



**Security Sector Reform  
and the Dilemmas of Liberal  
Peacebuilding**

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**ABSTRACT**

In recent years, Security Sector Reform (SSR) has emerged as a key component of international post-conflict reconstruction efforts. At the same time, however, it is becoming increasingly clear that the holistic approach to SSR that is outlined in policy papers is very difficult to translate into effective interventions in fragile states. This paper identifies two competing approaches for a 'contextualized' SSR-agenda: A monopoly model that focuses on restoring the state's monopoly on the means of violence and a hybrid model that seeks to strengthen local community-based security and justice solutions. The paper argues that as a strategy for intervention, the choice is not simply between a top-down 'imposition' of a universal state model and a bottom-up approach of 'working with what is there'. It is also a choice between direct and indirect forms of rule. This makes the dilemma real for liberal-minded practitioners and observers who for good reasons remain reluctant towards the colonial practice of ruling through middle-men. The paper does not offer a solution to the dilemma. When two imperatives pull in opposite directions, 'answers' are bound to be ad hoc: Specific and contextual, rather than principled and generic. The paper does, however, suggest that part of the way forward may be to move towards a more 'entry-oriented' mode of operation that recognizes that the role of external actors is to help establish a space for security and development solutions, rather than to fill that space.

## INTRODUCTION

The consensual policy discourse on peacebuilding, statebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction makes it appear as if there is broad agreement on what is needed to transform fragile, conflict-ridden societies into well-functioning states. In practice, however, the international community – liberal-minded as it may be – consists of a multitude of actors that come to the field for a variety of reasons and with a variety of understandings of what needs to be done, and how. One of the virtues of the liberal template is that it provides this fragmented ‘peacebuilding community’ with a shared narrative that – in theory – enables security and development concerns to be addressed as closely interlinked, rather than disconnected, domains. The vice is that the narrative is so generic that it remains quite unclear how it should be translated into targeted interventions in specific situations.

Drawing on the literature on the dilemmas of contemporary forms of intervention (Cheslerman 2004; Call and Wyeth 2008; Paris and Sisk 2009a), this paper uses the policy sub-field known as Security Sector Reform (SSR) as a prism for exploring how the inherent tensions of/within the liberal template currently manifest themselves. At the present juncture where peacebuilding is understood in terms of statebuilding, SSR provides an insightful perspective on the dilemmas of liberal interventionism. It is within this policy sub-field that the troubled relationship between the security of the state and the security of the people becomes most evident. This paper argues that at the present juncture, the key question confronting the SSR agenda is whether a conventional state monopoly on violence is required to ensure democratic governance, rule of law and other liberal values, or whether other – hybrid or non-state – forms of security and justice provision may be more in tune with local

realities and preferences and thus more legitimate and sustainable.

The paper presents the background for this discussion and suggests that as a strategy for intervention, the choice is not simply between a top-down ‘imposition’ of a universal state model and a bottom-up ‘working with what is there’ approach. It is also a choice between direct and indirect forms of rule. This makes the dilemma real for most liberal-minded practitioners and observers who for good reasons remain reluctant of the colonial practice of ruling through middle-men (Mamdani 1996). The paper does not pretend to offer a solution to the dilemma. When two imperatives pull in opposite directions, ‘answers’ are bound to be ad hoc: Specific and contextual, rather than principled and generic. It does, however, suggest that part of the way forward may be to move away from the current fixation with coherence and strategy and the need for a ‘shared vision’ towards a more ‘entry-oriented’ mode that recognizes that the role of external actors is to help establish a space for security and development solutions, rather than to fill the space.

## THE LIBERAL TEMPLATE

The liberal template for intervention dates back to the end of the Cold War and the rise of ‘new wars’ as a threat to international peace and security (Kaldor 1999). The template reflects two distinct ideas: Firstly, the idea that *security and development are inextricably linked* and indivisible: One cannot be pursued without the other. Secondly, the idea that *democratization* of war-torn societies will enhance peace, order and stability both at the domestic level and internationally. The first idea is widely referred to as the ‘security-development nexus’, whereas the second idea is known as the ‘liberal peace thesis’.

