(Continued)*

On January 23, 2013, Australia launched its first National Security Strategy. The strategy provides the overarching framework to guide Australia's national security efforts over the next five years and marks a new national security era in which the dramatic shift of economic and strategic weight to Asia dominates Australia's national security outlook. The other shift in Australia's strategic thinking is to view state-based conflict as more important and dangerous than threats presented by non-state actors, as was the case in the post-September 11 period. The points of possible conflict named in the strategy are: the South and East China Sea, the Korean Peninsula, and India/Pakistan.

Papua New Guinea has started developing its first-ever National Security Policy. PNG's Prime Minister Peter O'Neil has identified the development of a National Security Policy as one of his Government's priorities, given the economic boom the country will soon experience, and threats from both external and internal factors. A National Security Policy Technical Working Group has been put in place to formulate PNG's security policy, which will be

Speech of President Aquino during the signing of the GPH-MILF Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro, October 15, 2012 (Official Photo)

aligned with the PNG Vision 2050.

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR)

In terms of traditional SSR issues, such as a post-conflict security sector restructuring, there have been some important breakthroughs in the region as well.

Nepal has successfully ended a lengthy and difficult process of settling the future of former Maoist combatants by inducting the last batch of Maoist combatants into the state army. The 1,462 ex-combatants selected for army training were commissioned as officer cadets. Thousands of former Maoist fighters who

chose retirement received government cash handouts. In 2007, U.N. monitors put the strength of the Maoist fighting force at 19,602. This marks a milestone in the Nepali peace process that began with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in November 2006.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines Internal Peace and Security Plan (AFP IPSP) "Bayanihan" represents a change of paradigm in dealing with internal armed threats. It emphasizes that the primary focus of the AFP in the conduct of its operations is "winning the peace" and not just defeating the enemy. In order to win the peace, the AFP IPSP shall be anchored on two strategic approaches: The

Whole of Nation Approach and the People-Centered Security/Human Security Approach. (http://www. scribd.com/doc/46302366/ AFP-Internal-Peace-and-Security-Plan-IPSP-BAYA-NIHAN)

The subsequent framework agreement signed between the Philippines Government and an Islamist rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), fighting for a Bangsamoro homeland, is aimed at finally ending a decades-long war between the two sides. It provides for a new autonomous region in part of the south where Muslims are a majority. The draft agreement would give the leaders of Bangsamoro more political and economic powers, and provides for the gradual transfer of law

Solomon Islands - RAMSI Participating Police Force Commander, Paul Osborne presents a gift to Duidui ward's Provincial Member of Parliament, Silas Chekana during the Isuna police post closure ceremony October 3, 2011 (Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI)'s photostream)

enforcement from the army to the Bangsamoro police in a "phased and gradual manner." The framework also promises the people a "just and equitable share" of the region's abundant natural resources, and pledges to address the needs of poverty-stricken communities. Trickier still are negotiations over what is called "normalization," that is, disarming the former guerrillas of the MILF while pulling the Philippine army back from the field. Here the two sides remain far apart. The government is keen to ensure that the MILF put their weapons "beyond use" as soon as possible. The MILF, on the other hand, wants help to create new livelihoods for its former fighters. That, it insists, will be the

best guarantee that they will not soon return to armed struggle.

Despite its current hurdles, the framework has acted as an inspiration to those caught up in internal conflicts elsewhere in South-East Asia. For instance, the Thai government has for the first time started formal talks with its own Muslim rebels in the south of the country. Meanwhile, the MILF reports that negotiators for the armed wings of the Kachin, Karen and other groups in Myanmar have visited it to learn how it won the Bangsamoro state from the Philippine government. The ongoing negotiations have ramifications well beyond the Philippines.

The military side of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) ended on June 30, 2013, 10 years after hundreds of soldiers, police and civilians from Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu landed in the Solomon Islands to conduct what was to become a successful experiment in regional cooperation. The fundamental objective of RAMSI was to help the Solomon Islands lay the foundations for long-term stability, security and prosperity in the wake of a communal conflict that had begun in 1998. One of the most significant achievements of RAMSI is the immediate restoration of law and order,

including the successful collection of guns from former militants. RAMSI will now focus of providing police support to the Solomon Islands.

