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The future of EU security sector assistance:
LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

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This paper reflects on the future of the EU's role in working with foreign security actors. It does so in the context of debates on how to better equip EU external action to deal with conflict and instability, including through a European Peace Facility, while also operationalising the linkages between security and development. Our analysis looks at the support to security sector reform (SSR) as an instrument that resides at this nexus and faces various challenges at the strategic and operational level. Such challenges include balancing short- and long-term objectives, reconciling interests and values, ensuring context sensitivity and overcoming bureaucratic and cultural divisions between policy communities.

Drawing on practices from the EU and three member states (Germany, France and the Netherlands) in the domain of security sector reform, the paper provides insights on how such challenges can be practically dealt with. First, it argues that a comprehensive SSR policy not only requires a spelled-out strategy, but also a continued dialogue process between security, peace and development communities at the strategic and policy level, involving experts and civil society actors. Second, SSR needs to build on localised approaches that are informed by political context analysis and build on existing reform processes or windows of opportunity to foster change through targeted interventions. Third, cooperation with security actors should consider the risks in doing harm or negatively impacting conflict dynamics. Practical tools exist to manage risks, but negative effects can never be completely controlled. It also requires donors to invest in political analysis capacities and security expertise. A future EPF should be integrated in an overarching SSR support policy and wider political approach to peace and security to be successful.

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Acronyms

AFD	French Development Agency
APF	African Peace Facility
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
AU	African Union
BMZ	German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development
CBSD	Capacity-Building in support of Security and Development
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DCAF	Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance
DCSD	Directorate of Cooperation on Security and Defence
DDD	Directorate of Sustainable Development
DG DEVCO	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
DGRIS	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Strategy of the French ministry of defence
DSH	Directorate for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid
DVB	Directorate for Security Policy
EC	European Commission
ECA	European Court of Auditors
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
DG ECHO	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EEAS	European External Action Service
EPF	European Peace Facility
EU	European Union
EUCAP	European Union capacity building mission
EUTM	European Union military training mission
FPI	Service for Foreign Policy Instruments
GIGA	German Institute of Global and Areas Studies
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IcSP	Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace
IFRI	French Institute of International Relations
IISS	International Institute for Strategic Studies
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISREM	Institut de Recherche Stratégique de l'Ecole Militaire
JCI	International Justice Cooperation

MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MFF	Multiannual financial framework
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali
MJ&S	Ministry of Justice and Security
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
OCHA	United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
SSD	Security Sector Development
SSR	Security sector reform
UN	United Nations
USIP	United States Institute of Peace

1. Introduction

As the EU is facing the consequences of growing violent conflict close to its external borders and is struggling to adapt to geopolitical shifts, EU decision-makers have been seeking new tools to better deal with conflict and instability. This trend has been further corroborated by the EU's growing aspirations to become a credible global actor in the security domain.

A number of developments can be highlighted in this context. First, 2018 saw the launch of a new 'Capacity-Building for Security and Development' (CBSD) initiative to support military activities that contribute to sustainable development. Second, in the past years EU development aid and EU Trust Funds have increasingly been used for projects with a clear security dimension. Third, member states are discussing a proposal for the creation of a European Peace Facility (EPF) to finance a range of assistance measures for foreign military actors in the form of training, advice, infrastructure or equipment.

Such developments have triggered a debate on how security sector assistance can and should fit with broader EU external action. Historically, this has relied on development cooperation and trade as its main instruments. During the last two decades, the EU has built its capacities and instruments for security cooperation. This has included the introduction and development of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) to deploy crisis management operations and security capacity-building missions in third countries, as well as the creation of the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), to fund a range of activities on the nexus between security and development.

Simultaneously, EU policymakers have invested much energy in designing more holistic approaches to violent conflict. Various policy statements have proposed a 'security-development nexus' approach, a 'comprehensive approach' or, more recently, an 'integrated approach' to violent conflict. These argue that a combined use of different instruments, including security, conflict prevention, governance support, resilience and longer-term development aid, is required to address conflicts more effectively and build sustainable peace. In policy discourse, the concept of supporting security sector reform (SSR)[1] gives more concrete direction on how assistance to foreign security actors can be integrated within a development agenda. SSR is therefore focused on combining operational security sector assistance with support to the sector's governance in terms of accountability, civilian oversight, and respect for human rights and the rule of law.

This paper is written against the background of ongoing negotiations on the creation of a European Peace Facility as well as a more general redesign of the EU's external action funding instruments in the EU's new multiannual financial framework (MFF) 2021-2027. It analyses how EU security sector assistance can be reconciled with broader aspirations of promoting sustainable development and peace. More specifically, the paper provides analysis and collects lessons learned from recent experiences within the EU institutions and from EU member states working on SSR.

[1] Throughout the document, when referring to SSR in short, the meaning of the text is the 'provision of support to SSR'. This shorter form has been chosen for ease of reading.

The paper addresses the following policy questions:

- Which lessons can be learned from the current EU instruments in terms of advancing coherence and complementarity between security and development objectives and the EU's ambition to reconcile values and interests at the operational level? Specific attention will be paid to risk management, conflict sensitivity and doing no harm, and combining short-term responses with long-term engagement.
- What lessons can be learned from experiences from other actors that have engaged in the domain of SSR, i.e. Germany, France and the Netherlands?
- How can such experiences help conceptually orient and operationalise the EU approach to SSR under the next budgetary cycle of the EU, including the EPF?

Research for this paper is based on both an extensive document analysis and interviews with a total of 20 key informants held in Brussels, The Hague, Paris and Berlin. Findings are presented as follows: Section 2 elaborates on a number of challenges and dilemmas donors typically face when engaging in SSR. Section 3 looks at SSR approaches and practices in the EU, Germany, the Netherlands and France. The analysis focuses on policy developments, institutional architectures and funding arrangements, as well as existing practices to advance holistic approaches to SSR, manage risks and avoid doing harm. Rather than comparing the different cases, the analysis highlights a number of interesting elements from each case that are relevant for the broader debate on SSR policy and practice. Section 4 presents emerging observations on how to operationalise an SSR approach in the future EU budgetary cycle.

2. The challenges of supporting security actors

Since the introduction of the CBSD initiative, the EU has a dedicated amount of money to spend on capacity-building activities in support of military actors for actions with a sustainable development objective. Under the next MFF 2021-2027, it is foreseen that CBSD will be integrated into the 'Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument' (NDICI). In addition, the proposed off-budget European Peace Facility (EPF) would further equip the EU, as of 2021, with a mechanism to fund a range of activities under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) with military and defence implications. This would include running costs of partners' peace operations and military and defence-related capacity-building to partners, including through the provision of lethal equipment (EEAS 2018). The EPF as proposed would therefore not simply be a repackaging of existing mechanisms (notably the APF), but would endow the EU with a new tool for military capacity-building assistance that it did not have before (Deneckere 2019).

Through CBSD and the EPF, the EU is further expanding its scope from its traditional focus on non-military soft power tools and adapting itself to changing political, strategic and operational demands in a growingly unpredictable geopolitical environment. At the same time, various policy documents, including the 2016 EU Global Strategy (HR/VP 2016) and the 2017 Council conclusions on the integrated approach to external conflict and crisis (Council of the EU 2018a), call for a more joined-up approach to security and development that seeks to end violence and foster human security and long-term recovery. The documents also commit to using the EU's security and development instruments to engage in SSR by enhancing partners' security capacities with respect for the rule of law. Likewise, the 2017 European Consensus on Development (EP, Council of the EU and EC 2017) recognises the nexus by linking security sector engagement with issues of democratic control and accountability, human security and sustainable development. As such, EU policy on SSR aligns with the guidance of the OECD DAC on security sector reform and governance, which is generally accepted as the global consensus framework on SSR.

In this light, both the CBSD initiative and the EPF highlight the following challenges and dilemmas:

- **Balancing interests and values**: Traditionally, EU external action has been branded as being values-based and distant from narrow national interests. Yet with the turn towards 'principled pragmatism' as outlined in the EU Global Strategy, how can an interest-driven model be reconciled with an ambition to promote human rights, poverty alleviation and the rule of law? Training and equipping security forces of autocratic or fragile states comes with risks of misuse, human rights violations or strengthening conflict dynamics. Hence there is a need to ensure the necessary safeguards, risk assessments and monitoring systems, backed up by SSR expertise to provide support at the field level through strategic analysis and advice to local security stakeholders.

- **Stabilisation versus transforming security sector governance**: Engaging with security actors confronts donors with a dilemma on their ambition level. Conceptually, SSR goes beyond technical 'train and equip' assistance to a more political vehicle for change in governance to make a security apparatus more effective and accountable. In practice, some voices argue that enabling security actors to stabilise conflict through operational support is the only realistic goal, while others point at the risk of increasing the security capabilities of autocratic regimes if not combined with broader governance reforms (Bärwaldt 2018).

- **Short-term responses versus long-term engagement**: The discussion on the respective benefits of short-term and long-term interventions has been a concern for some while. Short-term responses can be attractive for political leaders who want to show decisiveness and see quick results. Smaller short-term interventions allow donors to be more adaptive and risk-prone in conflict-affected regions, test innovative solutions and express political engagement in peace processes. Yet transformative SSR requires a long-term change process. A growing tendency of short-termism therefore risks undermining predictability of support and favouring crisis-driven spending to high-profile conflicts over more targeted and sustained engagement.

- **Speed and flexibility can undermine local ownership**: Growing geopolitical uncertainty, protracted conflicts close to Europe and domestic calls for a more responsive EU external action are pushing the EU towards greater flexibility. The EPF will be designed to respond speedily and flexibly to urgent situations. Adaptability of support programmes is needed to use windows of opportunity when they arise or change course when the situation requires (Bärwaldt 2018). At the same time, speed and flexibility risks narrowing the space to build sustainable relations of trust and dialogue with local stakeholders if the changed course is not managed and coordinated in time (Sayós Monràs, Di Ciommo and Sherriff 2017).

- **Adapting to local realities**: To be successful, SSR needs to be rooted in a good understanding of local realities, needs, conflict dynamics and power balances. That means that interventions should be informed by solid conflict analysis. It should also ensure that it addresses local priorities and needs based on assessments and consultations with local actors from the government as well as civil society.

- **Pursuing an integrated approach in a fragmented bureaucracy**: Enabling responses to urgent threats while developing an effective and legitimate security apparatus requires a coherent use of instruments. Yet quests for coherence often face firm divisions between the development and security spheres in terms of concepts, principles, policy objectives and rules of the game. This divide is evident in growing concerns over a 'securitisation' of development aid, whereby security narratives are used to legitimise the use of such aid to serve security interests in ways that deviate from the established modus operandi of development cooperation (Stern and Öjendal 2010: 5-30). This highlights the challenge of bringing development and security communities closer together, while also ensuring that the different aspects of the nexus receive the required attention and resources.

- **Contributing to multi-stakeholder partnerships**: In the field of SSR, there is a whole range of actors involved, including bilateral donors giving direct support to security actors, implementing agencies, international organisations such as the UN, NATO or the AU, as well as civil society organisations. Each of these have the ambition to play a role in (post-)conflict situations, yet also have their own mandates, institutional interests and capacities. The challenge for the EU is how it can be relevant in a field with many actors and contribute to a multi-partnership approach to SSR that recognises the strengths, added value and limitations of the EU. This is all the more important to show the complementarity of the EU institutions vis-à-vis the member states, who still keep close control over the EU's security policy, with several member states active in SSR support through their own national institutions and programmes.