The security-development nexus implies firstly that violent conflict is seen as ‘development in reverse’ (World Bank 2003). Wars hinder economic growth and impose substantial human, political and economic costs on affected societies and regions: To achieve development, violent conflict must be prevented. It further implies that poverty, inequality and repression are regarded as ‘root causes’ for violent conflict: To achieve lasting peace and security, it is necessary to promote political and economic development (UNSG 1992). Finally, and politically perhaps most importantly, the nexus between security and development implies that wealthy nations cannot isolate themselves from the effects of poverty, instability and conflict in poorer countries: To achieve security at home, Western governments must pursue development abroad (Duffield 2001).

This type of reasoning goes beyond conventional state-centric notions of both security and development. It introduces broader notions of ‘human development’ and ‘human security’ that takes their starting point in the welfare, safety and freedom of people, rather than states (UNDP 1994). It does, however, maintain that the state is the fundamental unit upon which the international system is built. This is taken to imply that international order *and* human security can be promoted simultaneously by ‘improving’ existing states – that is, by promoting liberal values such as democracy, human rights, rule of law and good governance. This suggestion is based on old claims of a *liberal peace*, which essentially holds that liberal democracies are more peaceful than non-democracies, because they (i) tend not to wage war against other liberal democracies and because (ii) they have developed peaceful mechanisms for solving domestic political conflicts and thus remain unlikely to experience civil war (Doyle 1986).

When taken together, the security-development nexus and the liberal peace thesis have

been very influential in shaping and informing the ‘global experiment’ of international interventionism that was initiated with the end of the Cold War (Paris 2004). The standard formula for ‘second-generation’ or ‘multi-dimensional’ UN peacekeeping operations that evolved throughout the 1990s is a concrete example of how these ideas have been put into practice (Bellamy and Williams 2010: 13-41, 93-120). The formula included the deployment of military troops or ‘peacekeepers’ that were mandated to uphold peace and stability alongside a variety of civilian ‘peacebuilders’ tasked with the promotion of comprehensive political and economic reforms aimed at transforming a war-torn country into a liberal democracy with a functioning market economy (Paris 2004). These elements constitute the basic core of the ‘liberal template’ and remain constitutive for UN peace operations today. The application of the template has, however, shifted over time, as the peacebuilding discourse of the 1990s has given way to the current statebuilding discourse (Call and Wyeth 2008). While focus in the early 1990s was on *freedom* (political and economic) as a key ingredient in security and development, focus is now on *capacity* and the need for effective public *institutions* as a precondition for peace and stability. Today, advocates of the liberal template are less concerned with addressing ‘root causes’ such as poverty and inequality and more concerned with ensuring that the war-torn state is capable of fulfilling basic state functions that are regarded as vital for both lasting peace and sustainable development:

If States are fragile, the peoples of the world will not enjoy the security, development and justice that are their right. Therefore, one of the great challenges of the new millennium is to ensure that all States are strong enough to meet the many challenges they face (UNSG 2005: para 19).

The universal presentation and benign motivations behind the liberal template makes it very persuasive: Often “liberal peacebuilding is not just seen as the best way to create peace and stability – it is considered to be the only way” (Stamnes 2010: 8). Many critical scholars that advocate alternative approaches are often “liberals in disguise” who embrace different variants of the liberal template (Paris 2010: 353). Complex crisis situations such as those unfolding in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Sudan and Somalia have led few scholars to call for a termination of international intervention altogether or for an abandoning of the liberal emphasis on democratic governance and respect for human rights (Paris 2010: 357). As soon as scholars engage in the normative question of ‘what to do’, it seems that the main fault-line in the debate is not between intervention and non-intervention but rather between different graduations of liberal intervention (Richmond and Franks 2009).

This underlines that the **broad appeal** of the liberal discourse does not translate into a clear understanding of the **exact meaning** and implications of the liberal template. On the contrary. Several studies have shown how core concepts and such as ‘the development-security nexus’ and the entire peacebuilding discourse have multiple understandings (see e.g. Stern and Öjendal 2010; Heathershaw 2008). Often one needs only to scratch the surface of policy statements to see that the **consensus** remains quite shallow: Security agencies remain concerned with problems of (in)security, while development agencies are primarily concerned with problems of (under)development. The multitude of bilateral agencies, multilateral institutions and regional organizations that act on behalf of the international community have yet to reach a shared understanding of what ‘peacebuilding’ actually means – and how it relates to associated concepts such as ‘statebuilding’, ‘stabilization’ and ‘post-conflict

reconstruction’ – including in particular what it entails in practice and which steps are necessary and in what order to fulfil peacebuilding objectives (Barnett et al. 2007).