Conclusion

The comprehensive and fluid international and national security environments require a diverse, inclusive and adaptive security sector. Asia-Pacific nations are gradually transitioning to the broader definition of the security sector in step with their historical, cultural and security experience.

National security institutions are more amenable today than in the past to the idea that civil society should be involved in security sector development. The perceived legitimacy of the security sectors depends in great deal on how the issues and concerns of civil society are being addressed. Ideally, a whole-of-government coordination should lead to a whole-of-nation consensus on key security processes and decisions.

A successful development of the security sector requires political will, strong national ownership and competent change management. It should include incentives for innovation and disincentives for sticking with status quo. Effective SSD is an ongoing process and not a one-time reform.

Whither governance in Myanmar?

OpEd by Dr. Al Oehlers

The challenge is huge. And the stakes high.

How do you overhaul a pattern of governance – reviled by many as oppressive – so deeply entrenched and in place for over 50 years?

How do you overcome opacity, inertia and fear, to inject greater democratic oversight and accountability, inclusiveness, transparency, predictability, rules-based behaviors, and other defining hallmarks of good and effective governance?

How do you do so at a pace and scope that meets the ever-rising expectations of citizens and the international community?

And how do you maintain control of myriad challenges and priorities, coordinating wide ranging reforms and sustaining momentum in the transition to a more open, democratic society, with a modern competitive market economy, and a stable, enduring peace at long last among warring ethnic groups within the nation?

Failure to do so would involve more than just dashing the hopes of the more than 50 million people of Myanmar. The alarming prospect of a return to the dark past looms large, as well as the tragic descent into a greater chaos of ethnic and sectarian strife.

Though at the cusp of a greater future, Myanmar remains delicately poised at a juncture where all the good that has been achieved, may yet unravel. The threshold or tipping point for assured progress – if there is one – remains elusive and has yet to be crossed.

That is not to say progress has not been made. Compared with just a few years ago, the reformist administration of former general, President U Thein Sein, has surprised many with the breathtaking speed it has acted on a wide range of reforms, spanning the political, economic, and social priorities facing the country. All this is goodness, and while some critical observers have pointed out much more could be done, a very promising start exists.

But despite this, most who know Myanmar well confess to an unnerving sense of unease about the whole reform effort. Though welcome, worries persist that reforms are only superficial and skin-deep, insufficiently embedded and effectively implemented, and therefore, reversible.

While leaders may race ahead announcing reform after reform, an overwhelmed civil service struggles to keep pace translating well-intentioned ideals into practical and tangible improvements in everyday lives.

A canny business community, meanwhile, unsure of the durability of the reform effort, hesitates on crucial investment decisions, with serious repercussions for much needed employment generation.

Fast approaching elections in 2015 add to this climate of uncertainty.

Though the apparent frontrunner is the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, such is the fluidity of politics in Myanmar that outright victory for the NLD is by no means assured, nor her claim on the coveted Presidency. Hard-nosed political number crunchers even now suggest the possibility of an unstable coalition government is a very real prospect, giving cause to doubt sustained progress towards governance improvements post-election. Under normal circumstances, such an outcome may perhaps be tolerable. But circumstances in Myanmar are anything but normal and may prove unforgiving.

Disappointed and disillusioned voters may not be so patient as to let democratic processes run their natural course to resolve such political uncertainty. Latent sectarian tensions – whether of a political, religious or ethnic nature – may be harnessed by extremist groups to stoke unrest for political ends. The recent outbreaks of

Lt.Gen. Leaf visits Myanmar's National Defense College.

Yangon, Myanmar - April 1, 2012: Supporters of Aung San Suu Kyi wave flags, outside the National League For Democracy's headquarters, on the day of the by-election. (Photo: El-BrandenBrazil)

religious violence across the country serve as timely reminders of the existence of these tensions just beneath the veneer of civility and tolerance in much social and political life in Myanmar. One must hope the tragedy of such violence should never ensue.