The next section of this paper will look into four specific cases of European donors (the EU institutions, Germany, France and the Netherlands) and discuss their specific approaches to supporting SSR. Section 4 will then build on the donor-specific analyses to formulate more general observations and identify a number of lessons and good practices to address the dilemmas and challenges listed above.

3. SSR practices and lessons from European donors

This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of how different European donors have approached the challenges and dilemmas listed above. In doing so, it presents four case studies, focused on the experiences of the EU institutions (section 3.1), Germany (3.2), France (3.3) and the Netherlands (3.4). Each case provides a short discussion on existing policy frameworks, institutional architectures and funding arrangements, mechanisms to pursue a holistic SSR approach as well as risk management systems and conflict sensitivity tools. Rather than comparing each donor, the donor cases aim to capture the diversity in approaches and identify a number of good practices and potential lessons for future policy-making on SSR, notably in the context of the EU. For that purpose, each donor case ends with a short summary of key observations that will further feed into a broader analysis presented in chapter 4.

3.1. EU experiences with SSR

Overview: Main EU policies and instruments for SSR

Key policy document			
Title	Year	Institution	Key features on SSR
Joint communication on EU-wide strategic framework to support security sector reform (EC and HR/VP 2016)	2016	EEAS and European Commission	Reflects OECD DAC definition of SSR. focuses on transforming a country's security system to realise both human and state security. security and justice institutions, training, (non-lethal) equipment, support for civilian oversight mechanisms and community security.
Current instruments with SSR dimensions			
Instrument		Institution	Key features on SSR
EU development instruments (European Development Fund, Development Cooperation Instrument)		DG DEVCO	Long-term, developmental approaches to SSR. For the period 2014-2020, 16 country programmes explicitly refer to the governance and rule of law in the security sector (EC and HR/VP 2016). The EU spent USD 265 million on ODA-eligible SSR activities in 2017, and USD 313 million in 2016.[2]
African Peace Facility		DG DEVCO	The APF allows the EU to support African-led peace support operations (e.g. with equipment or payment of troop allowance). It also contains a capacity-building component that helps keep the APSA institutions running, for example by covering salary payments of African Union (AU) Commission staff (Mackie et al. 2017). EUR 2.7 billion was disbursed via the APF between 2004 and 2018.

[2] As per the OECD DAC ODA code 15210 'security system management and reform', amounts in 2017 constant prices. Source: https://stats.oecd.org/qwids.

EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa	DG DEVCO and DG NEAR	Focus on tackling root causes of migration in Africa, including scope to strengthen security in key regions (e.g. in Central Mali).[3] A total of EUR 4.9 billion pledged to Trust Fund, but no specific figures on SSR available (EC 2020).
Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)	FPI and DG DEVCO	Supports short- and medium-term projects SSR dimensions (e.g. support to Central African ministry of defence on civilian control). IcSP funding is also provided in support of DCAF.
CBSD Initiative	FPI and DG DEVCO	An initiative under the IcSP with specific funding for non-lethal capacity-building to military actors with a sustainable development objective. For the period 2018-2020 it has a total budget of EUR 100 million. It excludes regular military spending such as combat training or arms.
CSDP missions	EEAS and Council	Requires unanimous decision by member states. Focus on strengthening police, rule of law and civil administration, and increasingly also on border management, irregular migration, countering terrorism and violent extremism…(Council of the EU 2018b). Through the CSDP, the EU has deployed civilian and military missions to support foreign security actors through military training (e.g. Mali, Somalia and the Central African Republic), advice on reforms (Iraq and Ukraine), supporting border police (Libya) and broader civilian capacity-building activities forces (Mali, Niger).

Finding a path between 'train and equip', institution-building and system reform

The EU institutions have increased their support to SSR through financial and non-financial instruments since the early 2000s. Policy statements issued in 2005 and 2006 (one for CSDP missions and one for Commission-funded action) provided a conceptual framework for SSR (ADE 2011). A new joint communication on SSR by the European Commission and the EEAS was adopted in 2016 to adapt to the post-Lisbon Treaty institutional environment and growing EU foreign policy ambitions (see Table 1). Although this new policy document reflects contemporary thinking on SSR, EU practice is marked by disagreements on political priorities and by legal constraints linked to working with military actors (Deneckere 2019 and Schröder and Süßenbach 2018: 55-61). Indeed, SSR practice is often pulled towards different objectives of short-term stabilisation, helping security institutions in managing conflicts and making security sector governance more accountable. This is due to a highly fragmented institutional architecture and a diffuse decision-making process in which the European Commission is taking the lead over developmental approaches to SSR, while security instruments such as CSDP missions remain largely within the remit of member states and are subject to intergovernmental decision-making procedures, with the EEAS in a supporting role.

The EU's developmental branch, spearheaded by the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) in particular, approaches SSR as long-term institutional support. Under the EU's development programmes, significant amounts are spent on SSR

[3] See e.g. European Commission. 2017. Programme d'Appui au Renforcement de la Sécurité dans les régions de Mopti et de Gao et à la gestion des zones frontalières (PARSEC Mopti-Gao).

(such as law enforcement or border management) and related aspects of justice, governance or civil society in various partner countries. However, a 2011 evaluation concluded that EU SSR assistance tended to focus overwhelmingly on enhancing institutional capacities of state security and justice bodies, yet with limited focus on providing direct security benefits for citizens (ADE 2011). A more recent evaluation of EU SSR support in the enlargement and neighbourhood countries confirmed this observation and showed that the EU managed to strengthen institutional capacities of security institutions, while room for improvement remains in realising its ambitions on human rights, democracy, good governance and the rule of law (Penska et al. 2018).

In addition to development programmes, CSDP missions have been a central SSR instrument for the EU, yet from the perspective of security policy. While 'security sector reform' is often used as an umbrella term to designate CSDP missions' engagement, in practice they favour 'train and equip' models to help security actors to establish a monopoly of force, but with limited attention to questions of legitimacy, accountability and public acceptance or human security. For instance, EUCAP Sahel Niger has provided successfully training and equipment to fight terrorism and organised crime in Niger, but has made little progress on setting up internal control and audit capacities (ECA 2018b). Missions also prefer to provide training directly, rather than supporting local training facilities that would foster more ownership and sustainability.[4] Moreover, despite their ambitious objectives, missions tend to have relatively short mandate durations (e.g. 1-2 years). The need for regular mandate renewal creates uncertainty and makes it more difficult to plan activities, run procurement cycles for equipment or services and draw up meaningful exit strategies that allows the host country to become more autonomous (ECA 2018b). This is exacerbated by a very high staff turnover of civilian staff and usually short-term (6-monthly) assignments for military staff.

The capacity-building for security and development (CBSD) initiative has been explicitly adopted as a new building block of the EU's SSR framework. Its use is therefore subject to a number of conditions. These include agreement with the host country, the exclusion of lethal equipment, the absence of alternative (non-military) partner country entities that can deliver the services and an overall orientation to a sustainable development objective. The value of the CBSD initiative therefore is that it can help operationalise the security-development nexus and foster a degree of understanding between both communities on their respective approaches and constraints.[5] In reality, the foreseen development impact of CBSD initiatives is often based more on good faith than on a spelled-out, context-specific theory of change.[6] The narrow focus of CBSD on supporting military actors (e.g. to secure the airport of Mopti in Mali, support the Central African government for arms and ammunition stockpile management or rehabilitate military camps) also limits the scope for more societal or governance-related aspects of SSR.[7]

The African Peace Facility as the backbone of the EU-AU partnership

The EU's African Peace Facility (APF) has been an essential building block to not only help the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)[8] develop and run, but also give it legitimacy as a success story of African integration, as APF support has helped the AU create the conditions for a state formation process (in Somalia) or lay the ground for the deployment of a UN peacekeeping operation (Mali, Central African Republic). Notwithstanding inefficiencies in APF implementation, the combination of support to operational deployments with institutional capacity-building has contributed to building a more mature, long-term partnership between the EU and the AU. This has been backed by frequent opportunities for political

4 Interview with key stakeholder, 16 January 2020.
5 Interview with key stakeholder, 6 November 2019.
6 *Ibid*.
7 Interview with key stakeholder, 16 January 2020.
8 The African Peace and Security Architecture is the main framework of the African Union to address peace and security challenges at the continental or regional level. It has been in place since 2002.

dialogue and regular interactions at the operational level (Mackie et al. 2017). However, the APF's model of capacity-building has overall been too focused on keeping the APSA structures running (by supporting basic operational costs), rather than making the APSA a more professional and self-sufficient security architecture (Mackie et al. 2017). Ongoing developments within the AU to mobilise more own resources through the introduction of a 0.2% levy provide an opportunity for the EU to adapt its modalities to support the AU's quest for more financial independence in the long run (Apiko and Miyandazi 2019).

A growing European sensitivity towards the consequences of conflict in Africa has also confronted the EU with the limitations of working through the APSA to address short-term security objectives. This results not only from the fact that APSA structures are still not mature enough to effectively manage complex peace operations, but also from the intra-regional political dynamics in Africa, which, at times, make collective African or regional responses difficult. Consequently, the EU has sought more creative solutions to advance its security interests through collaboration with ad-hoc security coalitions (e.g. the G5 Sahel Joint Force) through APF resources. In the long run, this risks draining energy and legitimacy away from the APSA as an institutional management and accountability framework (Locke 2018).

Finally, the bulk of APF resources has been spent on sustaining military operations. While this could be justified in situations of urgent crises, reports have indicated a serious underfunding of civilian capabilities in African peace operations such as human rights monitoring or post-conflict reconstruction. This underfunding partially relates to the comparatively little attention given to these civilian aspects by African governments (Mackie et al. 2017). Yet recently, the EU has signed a technical arrangement with the UN and the G5 Sahel for the development of a human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework for the G5 Sahel Joint Force, which receives EU funding under the APF. The framework is developed by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to mainstream human rights and international humanitarian law compliance and the protection of civilians in the planning and conduct of operations. This is done, for instance, through tools for improved selection and screening of mission personnel, adapted training curricula, and complaint mechanisms (OHCHR 2019). The arrangement provides a promising example of how support to African peace operations can be broadened to more civilian, human rights and human security-related aspects within the broader SSR paradigm.

Tools for risk management and conflict analysis require stronger staffing capacity

The EU has a number of tools available to manage risks associated with security sector assistance and ensure that support is grounded in local realities. A common tool is the use of conflict analysis workshops, organised by the EEAS at headquarters level and in the field, to ensure conflict sensitivity and context-informed action. As part of the CBSD initiative, the European Commission has also recently developed a matrix to assess risks associated with military assistance. The risk assessment matrix helps to apply conflict sensitivity and do no harm principles in the design of CBSD actions and in the development of risk mitigation plans.[9] The matrix helps to assess policy risks (e.g. risks of negative perceptions of interventions or of jeopardising peace processes), human rights and gender risks (gender sensitivity, ability to monitor human rights violations) and project delivery risks (e.g. vulnerability to misuse, traceability of equipment). The risk assessment matrix provides a valuable tool that could also help inform EU SSR interventions more widely. However, as the matrix asks rather in-depth questions on the political and governance aspects of a country's security sector, it also depends on the availability of expertise on security institutions and political analysis, which is within the EU only thinly spread. There may be opportunities to work more with member states' defence attachés to avoid reducing the assessment becoming a tick-boxing exercise.[10]

[9] Interview with key informant, 6 November 2019.
[10] Interview with key informant, 16 January 2020.