## COHERENCE AND THE LIBERAL VALUE DILEMMAS

The lack of a shared understanding is increasingly understood to be an impediment to effective international intervention. Inconsistent policies and fragmented programming on the part of the international community have come to be seen as one of the main reasons why international intervention have so often failed to produce the desired results (UNSG 2009; see also OECD 2007a). As a result, *coherence* is now seen as a key requirement for successful intervention. The rationale is that the sheer complexity of the task at hand calls for the fragmented international community to “get its act together” as a report from the Utstein Group argued in 2004 (Smith 2004).

This implies that national and international actors, civilian and military establishments, developmental and humanitarian agencies and multilateral and bilateral institutions should go beyond merely trying to coordinate their efforts to avoid overlap and duplication and instead seek to genuinely work together in an ‘integrated’, ‘comprehensive’, ‘holistic’ or ‘joined up’ manner. The underlying claim is that interventions will become more efficient, effective and sustainable, if the broad range of actors involved have “a common strategy, based on a common understanding of the problem, a common theory of change, and an agreed synchronized plan for implementing and evaluating such a strategy” (de Coning and Friis 2011: 248).

The coherence agenda promises several things: First and foremost, it offers a way of regulating the interface between civilian and

military aspects of the international engagement. Secondly, it offers a way of ‘contextualizing’ the intervention: Bringing about a grounded and feasible approach to post-conflict transitions that reflects the national priorities and needs of the particular situation (Tschirgi 2010). Thirdly, it offers a way of linking the short and the long term by “meeting the most urgent and important peacebuilding objectives”, while ensuring that “actions or decisions taken in the short term do not prejudice medium- and long-term peacebuilding” (UNSG 2009: 6-7).

At the heart of the coherence agenda is thus a call for a more strategic approach to peacebuilding (Philpott and Powers 2010). Such an approach is seen as a way of addressing the intrinsic dilemmas of the liberal template by bringing them down to earth. Strategies for peace should reflect the particular needs and problems of each individual case, rather than provide standardized and principled solutions. In the words of UN secretary-general Ban Ki Moon:

Priority-setting must reflect the unique conditions and needs of the country rather than be driven by what international actors can or want to supply. [...] Getting the timing and sequencing right among priorities requires a delicate balance and difficult trade-offs within the framework of a coherent strategy (UNSG 2009: 6-7).

This is evidently an ambitious agenda. If taken seriously, it demands that a shared understanding is reached on at least three aspects: (i) which objectives are most urgent and important in the particular situation, (ii) which steps are necessary to fulfill those objectives and (iii) in what order should these steps be taken. Policymakers acknowledge that these are essentially political questions, yet tend nevertheless to take a relatively ‘technical’ approach to problems of

incoherence – searching primarily for organizational solutions. While it seems clear that the pursuit of coherence is impeded by differences in decision-making processes, bureaucratic procedures and administrative practices of the various agencies that act on behalf of the international community, focusing on this level of analysis only overlooks that there are “more deeply rooted hurdles to achieving coherence” (de Coning and Friis 2011: 247).

To explore the depth of these hurdles, it is helpful to start by acknowledging that the liberal template for intervention is inherently paradoxical. The paradoxes, contradictions, tensions and dilemmas of liberal intervention have been thoroughly explored in the literature in recent years (see in particular Bain 2001; Paris 2004; Chesterman 2004; Caplan 2005; Chandler 2006; Zaum 2007; Paris and Sisk 2009a). Uniting this body of literature is the suggestion that the liberal template outlines an agenda that is intrinsically conflicted as it seeks to pursue international order, state sovereignty and human security, simultaneously. The argument is *not* that these aims are always conflicting or contradictory. In fact, most scholars writing on these topics tend to agree that in the long run, international order, state sovereignty and human security may indeed be interdependent and mutually supportive. The argument is rather that in the short to medium term, any form of international action or inaction is bound to incur that trade-offs or compromises are made between distinct objectives, sometimes sacrificing one to further another. This paper suggests that the current manifestation of these dilemmas and tensions can fruitfully be explored by turning to the question of effective and legitimate provision of security. The next part of the paper is thus devoted to the ongoing debate within the policy sub-field that is dealing most explicitly with this question: Security Sector Reform.