They say history is a good guide to the future. If that is the case, then there is even more to worry about. Though the façade of military rule during the last 50 years may give the impression of stability and continuity, dramatic reversals and abrupt political changes are no strangers to the political history of Myanmar. One is reminded of the promising democratic dawn of post-independence Burma (as it was then known), the ensuing political upheavals, and eventual military coup that snuffed out parliamentary democracy.

Then, the pretext was a political and economic chaos presided over what were alleged to be incompetent, self-serving politicians – a situation anathema to a military privileging order and stability, and with a sacrosanct mission to preserve the unity and integrity of the nation.

Might history repeat itself in the aftermath of elections in 2015? Dare we think the unthinkable?

Much of the responsibility for averting such a prospect, of course, lies with political leaders in Myanmar, who must exercise leadership qualities of the highest order to navigate the political conundrums that will emerge. But the international community, too, has an important role, bearing witness, encouraging, supporting and providing assistance where possible.

Quite properly, much of the focus of the international community to date has been on assistance to the nascent civil society of Myanmar, strengthening political institutions and cultures in anticipation of forthcoming elections, and building much needed capacities in governance. But what is all too often neglected – due probably to its highly controversial nature – is engagement with the military: the Tatmadaw.

Somewhat paradoxically, there is arguably no more crucial actor to the future of the democratic development of Myanmar than the Tatmadaw. After

decades in power, the influence of the military is pervasive.

While a very important dynamic in curbing such influence undoubtedly rests in the greater empowerment of democratic institutions and civil society, towards which, much international assistance is now directed, it is equally important to complement such an approach with one that cultivates an inclination on the part of the Tatmadaw to willingly relinquish such influence and transition to a role and mission more consistent with democratic principles.

Maintaining the isolation of the Tatmadaw will not accomplish this.

Instead, a carefully designed engagement to provide exposure to international norms and best practices and comparable experiences of the evolving roles and responsibilities of the military during democratic transitions may prove helpful in assuaging some of the anxieties of the Tatmadaw of the uncharted and possibly turbulent political future Myanmar is headed towards, and assist this crucial actor in finding a niche for itself in the new democratic system that will evolve.

A long road remains to be traversed in strengthening governance in Myanmar. Numerous risks are attendant on this process, and setbacks will invariably occur. Continued vigilance will remain essential to prevent any derailment of this process. Moreover, crucial as it is for the future of Myanmar, success in this effort holds wider significance for regional development and security. As members of the international community, it behooves us to remain invested in this process and to canvass all possibilities of lending support, even if controversial. After all, the stakes are high. Shouldn't all options be considered?

Security Sector Development workshop participants pose with APCSS leadership and faculty for their official group photo in front of APCSS.

Captain Alois Ur Tom, Defense Chief of Staff, Papua New Guinea Defence Force, engages other workshop participants during plenary.

The Honorable Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Member of Parliament, Department on Climate Change and Environment in Bangladesh, talks to another participant during a breakout session.

Security Sector Development: National Priorities and Regional Approaches

"Security Sector Development: National Priorities and Regional Approaches" was the focus of a workshop held July 29 through August 1, at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies.

The workshop brought together teams from Bangladesh, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea as well as an attendee from Myanmar. Overall, there were 20 international participants and subject matter experts, as well as a number of U.S. attendees.

Security Sector Development is a common challenge, as well as an opportunity for all states, large or small, developed or developing. Each country has its own unique historic, cultural, socio-economic and political features and security priorities shaping the development of its security sector.

According to workshop academic lead Dr. Rouben Azizian, "There is therefore no template for security sector development. At the same time, national security sector development can benefit from international best

Brig. Gen. Jan Pieter from Indonesia shares his perspectives at the workshop.

practices and often directly depends on international support and cooperation."

The four-day workshop included panel discussions on "SSD, International Trends and Best Practices," "Governance and Management of the Security Sector," "The Role of Law and Governance in SSD," and "Roles and Responsibilities of Security Institutions." Working group sessions focused on nation specific projects.

The workshop concluded with presentations by each country team on recommended next steps and specific projects for national security sector development.