More broadly speaking, EU delegations often lack staffing capacity and expertise to effectively manage security programmes and ensure in-depth and continuous political reporting. Though good efforts were made more recently to beef up military capacities at delegation level, the targets have not yet been reached. As a result, EU SSR interventions are often based on incomplete analysis (EC and HR/VP 2016). The EU funds a Security Sector Governance Facility to address this capacity shortage. This expert consortium, executed by the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance - DCAF, mobilises technical expertise and support to national reform processes upon request. The Facility also contributes to lessons learning and the development of new tools and methodologies within the EU context (DCAF, FBA and JCI N.d. and Schröder and Süßenbach 2018). Yet the absence of EU SSR experts in the field also has harmed the overall credibility of the EU among other actors, such as the US or the UK. They largely see the EU as a new kid on the block when it comes to SSR that is not yet taken very seriously.[11]

Finally, monitoring and evaluation are also the victim of sectoral divides. On the one hand, the European Commission has a strong tradition of evidence-based monitoring and evaluation, including regular external evaluations at the project, instrument and strategic level. The APF has various formal and informal monitoring mechanisms and regular evaluations that feed data and learning into political and operational dialogue between the EU and AU (Mackie et al. 2017). On the other hand, CSDP missions do not have a tradition of external results-based monitoring and evaluation beyond public audit reports or internal reporting and strategic reviews. Within missions, no benchmarking is done that addresses the SSR process, thus revealing the limited means for learning and adaptation (EC and HR/VP 2016). Steps have been undertaken to develop joint EEAS/Commission guidelines on the monitoring and evaluation of SSR. However, external observers of the EU regret the fact that this evaluation culture has not yet penetrated into the practice of the CSDP sphere.[12]

Expertise and theories of change for a more strategic approach to SSR

The sections above describe how the EU's approach to SSR is divided between a more developmental approach focused on long-term transformational institution-building and a more transactional approach focused on operational assistance. As instruments are divided between the Commission, Council and the EEAS, the institutional environment is not conducive to collaborative action. This causes interventions to often run in parallel rather than in synergy (EC and HR/VP 2016). In some instances, the EU has addressed this by developing regional strategies for security and development (e.g. for the Sahel region) as a basis for cooperation. At the country level, there are often informal visions on complementarity, yet there usually is no broader political approach that can anchor support to national security and justice strategies of the partner country or provide clear strategic objectives to EU interventions.

Various steps have been taken to further improve the EU's approach. DG DEVCO has now appointed a military adviser with in-depth knowledge of the opportunities and constraints of working with security actors. Also within the EEAS, there is a team of experts that provide methodological and operation support on issues of governance, effectiveness and risk management when working with security sectors. Through workshops and field visits, they help promote a better understanding of the 2016 SSR framework across the EU institutions. The creation of an inter-service SSR task force also aims to foster mutual understanding and coordination.

A key tool now being promoted is the development of a 'logic of engagement' document (also referred to as coordination matrix). Such a document has been used in a number of countries where the EU supports SSR (often combining different instruments) to elaborate the objectives and outline the political cooperation

11 Exchange with key stakeholder, 8 March 2020.
12 *Ibid*.

needed to achieve these. Such a logic of engagement incorporates elements from existing political economy analysis or conflict analyses to form a theory of change and help with priority-setting and planning. The purpose is to develop a context-informed vision on realistic and strategic SSR policy objectives within the means available. EEAS experts hereby aim to promote a stronger focus on short-term initiatives that focus on governance and immediate benefits for the population. Such an approach uses technical cooperation in a way that allows to build trust, open channels for political dialogue and more flexibly respond to opportunities where there is a willingness from the partner government to engage. Such logics of engagement have been successfully used so far in a range of countries such as Mali, Gambia or Georgia and can function as a non-official guiding tool for specific interventions using various EU instruments in the domain of SSR.[13]

Key takeaways

- As a result of the institutional fragmentation and diffused decision-making, EU SSR is often pulled towards different objectives. There is growing scope for supporting SSR from a development or governance angle through the EU's development instruments, the IcSP as well as the Trust Funds. But while Commission support often focuses on enhancing state security and justice capacities, support for enhancing immediate benefits for citizens is more limited. And whereas CSDP missions tend to focus on train and equip models, questions of legitimacy and human security remain unanswered.
- The creation of an inter-service SSR task force and support of a team of SSR experts help to mainstream a broader understanding of (EU policy on) SSR and foster coordination across EU institutions.
- The CBSD initiative provides a promising model to support security actors from a security-development nexus approach. Yet current practices show that more guidance is needed to ensure that CBSD actions are based on spelled-out, context-specific theories of change that specify the link with long-term development objectives.
- The European Commission risk assessment matrix could be used more widely for all future EU SSR activities to help apply conflict sensitivity and do no harm principles. But the risk analysis also requires solid security sector expertise at headquarters and field level to be meaningful. The EU could consider working more closely with experts from member states in this exercise.
- At country level, the EU usually lacks a broader political approach to anchor support to the partner country's national security and justice strategies and reform processes and provide strategic direction. But a practice is emerging of using 'logics of engagement' documents to develop context-informed theories of change for SSR action and identify entry points for political dialogue and governance reform.
- EU SSR experts tend to prioritise smaller, short-term initiatives that focus on governance and immediate benefits for the population. The underlying idea is that short-term technical cooperation can quickly respond to windows of opportunity, help build trust and open channels of political dialogue, paving the way for longer-term engagements.
- The APF offers an example of how a focus on immediate operational support to peace operations can be combined with longer-term institutional support as part of a partnership approach. A growing focus on more flexible modalities to address immediate EU security concerns should not lose sight of the longer-term benefits of supporting the institutional development of regional security architectures to make them more effective, autonomous and accountable.
- The underfunding of civilian capabilities in African peace operations is not just the consequence of limited support, but also of comparatively little demand from African governments. This underlines the importance of political dialogue to ensure a stronger focus on civilian stabilisation and governance issues in response to conflict.

[13] Interview with key informant, 16 January 2020.

3.2. Germany's SSR approach

Overview: Main German policies and instruments for SSR

Key policy documents			
Title	Year	Institution	Key features on SSR
Interministerial framework concept on SSR	2006	Development ministry	Embedded SSR in Germany's development cooperation policy on the basis of the OECD DAC guidance (German Federal Government. 2006) and fitted with German tradition of engaging in peace and security primarily through civilian means.
White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr (German Federal Government. 2016)	2016	Ministry of Defence	Introduced the 'enable and enhance' initiative to provide training and equipment support to security actors of partner countries or regional organisations, while also stressing the importance of strengthening and reforming security sector governance.
Guidelines on 'preventing crises, resolving conflicts, building peace'	2017	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Development and Ministry of Defence	Elaborates a cross-ministerial vision to peacebuilding and conflict prevention that emphasises the dimensions of human rights, rule of law and individual liberties, while recognising the usefulness of military means when necessary.
Interministerial strategy to support security sector reform (German Federal Government. 2019a)	2019	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Development and Ministry of Defence	Specifies common objectives, principles and operational guidance to advance a coherent German approach to SSR. Strengthening partner governments' monopoly on the use of force, improving public access to security, building trust between citizens and security forces and strengthening regional security cooperation are key fields of action. Political dialogue is seen as key to build confidence, identify needs and create favourable conditions for reform.
Current instruments with SSR dimensions			
Instrument		Institution	Key features
Equipment Aid Programme for foreign armed forces		Planned jointly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence	Aims to get third countries' armed forces ready for participation in international peace missions, for instance by improving logistical, medical or intelligence capabilities (while excluding weapons and ammunition support). Support is based on a bilateral agreement with the partner country and follows a four-year cycle of construction and procurement, training and handover of responsibility. Support packages are accompanied by military

		advisers that facilitate the programme on the ground. A total amount of EUR 63 million has been foreseen for the period 2017-2020.
Police Training and Aid Programme	Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides funding and Ministry of the Interior posts advisors	Aims to strengthen the police forces of third countries, e.g. through equipment and training on criminal policing, border policing and aviation security. The programme follows a four-year cycle. The Ministry of the Interior posts advisory teams on the ground to accompany projects. The programme has an annual budget of around EUR 5 million.
Enable and Enhance Initiative	Jointly administered by the ministries of foreign affairs and defence	Provides support to training, equipment and advice for both civilian and military actors in partner countries. It is planned on a yearly basis, allowing for a more flexible use in crisis situations. While the programme can cover lethal assistance, only some of the measures have included this. The initiative had an annual budget of EUR 128 million at its disposal in 2017 and 2018 (Federal Parliament of Germany 2019).
Development programmes	Ministry of Development	The development ministry supports projects on security sector governance. The BMZ notably provides some SSR funding through the German political foundations (e.g. on parliamentary oversight) and GIZ. BMZ support also provides significant support to the AU to support civilian control over AU-managed peace operations.

German support to SSR: more technical assistance than governance reform?

For a long time, Germany had a tradition of engaging in peace and security primarily through civilian means (Deneckere and Hauck 2018). A watershed moment in Germany's approach to working with security actors was the government's decision in 2014 to provide military training and equipment to the Kurdish Peshmerga forces in Iraq to help them fight the Islamic State. It illustrated a growing German ambition to play a more assertive role as a global actor, including by providing combat equipment in a context of active war (Furhmann 2017). Yet the trend towards a stronger role of military means in Germany's foreign and security policy could already be witnessed earlier in Germany's military involvement in Kosovo in the 1990s and later in Afghanistan (Deneckere and Hauck 2018).

With this evolution came the gradual development of a more elaborate German policy framework for peace and security policy that eventually resulted in the adoption of an Interministerial strategy to support security sector reform in 2019. Crucially, the German SSR policy sees technical security sector assistance and support to security governance reform as complementary domains to achieve common political goals.[14] By incorporating both technical capacity-building ('train and equip') and support to security sector governance, rule of law and human rights promotion under the label of SSR, it puts SSR explicitly on the nexus of security and development policy.

[14] Interview with key stakeholder, 10 December 2019.

To fund SSR activities, Germany has a number of instruments available, which are listed in more detail in Table 2 (Rotmann 2018c). These notably include three security capacity-building programmes for short- and longer-term (military and civilian) security support. The programmes are administered jointly by the ministry of foreign affairs and the ministries of defence (for military support) and of the interior (for policing). The MFA, and notably its Directorate-General S, plays a coordinating role in terms of strategy and policy, whereas the two other ministries cover operational aspects. These programmes are explicitly established as instruments available to the government and therefore do not need parliamentary approval, unlike regular foreign deployments of the German armed forces.

In terms of financial weight, these programmes form the core of German financial support in the domain of SSR. While these three programmes are heavily focused on training and equipment support, they can also include governance or rule of law elements. The GIZ-executed 'police programme Africa', which supports national police as well as regional organisations in Africa on issues of criminal investigation, justice and prevention of gender-based violence is a good example (Rotmann 2018b). Yet generally speaking, strengthening security sector governance is beyond the scope of these funding programmes and rather lies within the remit of the development ministry.