## A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO EFFECTIVE AND LEGITIMATE SECURITY

Security sector reform (SSR) is a policy framework of fairly recent origin – dating back to the late 1990s – but the areas and activities associated with SSR are well-known elements of the liberal template. It aims essentially at transforming poorly governed or ineffective security agencies into professional and accountable institutions that operate effectively and efficiently in a manner consistent with principles of democratic governance (OECD 2007b; GNF-SSR 2007). Related terms include Security System Reform, Security Sector Governance, Security Sector Transformation and Security Sector Development. Uniting these labels is the largely uncontested idea that “effective and accountable security institutions are essential for sustainable peace and development” (UNSG 2008: 5).

The liberal underpinnings of SSR are evident in the emphasis placed on curbing or controlling the powers of the state through the promotion of rule of law, good governance and democratic oversight. It is, however, also evident in the emphasis SSR places on ensuring that the state is capable of fulfilling its functions, i.e. providing security and justice to its citizens and upholding law and order within its territory. As such, SSR is indicative of the ‘return of the state’ that was initiated with the World Bank’s Development Report from 1997 and its emphasis on the role of the state in providing an enabling environment for sustainable peace and development. SSR is a (if not *the*) core element in the wider statebuilding agenda that currently provides the main liberal narrative for understanding and responding to complex political emergencies in the global South. The SSR-agenda addresses the most basic building blocks of the modern state – the monopoly over the use of coercive force – and

seeks to juggle “the quintessential Weberian task of balancing the effectiveness and legitimacy of security forces” (Paris and Sisk 2009b: 16).

With the dual emphasis on operational efficiency and democratic oversight, the SSR agenda speaks to both civilian and military establishments in donor countries. As a distinct policy field, however, its roots are developmental. In fact, the SSR-model was formulated in the 1990s as an explicit alternative to the militarized forms of security assistance that had dominated during the Cold War. Instead of narrow programs aimed at training and equipping (T&E) the armed forces, the SSR-model provides a developmentalized model for security assistance that is “people-centred, locally owned and based on democratic norms and human rights principles and the rule of law” (OECD 2007b: 21). Focus is on democratic governance and accountability of the entire security sector, not on strengthening individual (often armed) institutions (Albrecht et al. 2010: 74). A key implication of this is that SSR is conceptualized as a long-term process rather than a means of overcoming immediate security threats. It promotes a *holistic approach* to the problems associated with poorly governed and ineffective security structures; not a quick fix to stabilization in conflict-affected areas.

The emphasis placed on holism underlines the affinity with the coherence agenda and the focus on integrated or comprehensive approaches. SSR thus belongs to “the same crop as the strategic concepts of effects-based and comprehensive approaches to operations”, yet it is the only concept within this school of thought to come from the development community (Egnell and Haldén 2009: 30). The coherence agenda translates into three features that are regarded as pivotal for applying a developmentalized approach to security in practice:

Firstly, coherence (or holism) implies that the ‘security sector’ has to be understood in its totality, that is as encompassing all those actors and institutions that play a role in ensuring the security of the state and its people. An authoritative definition has yet to emerge, yet the one offered by OECD provides a much-copied template (OECD 2005: 20-21). According to the OECD, the security sector<sup>1</sup> encompasses four types of actors/institutions: (i) core security actors, such as the armed forces and the police; (ii) bodies responsible for security management and oversight, such as the executive, the legislature and relevant ministries, including the finance ministry; (iii) justice and law enforcement institutions, such as judiciary, justice ministries, prisons and human rights commission; and (iv) non-statutory security forces, such as guerrilla armies, party militias and private security companies.

Secondly, it follows that it is the interplay between all of these agencies that needs to be improved in order to enhance security, not just their individual capacity. At the operational level this suggests that reforms in one part of the sector should be complemented by reforms in other parts of the sector: Police reform needs to go together with e.g. reforms of the penal system. At a more principle level, however, holism entails that questions concerning operational efficiency cannot be treated in isolation from questions of democratic oversight: A key characteristic of SSR is not so much that it “conceives of the security sector as more than its blunt, hard security instruments [but rather that it recognizes] that the security forces cannot perform their duties effectively in the absence of competent legal frameworks and

judicial bodies as well as correctional institutions and government oversight bodies” (Sedra 2010b: 16).