Within the development ministry, the Division 'Peace and security, disaster risk management' is an important body. As a thematic division, it does not manage any programmatic funding. Its role is rather to advise the ministry's geographical departments that manage aid programmes, who often do not consider security sector governance a priority. As a consequence, while BMZ does support some projects with security governance dimensions, the ministry is not a major player on SSR.[15] Germany's overall SSR support therefore heavily focuses on technical 'train and equip' assistance, while seeing governance reform largely as an add-on to such assistance packages (Rotmann 2018a).

The German institutional tradition: obstacle or safeguard?

Despite lofty commitments to more holistic approaches to SSR, the funding priorities indicate that Germany seems still far removed from its ambitions. Particularly the lack of clear theories of change on how technical assistance and support to governance reform should contribute to long-term political objectives is deemed a shortcoming (Rotmann 2018c). For instance, the German support to the Peshmerga has been criticised for lacking a strategy (beyond their tactical advantages) based on knowledge of the context, a set of long-term political objectives and a vision on how different instruments could contribute to these aims (Schulz 2018).

More comprehensive approaches are obstructed by Germany's 'departmental principle', the administrative convention that grants a high degree of autonomy and functional responsibility to individual ministries. The departmental principle has historical legacy in Germany as it avoids the concentration of power in a single office. As such, it can be seen as an important political check on the use of resources, especially in the domain of security policy. Yet this departmental autonomy generally prevents more collaborative approaches and mutual understanding (Deneckere and Hauck 2018). When it comes to SSR, observers have pointed at a persisting conceptual split between diplomats and development experts on the one hand, and the security bureaucracies on the other. The former tend to favour a more transformational understanding of SSR, whereas the latter focus on more short-term, transactional approaches through technical delivery and training (Rotmann 2018c).

[15] Interview with key stakeholder, 11 December 2019.

Some developments can nevertheless be noticed. Both the 2017 guidelines on 'preventing crises, resolving conflicts, building peace' and the 2019 SSR strategy have been the result of a collaborative process involving the ministries of foreign affairs, development and defence. Agreeing on a common vision and language across various ministries is no small success (Deneckere and Hauck 2018). Equally important, the documents have been produced after a broad public consultation (the so-called 'PeaceLab' process) with civil society and the expert community. The PeaceLab, which still exists as an online blog and series of conferences, is a successful forum to feed expertise into policy-making on the nexus of security, peace and development.

To advance a collaborative approach, an operations manual has been produced to promote interministerial coordination on crisis prevention and peacebuilding (German Federal Government. 2019b). It gives guidance at senior and working level for joint context analysis, strategic development and coordination of planning, implementation and monitoring. Furthermore, plans are foreseen for the establishment of an inter-ministerial SSR working group to explore a more synergistic use of different security assistance and reform measures across the board, especially when linking with country-specific task forces. At the country level, task forces have been established for a number of core countries (e.g. Iraq and Syria, the Sahel region, Somalia), which are overall a useful platform to promote a joint analysis and approach.[16]

A number of good practices have emerged as a result of such collaborative initiatives. This has included a joint assessment for Ukraine or a jointly commissioned evaluation on enable and enhance initiatives in Tunisia (although it did not cover the BMZ's involvement in SSR). Another evaluation of German support to security training institutes in Africa is also upcoming, which involved four ministries in the drafting of the terms of reference, clearly setting a good example for a joint approach to evaluation and learning in the domain of SSR. Such initiatives are promising steps towards a gradual cultural shift towards more intense forms of collaborative action.[17] While institutional divisions will continue to make joint planning difficult, having structures for exchange and discussion may still lead to coordination and cross-fertilisation even if departments decide to not join hands. Observers also note that political capacities for analysis, dialogue and influencing have not kept pace with the growing project budgets for SSR, therefore leaving unexploited strategic and political potential of those funds (Rotmann 2018c).[18]

Many tools, but no common approach to managing risks

Military equipment support always raises questions over its effective use and final destination. Especially for small arms and light weapons, which often have a lifespan of several decades, there is a risk that they are eventually used by actors or for purposes for which they were not initially intended, as the example of the Peshmerga support has shown (Spiegel Online. 2016). To mitigate such risks, as well as ensure broader conflict and gender sensitivity, Germany uses a number of tools.

First, to assess the needs, risks and opportunities, the MFA largely relies on the political analyses of embassies or like-minded countries or institutions, rather than external analyses or in-depth conflict analyses, as this allows for a lighter and quicker response. It is hereby supported by the "PreView" system, which compiles political (often open-source) analysis and prognosis to inform crisis prevention and early action.[19]

16 Interview with key stakeholder, 11 December 2019.
17 Interview with key stakeholders, 10 and 11 December 2019.
18 Interview with key stakeholder, 10 December 2019.
19 Interview with key stakeholder, 11 December 2019.

The development ministry uses different systems. It works together with the German Institute of Global and Areas Studies (GIGA), which performs political economy analyses and quality controls to allow for conflict-sensitive cooperation with respect for good governance principles. GIGA also runs a system of 'escalation potential analysis' for the development ministry to assess the potential of violence in countries around the globe and allow for risk-informed decision-making (GIGA N.d.). Finally, the ministry of defence uses its own systems as well and is currently developing a new IT support system for crisis early warning (German Federal Parliament 2019).

In the end, the identification of interventions remains largely at the discretion of single ministries. The focus of the MFA lies on the ability to respond flexibly to urgent needs and opportunities to deliver peace dividends in the context of a peace process, often with high implementation risks. In contrast, the long-term approach of the development ministry tends to be based on a more solid context analysis. Interviewees noted that data and analysis should feed more smoothly into joint assessment and decision-making.[20] Yet different time perspectives and political imperatives may mean that this objective may not always be realistic, in which case lighter coordination is seen as the second-best option.[21]

Second, German military equipment support is, where relevant, bound by arms export rules at UN, EU and national level. Especially for small arms, German arms export policy combines ex-ante assessments and end use declarations before issuing export licenses with an option of end-use controls. Such post-shipment controls were introduced in 2017 as a means to check whether in Germany produced arms are indeed not crossing the borders of the receiving country or used for systematic human rights abuses. These controls have been welcomed to monitor clients' compliance, yet the system is far from watertight. A specific issue is that arms deliveries to EU or NATO member states are not subject to ex-post controls, leaving the possibility open that delivered arms still arrive in third countries via a detour. For instance, reports found that, between 2009 and 2011, small arms produced in Germany and destined for the civilian market in the United States eventually found their way to Colombia, where they were used in a bloody civil war (Bogerding 2019). Another case illustrates that the enforceability of the controls can be evaded. In 2015, evidence was found that Saudi-Arabia provided German assault rifles to militias fighting the Huthi rebels in Yemen. Although Saudi-Arabia had obtained a licence to manufacture such arms locally under the condition that they would only be used domestically, the Saudi government could avoid compliance monitoring by simply not granting its approval for such end-use controls (Spiegel Online 2015). Calls have therefore been voiced for an expansion and stricter implementation of the mechanism, including through more staff to execute controls, a sanctions mechanism for non-compliance and the closure of loopholes.

Importantly, German equipment support packages are usually accompanied by the deployment of military or police advisory teams to coordinate and monitor support on the ground. They are in this endeavour supported by the embassies, although interviewees pointed out that this is in practice difficult because of limited human resources as well as sensitivities in relation to often widespread misuse of funds in partner countries' security sectors.[22] Moreover, practice shows that compliance by the partner government with commitments made is far from easy to ascertain, despite reporting and evaluation requirements.

Finally, Germany has privileged access to a number of expert organisations, such as GIZ. GIZ is a major implementing partner of the development ministry, but is also increasingly working with other ministries in the domain of SSR. GIZ has over the years built up solid expertise on conflict sensitivity, risk management and sustainability. It uses a range of conflict-sensitive methods, including a framework for 'peace and

[20] *Ibid*.
[21] Interview with key stakeholder, 10 December 2019.
[22] *Ibid*.

conflict assessments' to assess the causes and consequences of conflict and potential risks of doing harm. Since 2016, GIZ also uses its 'Safeguards + Gender Management System' to check interventions on external risks in their planning and implementation stages. Interventions are subject to a risk analysis to avoid negative effects on conflicts, human rights or gender equality and identify opportunities for positive change. The system is used both in the planning and implementation of projects and allows to formulate mitigating measures and quick adaptations (GIZ 2016). As such, the system formulates a minimum standard for projects, combining different requirements and processes in a single management framework. As a privileged partner of the German ministries, GIZ is involved early on in the conceptual stage of projects and can therefore ensure a risk-sensitive approach from the initial stages.[23] GIZ has also built up expertise on context- and conflict-sensitive results-based monitoring and third-party monitoring in fragile contexts where access is difficult.[24]

Key takeaways

- German SSR support largely favours train and equip approaches, which receives the bulk of the funding through a range of dedicated funding instruments. More transformational SSR approaches prioritising governance aspects are spearheaded by the development ministry BMZ, but are much more limited.
- Despite commitments to a holistic approach, different SSR engagements are usually not guided by joint, context-sensitive and long-term strategic objectives and therefore often fail to connect to a bigger larger strategy or theory of change.
- Fragmentation in the German bureaucratic tradition provides a political and institutional check on the use of means and resources, but also prevents collaborative approaches. Yet the German experience also shows that broad collaborative policy-making processes with involvement of experts and civil society can foster mutual understanding among security and development professionals.
- Structures for interministerial coordination can help promote joint decision-making, implementation or monitoring and evaluation. Yet such success stories still largely rely on the willingness of individual staff members. Changing institutional mentalities is a long-term process that needs to be nurtured and sustained. At the same time, a complex policy domain such as SSR benefits from a variety of methods that cover different time perspectives and different levels of flexibility and risk aversion.
- Despite committing to an SSR approach that connects to partner country reform processes and commitments, capacities for political analysis and dialogue have not kept pace with growing resources for German SSR support. Partner countries also do not always have adequate strategies in place for donors to align with.
- Germany has an advanced toolbox available to manage risks and ensure accountability of SSR support. It notably has an ambitious mechanism of arms export compliance controls, although experience also shows both legal, political and capacity limitations of the tool.
- Effectiveness and accountability of German training and equipment support is supported by locally deployed advisory teams that coordinate and monitor support on the ground. Embassies also play a role in this, although limited human resources mean that partner government reform commitments are not always easy to ascertain.
- Germany has privileged access to expertise within German expert bodies such as GIGA or GIZ, both in terms of analysis and of operational support on conflict sensitivity, risk management, human rights and gender mainstreaming and sustainability.

[23] Interview with key stakeholders, 9 December 2019.
[24] Email exchange with key stakeholder, 13 January 2020.