This underlines, lastly, that a holistic approach to SSR needs to be guided by and seen as part of a broader national strategy, vision or framework for change. SSR cannot be pursued as a distinct field of intervention. It must be seen as an integral – and pivotal – part of a country’s transition from fragility, conflict and poverty to sustainable peace and development. Although the SSR-agenda is formulated and discussed as a distinct, and sometimes fairly technical, policy sub-field, its transformative ambitions are wide-reaching: Reforms of the security sector are regarded as a key mechanism for renegotiating the social contract between state/society and rulers/ruled (Knight 2009).

From the outset, holism has been recognized as both a strength and a weakness of the SSR-model. It helps relate individual projects and processes to wider goals of democratic governance and rule of law, yet it also provides for a reform agenda so ambitious and comprehensive that “nobody knows where to start or how to proceed” (Smith 2001:13). Perhaps for this reason, the greatest successes of SSR are to be found in policy formulation, rather than actual implementation. According to the OECD, “donors continue to take an ad hoc approach to SSR viewing the different sectors in isolation and not as an interconnected system” (OECD 2007b: 13). In practice, it seems very difficult to translate the holistic SSR-principles into specific, focused and effective interventions. Despite its growing popularity, SSR appears thus to be a model in crisis: Widely accepted in theory, but largely unsuccessful in practice (Sedra 2007).

The gap between policy and practice has been explained as revealing both a demand and a supply side problem of the holistic SSR-model: On the supply side, donor states tend to lack the necessary political wherewithal, in-

<sup>1</sup> The OECD uses the term ‘system’ rather than ‘sector’ to underline the interconnectivity between the numerous actors and institutions.

stitutional frameworks, and long-term outlook to undertake the type of transformative agenda entailed in SSR, while reform recipients rarely demand or buy into the comprehensive form of transformation that donors are selling (Sedra 2010a: 17). Evidently, the political preferences and interests on the part of both donors and recipients of SSR play a major role in determining the extent to which the SSR-principles are translated into practice. However, focusing on this level of analysis only suggests that there is nothing wrong with the model as such, or rather that the main problem is with those who apply it. The basic argument in this paper is that the crisis of the SSR-model is a reflection of inherent paradoxes that flow from the use of outside intervention to foster democratic forms of self-governance. To understand the widely acknowledged gap between SSR policy and SSR practice it seems in particular useful to explore the tensions that are linked to *the promotion of universal values as a remedy for local problems* (Paris and Sisk 2009c: 305). This allows us to see that the main challenge for the holistic, developmentalized approach to security that is embodied in the SSR-agenda is not to overcome the gap between policy and practice, but rather to transcend the divide between the universal concepts of SSR and the particular contexts in which SSR is being pursued.

The SSR-model, despite its people-centred outlook, remains state-centric: It is concerned with reforming centralized institutions – the army, the police, the judiciary, and the parliament – to ensure that security and justice services are provided in a uniform manner to all citizens of the state. Yet, in fragile and conflict-affected states, these institutions are far from being the only – or even the most significant – providers of security. In the absence of effective and legitimate state provision of security, local and informal justice and conflict management systems tend to expand, often enjoying considerable local legitimacy (Menkhaus

2010: 182). A tension thus exists between the state-centrism of the SSR-model and the societal realities on the ground. The remaining part of the paper outlines the policy dilemmas that spring from this tension.

## **TWO COMPETING MODELS OF SSR**

The policy dilemmas are related to the double-edged nature of security provision: Those who provide security also have the capacity to threaten those they allegedly should be protecting. It is precisely for this reason that the SSR agenda seeks to install ‘safeguards’ of democratic and/or civilian oversight that can prevent the state – i.e. the central government – from putting itself above the law. This is essentially an agenda that seeks to curb the powers of an abusive and repressive regime. The problem is, however, that in a fragile state the centralized government is primarily characterized by its inability to project its authority across the territory of the state. Fragile states are thus not ‘states’ in the Weberian sense of the word: They cannot successfully claim to hold a monopoly on the legitimate means of violence. Instead they are ‘hybrid political orders’ in which public authority is exercised by a multitude of actors whose relations to the formal state may change over time and from place to place: Sometimes supporting the state, sometimes rivalling it (Boege et al. 2008; see also Lund 2006). The key question is whether this fragmentation of public authority is best understood as a ‘fixable’ deviation from a universal norm of effective Weberian statehood (Ghani and Lockhart 2008), or as a persistent feature of a particular form of post-colonial statehood (Clapham 2002).

While the question may seem theoretic, it translates almost directly into the ongoing policy debate on the future of SSR. This debate is

dominated by two competing suggestions for addressing the tension between the (universal) state-centrism of the holistic SSR-model and the (particular) societal realities of fragmented authority in fragile states. The first model aims at establishing a legitimate state monopoly over the use of the coercive force and is referred to here as the ‘monopoly model’. The second model in contrast seeks to build upon the existing fragmented structures to enhance everyday security. It is referred to here as the ‘hybrid model’.

*The monopoly model* is by far the dominant strand in the theory and practice of liberal intervention. It is echoed in the tendency of the UN Security Council to mandate multi-dimensional peace operations to assist in the extension of state authority throughout the territory, and explicitly mentioned in the Capstone doctrine that outlines the guiding principles for UN peace operations:

The deployment of troops and police must be accompanied by efforts to *restore the State’s monopoly over the legitimate use of force*; re-establish the rule of law and strengthen respect for human rights; foster the emergence of legitimate and effective institutions of governance; and promote socio-economic recovery (DPKO 2008: 87-8, emphasis added).

This model takes it for granted that the Weberian state-model is the only form of political order in which good governance and democratic accountability can be ensured: “for rule of law to take root, the state must first have a monopoly of force to provide at least minimal protection for its citizens”, as the former UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Liberia, Jacques Paul Klein, recently argued in a policy brief co-authored with other scholar-practitioners with experience from Liberia (Blaney et al. 2010: 1). The implication

is that in fragile post-conflict settings, SSR-efforts should focus on operational effectiveness rather than democratic oversight as a necessary first step. While this challenges the conventional SSR-model’s emphasis on effectiveness and legitimacy as intrinsically linked, it remains within the confines of the wider liberal template and endorses a sequential approach based on the assumption that a certain minimum of state capacity has to be in place before extensive reforms aimed at controlling or curbing the power of the state can be pursued. Roland Paris has captured this strategy as ‘institutionalization before liberalization’ based on the straightforward logic that institutions need to be built before they can be liberalized (Paris 2004). Compared to the neo-liberal focus on freedom that dominated the 1990’s peacebuilding discourse, the monopoly model signals a return to the Hobbesian basics of the liberal state: “the essence of stateness is [...] enforcement: the ultimate ability to send someone with a gun to force people to comply with the state’s laws” (Fukuyama 2004: 8). In order for the liberal state to provide security and protection to its citizens, the state must demand a force superior to what others may have at their disposal. Seen from this perspective, establishing a liberal peace in fragile states involves not merely the taming of the Hobbesian Leviathan but the actual establishing of the Leviathan.

*The hybrid model* in contrast is based on the assumption that **stable and legitimate governance structures** must be built on the basis of the actual institutions that function in the specific context, rather than on generic blueprints provided by outsiders (Boege et al. 2009; Hughes 2010). This approach recognizes that post-colonial states, in particular in Africa, “have hardly had a monopoly of legitimate force at any point in time” (Ebo 2007: 37) and that public authority is exercised by ‘twilight institutions’ whose relationship to the formal state waxes and wanes over time (Lund 2006).

Instead of insisting that the formal state should control all legitimate means of violence, it will be more in tune with the realities on the ground to “work with multiple authorities in order to maximize their strengths and minimize their weaknesses” (Baker 2010: 217). Whereas the monopoly model tend to either ignore non-state powerholders or portray them as warlords preying on the population, the hybrid model assumes that non-state authorities are not a priori ‘better’ or ‘worse’ than the state. Effective SSR programming thus needs to be based on a realistic assessment of how existing forms of security and justice are provided at the local level rather than on a normative ideal of how it ought to be provided (Scheye 2010).