3.3. Practices from France

Overview: Main French policies and instruments for SSR

Key policy documents			
Title	Year	Institution	Key features on SSR
Concept on security system reform	2008	Interdepartmental coordinating committee on security system reform	Framed SSR as a matter of supporting professionalism and operational effectiveness of security actors on the one side, and of improving legitimacy on the other, drawing explicit links with democratic governance, human rights and the nexus with development.
Strategy on prevention, resilience and sustainable peace 2018-2022 (French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. 2018)	2018	French Interministerial committee on international cooperation and development	proposes a focus on strengthening inclusive governance and social contracts through development cooperation, as part of a coordinated approach with other French actions, including in the domain of security and defence cooperation. It is based on the OECD fragility framework, the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Deal for engagement in fragile states to promote the governance aspects of SSR.
Current instruments and operators with SSR dimensions			
Instrument		Institution	Key features
Operational cooperation		Ministry of Defence and Ministry of the Interior	Focuses on direct cooperation and support in the form of training, accompaniment and combat (for instance via permanently deployed French troops in Senegal or Djibouti).
Structural cooperation		Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs - DCSD	Focuses on strengthening the human capital of partner forces, improving security governance and supporting structures such as human resources, salary policies and grades. Its focus on small structural changes within the security system also aims to contribute to broader transformations. The DCSD had an annual operational and intervention budget of EUR 36 million. It can also rely on a network of 300 'cooperants' in 140 countries and embedded in the security institutions of partner governments that implement structural cooperation programmes.[25]
Support to security sector governance		Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs - DDD	The Fragility, Resilience and the Global Approach with the Directorate of Sustainable Development (DDD) provides support to security sector governance. It particularly works through DCAF, for

[25] Interview with key stakeholder, 26 February 2020.

		instance in support of designing and promoting SSR visions in francophone countries in Africa or training on SSR to French officials.
Minka Fund	AFD - French Development Agency	The Minka fund provides between EUR 100 and 200 million per year to support conflict prevention and crisis resolution in Africa and the Middle East. Some target activities have implicit SSR dimensions such as promoting equitable access to security and justice. Minka is designed for flexible and swift responses with the purpose of delivering quick visible results and restoring trust.
Stabilisation fund	Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs - Crisis and Support Centre - Stabilisation Unit	This fund can rapidly and flexibly provide governance support or civil society capacity-building. It can include contributions to the restoration of internal security forces, rule of law or the redeployment of public services. It had a budget of EUR 17.5 million in 2018.
Main French operators in the field of SSR		
Name	Affiliated ministry	Activities related to SSR
Expertise France	Privileged partner of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, but also working with other ministries and EU institutions	Is the main French technical cooperation agency.[26] It has developed expertise in stabilisation and resilience (e.g. strengthening inclusive governance and access to justice), peacekeeping (e.g. securing UN peacekeeping camps) and defence and security capacity-building through training, equipment and infrastructure. While being an important partner of the French government, Expertise France is relying to a large extent on EU-funded projects including CBSD actions or APF-funded programmes in the Sahel.
CIVIPOL	Ministry of the Interior	A Consulting and service company in areas of homeland security and civil protection. It is present in 80 countries and works on issues such as arms flow control or the prevention of trafficking in persons via institutional support or capacity-building (e.g. Support for police training academies).
International Justice Cooperation (JCI)	Ministry of Justice	Private operator in the domain of international justice cooperation.

[26] Like Expertise France, also AFD is a key agency for French international cooperation. Yet while the latter is more a project funder, the former can be described as a technical expertise operator.

A traditional focus on operational effectiveness broadening its scope towards governance

France has a strong tradition in military and security cooperation, oriented towards operational support to partner countries' security agents (Leboeuf 2018a). The practice of military assistance goes back to the colonial era in Indochina and subsequently the age of decolonisation, when France worked with many newly independent countries in Africa to build up their armies so as to avoid permanent foreign military presence (Dagand and Ramel 2013).

In more recent years, France has advanced a more political approach to SSR. France adopted in 2008 an interdepartmental concept on security system reform, which framed SSR as a matter of both supporting operational effectiveness of security actors and of building their legitimacy (Interdepartmental coordination committee on security system reform 2008).

The main French institutional actors in support of SSR are the Directorate of Cooperation on Security and Defence (DCSD) and the Directorate for Sustainable Development (DDD) within the ministry of Europe and foreign affairs. The DCSD advances 'structural cooperation' with foreign security actors with the purpose of improving their effectiveness, at the request of partner countries (DCSD 2012). Such structural cooperation complements the operational cooperation managed by the French ministries of defence and of the interior, which comes in the form of training, equipment accompaniment or combat. For the implementation of structural cooperation, DCSD relies on a network of 300 cooperants in the field. These are French military officers, police officers or civil protection experts that are embedded in the security institutions of partner governments.

The underlying logic of such structural cooperation is that its focus on small structural changes within the security system (e.g. improving salary policies or developing strategies) does not only support professionalisation, but also contributes to broader transformations. For instance, a support package was provided to Côte d'Ivoire to support reform in domains such as human resources management. The ultimate objective was not only to improve the administrative structures of the armed forces in the country, but also provide them with a clear goal, i.e. integration in MINUSMA, the UN peacekeeping operation in Mali. Hence, addressing security sector assistance was seen as an instrument to also inject a sense of purpose to armies and set targets to bring up the forces to international standards, including on human rights. By a similar logic, French support to troops' training and salaries is also done in view of reducing incentives for troops to engage in coups or attacks.[27]

Researchers have pointed at the need to combine the structural cooperation approach to SSR with a more long-term approach to security sector governance that not only benefits the ruling elite of partner countries but also helps secure a law-based state (Leboeuf 2018b). This line of thinking has been reflected in the most recent strategy on 'prevention, resilience and sustainable peace' 2018-2022. Within the ministry for Europe and foreign affairs, the democratic governance aspect of SSR is particularly spearheaded by the Fragility, Resilience and the Global Approach with the Directorate of Sustainable Development (DDD). The DDD normally leads the drafting of policies related to supporting institutional reforms in partner countries. Yet notwithstanding the developments in policy and practice spearheaded by the DDD in the domain of security sector governance, it is dwarfed by the DCSD in terms of financial clout. DDD also supervises the activities of the French development agency AFD in relation to democratic governance. AFD has assumed a governance mandate as both a funder and implementer, it is adopting this mandate only very slowly and is yet to develop its policy or programmes on SSR. AFD explicitly does not have a mandate on security nor does it use the SSR terminology (Leboeuf 2018a). France has therefore not yet managed to establish SSR

[27] Interview with key stakeholder, 26 February 2020.

as a mainstream vehicle for change management beyond a short-term stabilisation tool, as security professionals from the DCSD have de facto taken the lead. Various institutional reorganisations also meant that the SSR concept gradually lost its momentum over the years (Leboeuf 2018a).

Currently, a new SSR doctrine is in the pipeline to replace the 2008 SSR concept. The inter-institutional drafting process has been led by the DCSD, in coordination with DDD and with consultation of other relevant ministries and operators. The new doctrine, which draws on inputs provided by an external expert, proposes two pillars: capacity-building (e.g. training, deployment, professionalisation of senior staff...) and governance (human resources, parliamentary control, financing…). The document does not aim to be a joint strategy for all actors, largely as a result of inter-institutional disagreements. Instead, it will provide a normative orientation with agreement on overall objectives and challenges, alignment with the most recent global normative frameworks, clarity on the different mandates of actors involved and established cooperation structures. The need for such a document was felt after various institutional reforms in the French government as well as evolving foreign policy priorities had rendered the existing concepts and structures outdated. The new doctrine is expected to be formally adopted later in 2020. It remains to be seen to what extent it will succeed in establishing a joint language on SSR, shape a more effective coordination culture and lead to a greater prioritisation of security sector governance within the scarce budgets available within the ministry of Europe and foreign affairs.

Coordinating a crowded field of French SSR actors

The French institutional architecture for SSR is highly fragmented: While the DCSD and the DDD within the ministry of foreign affairs are clearly the main players, various other entities, such as the defence ministry, AFD or the ministry of the interior's directorate for international cooperation play a role as well in policy-making and funding. Different ministries also tend to work through their own privileged partners, such as Expertise France or CIVIPOL, further adding to the complexity of the picture. The focus of these operators is primarily on implementation, yet their expertise is also often consulted by ministries in the identification and planning stages of interventions. They were also consulted during the drafting process of the new SSR doctrine. At the same time, their technical profile can also be a weakness: In Ivory Coast, Expertise France implemented an (EU-funded) three-year project in support of civil protection, which comprised equipment and infrastructure assistance, as well as a governance dimension. The latter, however, was found difficult to implement because the legal texts of the reform were blocked at the political level. As a technical operator, Expertise France lacked the political means to push through the needed change.[28]

Coordination between the ministries of foreign affairs, the interior and defence on security and defence issues has been bolstered through the establishment of an Interministerial Strategic Direction Committee, which promotes synergies between civilian and military security and development efforts on SSR. Attached to this committee has been a standing SSR task force responsible for assessing the frameworks for strategic action in a given country or region. The task force was designed as a pool of expertise that could also be deployed for evaluation missions during the operational phase (Leboeuf 2018a). Yet various institutional reforms have rendered the task force dysfunctional.[29] Coordination has, however, continued to take place within regional task forces that have been set up for a number of target regions and countries (e.g. Mali) to allow for coordination and a rationalisation of the limited human resources and expertise available.[30]

[28] Interview with key stakeholder, 26 February 2020.
[29] Interview with key stakeholder, 27 February 2020.
[30] *Ibid*.

Various good examples of coordination exist. This includes a project in 2017 to enhance police accountability in Madagascar that covered activities with civil society to build trust between the police and the population. In line with the principle of a comprehensive approach, the project was crafted and implemented on the basis of synergies between several French security and development actors, including the cultural section of the French embassy in Madagascar, DCSD and DDD, the ministry of the interior and France's General Inspectorate of the National Police.

The new SSR doctrine will propose a new structure in the form of an inter-ministerial steering committee on SSR to facilitate dialogue and coordination between different French actors. Its purpose would be to serve as a unique meeting point to allow stakeholders to formulate a harmonised position that can be used by the relevant embassy in its political dialogue with all partner country stakeholders, thus avoiding parallel dialogues happening by different actors.

Field networks are France's main diagnostic instrument for context sensitivity

France has a number of instruments available to design context-sensitive approaches to SSR. Within the ministry of foreign affairs, the Crisis and Support Centre is responsible for monitoring, anticipating and managing crises abroad. With regard to anticipation, the Preparedness and Partnerships Unit, an inter-ministerial coordinating structure attached to the Crisis and Support Centre, developed an early warning system in 2014. Referred to as "SyAl", the tool is designed to anticipate crises and enable France to more efficiently mobilise its crisis response and cooperation instruments.

Perhaps more important are France's different networks of field experts. In addition to the DCSD cooperant network mentioned above, the interior ministry coordinates a pool of 250 police and gendarmerie attachés in 93 French embassies. Likewise, the defence ministry's Directorate General for International Relations and Strategy (DGRIS) supervises France's diplomatic defence network which comprises defence missions at 88 French embassies. They manage the military and defence cooperation mission under the auspices of the DCSD. Through its network of defence attachés, DGRIS is responsible for politico-military analysis and strategic outlook, as well as monitoring of defence relations with host countries and regions.[31] In addition, French civilian or military staff contributions to multilateral missions, including EU CSDP missions, allows French specialists to sharpen their practices in supporting SSR. For instance, French military seconded to the Advising unit of the EU military training mission in Mali (EUTM Mali) played a key role in supporting the drafting of military orientation and budget laws for the Malian Ministry of Defence.[32]

Such networks are important assets whose long-term deployment allows France to be close to the ground and build extensive informal networks and relations of trust. The networks of defence and interior security attachés are not only linked to their respective ministries, but via the DCSD also to the ministry of foreign affairs, thus facilitating common analysis.[33] Yet currently these cooperants and attachés do not always receive the necessary training on wider SSR issues to play such a political role (Leboeuf 2018a).

As the main operator of France's SSR approach, Expertise France does not have its own resources for SSR projects and therefore does not have the amplitude to engage in all preparatory activities itself in terms of context analysis. For this purpose, it works together with embassies, AFD offices e.g. on aspects of do no harm. It also works with local experts, universities or other actors to help better understand the local situation and identify needs and gaps. In some instances, they also work with ECHO, ICRC or OCHA for training on context sensitivity or conflict analysis with the purpose of integrating such concepts in their

31 https://www.defense.gouv.fr/
32 Communication with key stakeholder, 29 April 2020.
33 Interview with key stakeholder, 26 February 2020.

overall SSR approach. Yet overall, Expertise France's security and defence team is fairly new and is still building up its SSR expertise and capacities in light of quickly growing budgets. For instance, standardised methodologies for context analysis or screening procedures for local experts are not in place yet. As Expertise France is increasingly involved in the implementation of large EU security cooperation projects, including the support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force, the organisation is gradually building up its expertise and toolbox on SSR through practical experience.

Key takeaways

- France's approach to SSR is spearheaded by the DCSD. The DCSD pursues structural cooperation with foreign security actors by providing institutional support and assisting overall professionalisation. This builds on a logic that small changes can also contribute to broader transformations e.g. by providing strategic direction to foreign security forces.
- While the DCSD's focus on structural support shows the blurred lines between 'effectiveness' and 'reform', broader governance issues are beyond its mandate. Wider governance questions are advanced by DDD, but it has only limited resources to counterbalance the dominance of the DCSD. Overall, the French approach can be described as pragmatic and without a clear blueprint.
- A holistic SSR concept reflecting OECD standards already was adopted in 2008, but enjoyed limited institutional ownership. A new SSR doctrine is currently being developed, although it remains to be seen how it will succeed in establishing a joint language and vision on SSR in an institutional environment where implementation of SSR in all its dimensions is rather fragmented.
- To facilitate coordination in a crowded field of institutional actors and operators, a number of structures have been introduced to promote joint context analysis and coordinated planning of actions. The new SSR doctrine will create a new interministerial steering committee on SSR to serve as a unique meeting point to formulate a harmonised position among stakeholders, also allowing embassies to conduct a more strategic political dialogue on SSR.
- An important asset of France's approach to SSR is that it can rely on a vast network of security and defence attachés and cooperants embedded in partner countries' structures. They give French decision-makers easy access to on-to-ground expertise both during planning and implementation of SSR interventions. They also have a potential of building informal networks and trust with local changemakers and champions, although they are not always familiar with the several dimensions of SSR and their potential for a more political approach to SSR is not sufficiently exploited.

3.4. Practices from the Netherlands

Overview: Main Dutch policies and instruments for SSR

Key policy documents			
Title	Year	Institution	Key features on SSR
Integrated International Security Strategy 2018-2022	2018	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Approaches SSR from a security perspective, building upon the integrated 3D (defence, diplomacy, development) approach which sees security as complex and in need of multidimensional answers (Lijn van der 2011). Operational capacity-building and institutional development are also core pillars, calling for specific military, civilian and diplomatic capabilities and institutional capacity-building to strengthen the rule of law, whilst also referring to the sharing of knowledge and equipment (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018a).
Netherlands' Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation policy	2018	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Approaches SSR from a development perspective, and focuses on sustainable development goal 16 'peace, justice, and strong institutions' as its guiding principle to conflict prevention and peacebuilding (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018b).
Current instruments and operators with SSR dimensions			
Instrument		Institution	Key features
Central Stability Fund		Ministry of Foreign Affairs - jointly managed by the Directorate for Security Policy and Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid	used to support activities regarding peace, security, and development in order to ensure rapid and flexible implementation. This includes projects in the domain of SSR. The focus is mainly on areas with real security threats in unstable countries and those in post-conflict situations. The Stability Fund is a mixed ODA/non-ODA fund of approximately EUR 100 million per year that is administered by the MFA from The Hague (Veen van 2018).
Decentralised aid budgets		Embassies	Dutch embassies abroad can request decentralised funding for short-term projects between 1-3 years, which can cover SSR projects. Such funding is often used as an instrument in exchange for political commitments from partner countries.

Dutch SSR policy: two lenses, but no shared concept

The Netherlands has never developed a formal cross-government policy document which outlines the higher objectives, principles, and activities on SSR. However, key policy documents do exist in which there are references to SSR. The Integrated International Security Strategy 2018-2022 (IISS) approaches SSR more from a security perspective, building on the 3D (defence, diplomacy and development) approach, whereas the Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation policy approaches SSR from a development perspective (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018b).

This split in approach also translates institutionally. The ministry of foreign affairs (MFA) is responsible for the policy area of SSR. Other Dutch ministries such as the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Ministry of Justice and Security (MJ&S) take their cues from the MFA and focus on implementation only (Veen van 2018). Within the MFA, two departments are actively involved in SSR, but from different approaches. One is in the Directorate for Security Policy (DVB), which manages Dutch contributions to peacekeeping operations, and the other is in the Directorate for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH), which focuses more on security sector governance, accountability and civil society. DSH, in 2015, developed an internal theory of change for its security and rule of law engagement in fragile situations, which sets an orientation on SSR within the DSH, but not beyond. When exploring opportunities for Dutch intervention, the theory of change calls attention to context-specific and conflict- and gender-sensitive approaches (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015).

Despite this institutional split, the 3D concept has helped to guide the formulation of more joined-up approaches to engaging in conflict, security, and fragility issues. However, analysts have noted that the 3D approach remains rather vague and there has been disagreement on the degree of coherence needed (Veen van 2018). By capturing best practices and lessons learned from the Dutch 3D approach in Uruzgan (Afghanistan) between 2006 and 2010, military and diplomatic integrationists perceived that this could have been the seed to grow a more comprehensive approach to security sector assistance for the Netherlands (Lijn van der 2011). Indeed, these lessons were later further consolidated to advance an integrated approach, leading to the development and adoption of the interdepartmental document 'Guidelines for an Integrated Approach' in 2014 (Matthijssen 2014). This document provided broad guidance on how to coordinate between development, foreign affairs, defence, security and justice departments when engaging in situations of conflict or fragility.

A small player looking for influence and added value

The primary financing mechanisms for SSR are the central Stability Fund on decentralised aid budgets at embassy level. The central Stability Fund supports activities regarding peace, security, and development, including in the domain of SSR. The focus is mainly on areas with real security threats in unstable countries and those in post-conflict situations. Embassies can also directly fund projects, often to support political objectives. For example, a recent project in Northern Macedonia via DCAF and managed by the Dutch embassy to support the intelligence sector in the country whilst maintaining a clear political dialogue which fits into the broader story of promoting the rule of law and governance reforms in (potential) EU pre-accession countries.[34]

[34] Interview with key stakeholder, 28 January 2020.

It is difficult to provide a reliable figure of Dutch resource allocations to SSR because central and decentralised funds for SSR are administratively separated in the Dutch MFA's finances, and because financial reporting is not done on the basis of themes like SSR. Reports suggest a rough estimate of the entire Dutch aid portfolio (consisting of both streams) featuring no more than 5-10 SSR programmes of between EUR 1-10 million each at any one time. Financial data suggests that financing of SSR activities has remained broadly constant over time.[35]

Although the Netherlands has initiated bilateral SSR support programmes in the past, including in Burundi and Lebanon, the majority of Dutch SSR support has been delivered as contributions to broader multilateral processes where it can add value as a relatively small player. This has included demand-driven support to UN peacekeeping operations (e.g. Mali) or NATO operations (in Afghanistan).[36] In terms of its programmatic content, Dutch SSR practice has consistently prioritised support to formal state security actors to the exclusion of informal, non-state and justice-oriented actors.[37] This is not to say that such actors have not been programmatically engaged, but rather that this has not typically happened under the banner of SSR. When supporting peacekeeping missions with an SSR component, Dutch SSR practice has typically contributed to 'train-build-equip' activities characteristic of more traditional security cooperation with a focus on the formal security sectors of post-conflict countries (Denney and Valters 2016 and Veen van 2016).[38]

Recent reports also suggest that the Netherlands has engaged in military support programmes through equipment provision of a more covert nature. An investigation revealed evidence that military equipment support provided by the Netherlands to opposition groups in Syria in the form of laptops, cameras, and pick-up trucks ended up in the hands of the terrorist organisation Jabhat al-Shamiya in Syria in 2017. This was an unintended consequence of the Netherlands' state secret non-lethal assistance programme which supplied non-lethal goods to 22 opposition groups in Syria from 2015-2018. The MFA-coordinated programme was subsequently stopped, as it raised doubts on the effectiveness of soft equipment provision as a priority SSR component and reaffirmed its ability to exacerbate conflicts if materials fall into the wrong hands (Holdert and Dahhan 2018).

Dutch developmental SSR programmes have focused on formal actors through a state security lens. Observers have noted that despite commitments to holistic SSR approaches that include accountability, governance, and human (informal) security in some policy documents, Dutch SSR practice shows that many of these aspects have not enjoyed equal attention (Veen van 2018). Growing attention to governance dimensions can nevertheless be observed recently.[39]

35 *Ibid.*
36 *Ibid.*
37 *Ibid*.
38 For an overview of SSR issues in the US context, see Kleinfeld 2016.
39 Interview with key stakeholder, 28 January 2020.

Informal coordination comes with benefits and challenges

Due to the absence of a cross-governmental SSR policy, the Dutch approach towards inter-departmental coordination on SSR has remained largely informal. The main hub of SSR expertise in The Hague is concentrated in the DSH, with some of its staff members enhancing their SSR knowledge through training courses offered by DCAF. Outside this small group of experts, knowledge of the SSR concept is low and capacities to mainstream understanding of a joined-up SSR concept have been limited.[40] Whilst some see the absence of formal coordination structures as a strength that allows a relatively small bureaucracy such as the Netherlands' government to be more flexible in its SSR approaches, a consequence of this individual-based strategy has been a lack of institutional memory, knowledge, and mainstreaming of understanding of the complexities of SSR across departments and ministries.[41]

Nevertheless, the Netherlands has demonstrated in its operations in Afghanistan, Mali, and Burundi that these informal channels can make for smoother communication and coordination efforts within specific interventions, especially in high-profile engagements. Although the mentioned programmes do not systematically use the label of SSR, there are clearly many SSR elements found within the programme designs, such as linking support for police and armed forces with questions of governance.

The Dutch contribution from 2006 to 2010 to NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Uruzgan, Afghanistan, focused on both military and civilian aspects including promoting good governance, establishing professional police and army forces, building and developing the rule of law, and reconstruction. The Dutch policy was founded on the 3D approach from the outset, yet at the beginning, there was no agreed or coordinated interdepartmental mission design or plan for Dutch support. The MoD and MFA each issued their own set of instructions to the military and civilian components of the mission. Nonetheless, improvements were increasingly made. For example, coordination of the mission took place in the weekly Military Operations Steering Group, where high level representatives of the ministries of General Affairs, Foreign Affairs, and Defence participated. In 2009, civilian and military elements of the Task Force Uruzgan were further integrated, leading to the joint command of the Civilian Leadership of the Civilian Representative (a MoFA official) and the commander of the Task Force over all civil and military activities in the province. This approach established the development of shared responsibility and planning processes, with individual activities taking place within a shared and integrated framework (Dutch Government 2011: 105).

40 Interview with key stakeholders, 28 January 2020.
41 *Ibid.*

As another example, the Burundi-Netherlands Security Sector Development (SSD) programme was established in 2009 with the signing of an eight-year Memorandum of Understanding between the two governments. Its overarching objective was to contribute to the development of a security sector in Burundi that was transparent, guided by democratic principles, financially sustainable, and accountable, while assuring the delivery of security and justice to all Burundians. The Burundi-Netherlands SSD programme is noteworthy due to its size and ambition based on an 8-year timescale (2009-2017) as well as the Dutch commitment to incorporate the main internationally-promoted SSR principles into the programme. The programme demonstrates that, even in the absence of formal coordination structures, the Netherlands manages to bring staff together from different ministerial departments who can commit expertise to formulating a comprehensive SSR programme. Yet after the premature closure of the programme, experience and expertise was also quickly lost. The example shows that a reliance on individuals and limited access to in-house knowledge management mechanisms also means expertise easily disappears when political interest in SSR wanes, and has to be rebuilt up from scratch later on. Interviewees have noted, however, a desire to produce a whole-of-government approach towards SSR which will allow a more formal and proactive method of coordination across departments and ministries.[42]

Mixed experiences with local context adaptation

To ensure adaptation to local realities, the Netherlands tends to use three main methods for gathering local context information to inform programme strategy and procedure.[43] Firstly, to make up for limited in-house SSR expertise, the Netherlands works with national and international experts and think tanks to gather information on specific local contexts. Secondly, an SSR checklist is used internally to ensure that a programme is sufficiently context- or conflict-sensitive and SSR-compliant. Within this checklist procedure, a policy check is taken to ensure that a programme fits the policy objectives, as well as a check on the operational dimensions of the programme, including monitoring and evaluation and risk assessments. Thirdly, an early warning desk feature of the security policy department informs strategy by establishing SSR activities based on the analysis of context and conflict dynamics.[44]

The Dutch engagements in Afghanistan, Mali, and Burundi show both positive examples and pitfalls of SSR when it comes to local content adaptation. First, the Dutch experience in Uruzgan was supported by intelligence gathering at the local level based on the UN X-PMESII method (used to gather information on inter-relationships between political, military, economic, social, infrastructural, and information-related factors). This intelligence provides an in-depth and holistic understanding of the local dynamics and root causes of conflict within a specific country context, to develop effective conflict resolution responses. Obtaining such information required a strong local presence of the Dutch military and communication with the local population. Yet it was found that cooperation in the area of intelligence ultimately had a positive impact on the execution of the mission (Kuijl 2019).

Due to the success of the X-PMESII method in Afghanistan, the Dutch government decided to apply the same method in the context of its MINUSMA participation in Mali (Kuijl 2019). However, the mission in Mali did not reap the same benefits. In Afghanistan, the focus on a single province (Uruzgan) allowed it to thoroughly investigate root causes of conflict. In contrast, the Dutch responsibility in Mali included the entire country, and proved geographically too large for the insufficient resources available to apply the method effectively, resulting in a decline in quality and making implementation of the Dutch contribution more difficult (Kuijl 2019). This is a clear example of the necessity for adapting a security assistance programme to the realities of the local challenges.

42 Interview with key stakeholders, 28 January 2020.
43 Interview with key stakeholders, 18 November 2019.
44 *Ibid*.

Lastly, the Dutch SSD programme in Burundi represented a highly flexible approach which took conditions on the ground as its starting point and built upon them to progressively bring about change. As the programme progressed, Burundians were given responsibility and authority over all three Programme Management Units, signifying that the programme was progressively locally owned by Burundians (Ball 2014: 30-31). Furthermore, the SSD programme entailed high levels of political sensitivity and greater levels of political involvement in comparison to other SSR programmes. This involved heavy investments from the Dutch in political dialogue at all levels on a daily basis, which proved essential for the programme's success (Ball 2014: 28-29). However, the programme demonstrated that it can be particularly difficult to consider factors that can unexpectedly arise in highly fragile and unstable situations. Indeed, the programme was unable to predict the 2015 political crisis that ensued in Burundi which had serious repercussions for the SSD programme. The political developments and emerging crisis changed the Dutch government's assessment of its engagement in Burundi, resulting in its premature termination of the SSD programme.

Key takeaways

- As a relatively small player, the Netherlands aims to provide added value by contributing to multilateral processes with an SSR component, applying its 3D approach to combine military, police, diplomatic and development-related means.
- The Netherlands does not have an overarching SSR policy. Although existing security and development policy documents mention the importance of a holistic approach to SSR, practice shows a strong focus on assistance focused on training, equipment and infrastructure in its security sector support, although growing attention to governance dimensions can be observed recently.
- As a smaller player, the Dutch government does not have formal coordination structures dedicated to SSR, but relies on informal interactions between staff of different departments and ministries. This flexible approach has been successful in designing holistic SSR-related programmes (e.g. in Afghanistan or in Burundi) and set up programme-level coordination structures. Yet such successes are largely dependent on individual commitments from staff members.
- The Dutch government has only a few dedicated staff working on SSR. The absence of a dedicated SSR policy or structure makes a broader dialogue and buy-in on SSR across government departments more difficult. Regular staff rotations and fluctuations in political interest in SSR also mean that institutional memory and expertise often gets lost and needs to be built up again.
- The Dutch experience in Burundi shows that good SSR practices can be realised when different expertise domains are combined and a politically savvy approach is adopted to progressively scale up cooperation with the partner government. Yet the experience in Burundi also shows that early successes can quickly get lost when the political situation changes radically.

4. Observations for a future European approach to security sector support

This section provides a number of overarching observations that draw on the analysis of EU and member state practices on supporting the security sector in foreign countries. The purpose is to inform future policy-making on EU security sector reform, notably in the context of the negotiation and future implementation of the future MFF 2021-2027 and the European Peace Facility. Some of the observations may also have validity beyond the EU and provide wider thinking on how to put SSR policies into practice. For this purpose, this section revisits the different challenges identified in section 2 in this paper.

The EPF as a entry point for a more strategic EU approach to SSR

The EU has had for many years a tradition of supporting good governance, including in the security sector. Geographically, this has initially been mainly focused on (potential) pre-accession countries. Yet as the EU is stepping up its engagement in fragile and post-conflict countries with a weak security apparatus, there is a case to be made for a growing focus on immediate stabilisation efforts, including by supporting security actors of such countries to become more effective in providing security and stability to their country and its citizens (Leboeuf 2014). At the same time, how security actors contribute to stability on the long term depends on the extent to which it respects international standards, can be held accountable and is seen as legitimate by the population.

There is no blueprint answer to the question where donors can find the right balance between more 'transactional' support to stabilisation and 'transformative' support to governance reform. The desired level of ambition will ultimately depend on a range of contextual factors such as available resources and capabilities, the nature of the relationship with the partner government and the alignment of their interests and agendas. Yet what the analysis in this paper reveals is that a real reflection on strategic objectives is often inhibited by two factors: a **conceptual** one and an **institutional** one.

Conceptually, there is little standardisation in terminology on security sector assistance and reform. While there is general consensus that the term 'SSR' signifies an aspiration to engage comprehensively in support of both operational effectiveness and legitimacy of security actors, terms like 'security sector assistance', 'capacity-building', 'reform' and 'governance' are often used interchangeably in day-to-day practice. As a result, **SSR terminology often veils a strong dominance of 'train and equip'-type assistance where wider questions on security sector governance** or how security actors can provide human security and contribute to societal benefits **often comes as afterthought** or add-on to existing assistance programmes. Such conceptual ambiguity often hinders a real discussion on concrete strategic objectives of an SSR policy and points at the need for a more sophisticated and standardised lexicon.

Institutionally, the translation of commitments into balanced and coherent SSR programmes is often impeded by **fragmented bureaucracies that tend to maintain strict divisions between more development-oriented and more security-oriented entities**. Consequently, while many donors have ambitious SSR agendas set out on paper, SSR is often the victim of clashing views, diverting interests, limited mutual trust between stakeholders and political dynamics that favour greater budgetary resources for 'train and equip' support yet less for security sector governance support.

In an EU context, such factors pose even stronger challenges, not only because of radical differences in the institutional governance of security and development policy, but also because of the leading role of member states in setting out foreign and security policy by consensus. **While member states may subscribe to the OECD definition of SSR, the extent to which they emphasise a more 'developmental' approach** focused on good governance, rule of law and civilian aspects of conflict prevention **or a more security-related approach** focused on operational cooperation and crisis management **is related to existing foreign policy interests and traditions within each member state** (Leboeuf 2014). For the EPF, the member state-driven and unanimity-based governance of the new facility will make it inevitable that implementation will continue to be subject to political horse-trading, where support for one proposal is exchanged for support for another one, as long as interests are not too misaligned.

Yet the German example discussed in this paper also shows a potential response to such conceptual and institutional divides. **The German PeaceLab process**, as described in the section on Germany**, illustrates that a broad collaborative policy-making process can foster mutual understanding among different policy communities** and help define a common language. Importantly, the involvement of civil society and experts can help broaden the debate, rationalise it, build trust and create a wider societal ownership. **A similar dialogue process could be set up at EU level** involving EU institutions, civil society, implementing partners, experts and member states officials from the security, development or diplomacy fields. While the purpose of such a dialogue process should not be to discuss or coordinate on every single SSR intervention considered by the EU, it could help nurture and sustain the policy debate at a more strategic level, help build common ground, reduce mistrust, build on a common language and vision, and take stock of experiences and lessons learned (Bärwaldt 2018). The EU's 2016 SSR communication could hereby form a basis for discussion on how the EPF can be fitted within a wider EU approach to security sector support and inform discussion on certain operational questions (e.g. on introducing safeguards in EPF decision-making and implementation) to be spelled out in a separate working document. **The EU's existing inter-service SSR task force should then be the platform to coordinate EPF activities with other EU initiatives funded under the future NDICI and other instruments.** This should help ensure that in formulating SSR approaches, equal attention is given to security sector governance concerns from the start, including in contexts where EPF support will be mobilised.

SSR requires no blueprint programmes but political savviness

As the EU is facing growing instability in its neighbouring regions, it is looking to equip itself with more flexible response mechanisms to address urgent security crises. Often, a focus on speed and flexibility is seen as undermining context sensitivity and local ownership as it limits scope to build local support or trust and favours responses that primarily respond to top-down political priorities than real needs and buy-in on the ground. Yet although SSR tends to be a long-term process, flexibility and adaptability are equally important to ensure effectiveness. **A strategic SSR engagement ideally entails a long-term engagement with partners**, yet with the possibility for short-term trial and error and flexibility to scale up or scale down support when windows of opportunity open or close. **SSR programmes should also be rooted in a good understanding of local realities, needs, conflict dynamics and power balances** on the basis of conflict analysis. In practice, often the understanding of the local situation remains rather deficient and donors use off-the-shelf models of SSR that are insufficiently tailored to the local realities and needs.

Within the community of experts and practitioners, there is a line of thinking shared by many that **SSR should happen 'bottom up'**. This builds on the argument that small assistance measures focused on the professionalisation of security sector structures (e.g. in terms of strategic development or human resources management) can have transformational effects in terms of making security institutions more accountable and more responsive to human security concerns. Such a bottom-up approach recognises the long-term nature of an SSR process, but tends to prioritise smaller initiatives with immediate results, while providing the means to build trust and long-term informal relations with change makers, open channels for political dialogue and paving the way for longer-term engagements.

This bottom-up approach, which is represented by the French approach to 'structural cooperation' spearheaded by the DCSD and has also informed current thinking within EU circles, is useful because it **adapts to the essentially political nature of change processes in governance**. It notably underlines the need for strong capacities at field level with a good understanding of existing SSR concepts to gather intelligence on the security structures of a partner country, establish networks, identify champions and engage in a dialogue.

Yet in order to have a real transformative and long-term impact, it also points, indirectly, **at the importance of being able to scale up support for security sector governance reform** when the right conditions are there. This should be based on a nationally-owned reform process. Yet practice also shows that partner countries do not always have adequate strategies in place for donors to align with as a result of weak or divided decision-making structures (Leboeuf 2014).[45] Or partner countries may equally have certain biases in their approaches, for example by putting a strong emphasis on military capabilities, with little attention to the development and deployment of civilian capacities. Such cases underline again the importance of **a solid political dialogue on priorities, potentially to be formalised in a joint compact on security sector support between the donor and partner country (**Allen and Kleinfeld 2019).

To help identify and plan SSR actions and frame them within a broader change process, the development and use of joint theories of change should be encouraged across the board. Theories of change can help bring different SSR stakeholders together to jointly agree on a set of objectives, conceptualise a change process to which both short- and longer-term assistance measures can contribute, and identify entry points for change on the basis of a shared political economy analysis. Such a method would reduce the risk of conflict between short-term security assistance and longer-term development and governance reform objectives, while also providing the flexibility to adapt when circumstances change (Bärwaldt 2018).

The **Burundi-Netherlands Security Sector Development provides a good example of an SSR programme that was all-encompassing, yet also used a progressive approach towards scaling up local ownership based on local context analysis**. The Dutch experience in Burundi also shows that ambitious programmes that follow the consensus on good SSR practice can still result in failure due to unexpected changes in the political context that are beyond control. A healthy degree of realism about the potential of SSR ambitions is therefore needed. Even small SSR measures can have a transformative impact if implemented at the right time and create the basis for broader support packages. Yet in the end, SSR will always be a matter of trial and error, and mechanisms to pull out support when needed, based on clear and objective criteria, should be built in.

[45] Interview with key stakeholder, 28 November 2019.

Safeguards can reduce, but not completely eliminate risks

Providing security sector assistance comes with various risks. Past practice shows several examples of where military forces that had benefited from foreign assistance were involved in human rights abuses or where equipment ended up in the wrong hands, thus strengthening conflict dynamics. This poses significant challenges to the EU's commitment to its values agenda and its legitimacy as an external actor. **The EU should therefore introduce the necessary safeguards to limit such risks as much as possible when engaging in security sector assistance**. Such safeguards should inform both decision-making on EPF projects as well as guarantee monitoring of their implementation.

First, managing risks start with **taking informed decisions**. Allocating funds for security sector assistance projects should be based on a good understanding of both the potential and the associated risks of such support. In the context of the CBSD initiative, **the EU has already developed a risk assessment matrix, which serves as a useful and sophisticated tool to help inform decision-making** that should also be used in the context of the EPF and wider SSR-related projects (e.g. CSDP missions). Yet such an analytical tool can only be fully effective if the right capacities are in place to conduct informed analysis on the basis of a solid understanding of the political realities of the partner country and the role and functioning of its security sector. As the EU's political capacities at Delegation level and access to military and security sector expertise remains rather thinly spread, there is a chance that risk assessments are done too hastily or even reduced to a box-ticking exercise. A practical solution could be **for the EU to explore available expertise elsewhere, for instance by cooperation field-level networks of experts at member state level** (e.g. defence attachés or the French cooperant network) or within specialised knowledge centres or implementing agencies.

Second, **military equipment support should**, at a minimum, **be subject to existing criteria of the EU's common rules governing control on exports of military technology and equipment**. Yet there can be differences in how European (and international) rules are domesticated by each EU member state, with some introducing stricter and others more lenient rules and procedures. Such divergences may have an impact on EPF implementation, as it risks favouring working through countries with more flexible arms export rules. To create a level playing field and a strong and coherent risk management system, the EU should therefore consider adding its own controls. Inspiration could come from the German mechanism of arms export compliance controls, provided that it invests in the necessary human resources to make such mechanisms credible and effective. The EU could also consider adopting a compact-based approach, involving **the agreement between both parties** on a compact **that spells out the support measures and their intended outcomes**, as well as a number of mitigating measures regarding human rights protection and protection of civilians, with pre-identified criteria and mechanisms for sanctioning when commitments are not upheld (Godefroy 2019). For such compacts to be effective, **a system of regular assessments and evaluations would be needed, steered by a centralised body within that exerts oversight**. EU Delegations should also be endowed with the expertise to negotiate such compacts, monitor the context and enforce conditionalities through political dialogue.

Third, the EU should ensure **transparency and accountability** in how EPF and wider SSR programmes are implemented, not in the least **through regular reporting to the European Parliament** and by granting it a right of scrutiny. As the EPF will be established as an instrument under the intergovernmental CFSP, the European Parliament will likely have no formal oversight role over the EPF. Yet involving the European Parliament in its democratic control (potentially in cooperation with national parliaments) (Besch 2020), would not only contribute to the credibility of the EU's commitment to international standards of security sector governance, but also ensure a more open mechanism for political debate on the strategic direction and implementation of EU security sector assistance and how it fits with the EU's wider global interests and values. The EPF could also continue the established tradition under the African Peace Facility of regular external evaluation for accountability and learning purposes.

Finally, one should realise that risks associated with security sector support can never be completely controlled. Ultimately, SSR often is a highly intricate process with no guarantee of success. The aim for donors like the EU should therefore be to have a good knowledge of the actors, a good understanding of when to intervene and when not, what level of risks are acceptable and how they can be managed, and realise that success will often be imperfect (Leboeuf 2014).

The added value of the EPF builds on assumptions that remain to be tested

Although several member states run their own national initiatives in the domain of security sector assistance, **national officials from different backgrounds see added value in having a European instrument** for (military) security capacity-building in the form of a **European Peace Facility**, albeit for different reasons.

For some, the EPF is primarily about **giving the EU a greater voice in international security** and equipping it better to act as a credible geopolitical power and influential partner in a global environment marked by shifting power balances.[46] This is based on the argument that by pooling member state resources, a European facility will have a higher chance of real strategic impact than individual states and can bring additional political leverage, for instance on setting results benchmarks or conditioning support to broader governance reform agendas. Particularly stakeholders from foreign policy circles have highlighted this point. However, that financial clout automatically translates into political leverage is more an assumption than a fact and depends on a number of factors, including how strategic interests of both donor and beneficiary governments compare. As pointed out earlier, it also depends on the willingness of the EU and its member states to beef up capacities for political dialogue within EU Delegations.

A more operational benefit expected from the EPF is that **it can harmonise efforts and avoid duplication of support.** This draws, inter alia, on the experience in Mali, where different donors provided communication equipment to the armed forces that was not interoperable and therefore very complex to use. It is expected that pooled support at the EU level could at least partially help foster better coordination (Leboeuf 2017). Also this argument is to be tested as the EPF will not replace member states' own programmes and will also be subject to its own political dynamics and agendas that might have a negative impact on its coordination potential.

A third argument in favour of the EPF is that **it can be complementary to other initiatives**. Complementarity potential is seen in two ways. First, the sheer financial volume of the EPF dwarfs national budgets or other EU initiatives for security sector assistance. Member states therefore see potential in mobilising EPF resources to scale up smaller national initiatives that have already been deployed and tested on the ground. As such, EPF projects could build on existing initiatives and rely on member state

[46] Interview with key stakeholder, 10 December 2019.

expertise on the ground, while beefing up resources. It is also argued that the EPF can complement the EU'S CBSD initiative, allowing the latter to focus on its development-oriented mandate.[47] Second, the European nature of the EPF is seen by some as a source of legitimacy that would not carry the historical legacy of colonialism with which security sector assistance is often associated.[48] Yet in reality, the 'legitimising' potential of the EPF cannot be simply assumed but will be intimately linked with the practice of its implementation and how it will inform popular perceptions on the EU's commitment to its values.

Finally, **the added value of the EU in the domain of SSR should not only be judged against how it complements the member states**. As the EU likes to stress its commitment to multilateralism, a challenge for the Union is how it can be relevant in a field with many actors (including, for instance, the UN or the AU) and can contribute to a multi-partnership approach to SSR. Here, **it is important for the EU to learn from past experiences, and notably from the APF.** As pointed out, the APF has been an important tool to build a partnership with the African Union that has **both supported responses to conflicts in Africa and helped build the AU's institutional capacities to run peace operations**. The added value of this partnership has been the EU's financial weight, its long-term perspective and predictability, combined with the legitimacy of the APSA as an African-owned architecture and its ability to deploy operations quickly, as well as the availability of channels for dialogue between the partners at political and technical level. In the future, **the flexibilisation and broadened scope foreseen by the EPF should not go at the expense of the gains made through the APF in providing the building blocks for a peace and security partnership with the AU**, which nevertheless remains in full development. At the same time, it should reflect on how the partnership can adapt to institutional dynamics within the EU and the AU, as well as broader geopolitical trends. **This can include closer cooperation with the UN** as well as a clarification of the relation between the AU and regional organisations in Africa. In general, a growing focus on more flexible modalities to address immediate EU security concerns should not lose sight of the longer-term benefits of supporting recognised regional security architectures in terms of both effectiveness and accountability (Mackie et al. 2017).

[47] Interview with key stakeholder, 6 November 2019.
[48] Interview with key stakeholder, 25 February 2020.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to provide some reflections on the future of the EU's role in working with foreign security actors. It notably looks at security sector reform as an instrument that operates at the nexus of security and development policy, and because of that also faces various challenges and dilemmas at both the strategic and operational level. Such challenges include finding the right balance between short- and long-term objectives, reconciling interests and values, ensuring context sensitivity while responding to high-level security priorities, and overcoming bureaucratic divisions and differences in institutional culture between different policy communities.

Drawing on past and current practices from the EU and three of its member states in the domain of security sector assistance and reform, the paper provides insights on how such challenges can be practically dealt with. We argue that:

- A solid, comprehensive SSR policy not only requires a spelled-out concept or strategy, but also a continued strategic and policy-level dialogue process between policy communities. Involving experts and civil society can notably help to make discussions more open and evidence-based and less conflictual.
- SSR needs to build on localised approaches that are informed by political context analysis and build on existing reform processes or windows of opportunity to foster long-term change through targeted interventions.
- Security sector assistance, when focused on enabling operational capacities, should build on a solid understanding of associated risks in doing harm or negatively impacting conflict dynamics.

The analysis shows that practical tools exist to manage risks, but that harm can never be completely avoided. To ensure an SSR approach that is both context-sensitive, politically savvy and risk-informed, the analysis highlights the importance of investing in political analysis capacities and SSR expertise at the field level.

This paper looks at the future of EU support to security actors, notably in the context of the design and operationalisation of the future European Peace Facility and the new MFF. Its main argument is that the EU should ensure that a future EPF is not viewed in isolation of the broader external action instruments and objectives of the EU, and should therefore be integrated in an overarching SSR support policy and wider political approach in dealing with the countries concerned. As the EU is redefining its role as a global security actor, it should not forget to learn from existing European practices, build on past achievements and remain loyal to its values.

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