Albeit far from as widespread as the monopoly model, the hybrid model has also found its way into policy documents. Referred to as the ‘multi-layered approach’, the reasoning behind the hybrid model has been incorporated into the most recent OECD ‘Handbook on SSR’ (OECD 2007b). It has also been adopted by individual donor countries, including e.g. the UK whose ‘stabilisation unit’ regards the multi-layered approach as a key element of ‘stabilizing’ security sectors in fragile states in order to pave the way for more comprehensive SSR-programmes (UK 2011). This illustrates that the hybrid model in much the same way as the monopoly model can be contained within the broad confines of the liberal template by regarding it as a ‘first step’ in a sequenced process. The challenge for the hybrid model – seen from a conventional SSR perspective – is to ensure that the various forms of non-state security providers are incorporated into an overarching national structure. To accommodate this, a key aspect of the multi-layered approach as it has been formulated by donor agencies is to establish links between state and non-state providers of security and justice that can provide for a coherent system of regulation, accountability and democratic governance. In this sense,

the multi-layered approach provides another, indirect, route towards statebuilding. Instead of strengthening the state and its institutions directly, it “attempts to extend the scope of state control into areas where its influence is limited by means of negotiating relations of sovereignty with existing non-state providers of security” (Albrecht et al. 2010: 82).

This illustrates that despite their obvious differences, the monopoly and hybrid models share several characteristics: First and foremost, they attempt to revise the conventional SSR model to better reflect the realities on the ground. Secondly, their proposed ‘contextualisation’ involves adding a strong dose of pragmatism to the lofty idealism of the holistic approach. In each their own way, the two attempts at ‘conceptualizing’ SSR entail that a choice is made between state security and human security based on an assessment of which type of security matters most to the objectives of the international intervention. At the core of each model is a claim that either state security or human security is ‘more’ fundamental for long-term peace and stability. The revisions of the holistic SSR-model thus suggest that a people-centred state-centric approach to statebuilding simply is not feasible: When confronted with the realities on the ground, choices have to be made between focusing efforts on the state or the people – at least in the initial stages.

For the purpose of this paper, the question remains whether the co-existence of two such radically different statebuilding strategies indicate an existential crisis of the liberal template or rather is a sign of resilience. Arguments can be made either way. One might reasonably claim that in some situations, the monopoly model is more appropriate, whereas the hybrid model provides a better fit in others, and that this illustrates how adaptive and flexible the liberal template is: Not at all the ‘one-size-fits-all-model’ it is frequently criticized of being. In this paper, however, focus remains on policy

dilemmas and why the choice between two alternative SSR-models is far from a happy one.

## **SSR AS STRATEGIES FOR INTERVENTION**

Confronted with the societal realities on the ground in fragile states, the holistic SSR-model comes through as 'laudable, a-historical and overambitious' (Egnell and Haldén 2009). The main question for the SSR-agenda – and by extension the liberal template – is whether this calls for a lowering of the liberal ambitions, a stronger focus on the non-state, or both. To international policymakers, the answer to that question depends on which model of security assistance that is considered most appropriate to the objectives of intervention: A model that aims at building a legitimate state monopoly over the use of coercive force, or a model that acknowledges hybrid political orders as a permanent feature of the states in question? It is fair to suggest that those who are primarily concerned with international peace and security tend to lean towards the monopoly model, whereas those who are primarily focused on development and human security are more inclined to favour the hybrid option. Yet, the issue is far more muddled than that.

The monopoly model lends itself easily to the failed states discourse and the argument that the imperative challenge of our time is to transform such 'ungoverned territories' into responsible sovereign states that can fulfill their obligations as states and contribute to upholding order and stability at the global level (Fukuyama 2004). Albeit the security concerns of the people actually living in those areas are part of the equation, they are not the primary objects (or subjects) of security. The main objective is to reduce the risk of transnational threats and 'spill-over' from local crisis and conflicts. This argument has been a key element in the lib-

eral template from the outset, yet it has been radicalized after the terrorist attacks on USA in 2001. In the post-9/11 climate, the monopoly model thus offers a timely argument for why and how strengthening the state's ability to control what goes on inside and across its territorial borders is the prime concern of intervention.

In contrast, the hybrid model is – at the face of it – concerned with the everyday security needs of the people living in so-called failed states. Instead of focusing on the providers of security, it focuses on the traditional target groups of donors: The poor, the vulnerable, the marginalized (Richmond 2009). Instead of adopting a sequentialized approach in which efficiency comes before legitimacy, it maintains the holistic SSR-approach and argues that the short-term choice is not between legitimacy and efficiency, but rather, between different *perceptions* of legitimacy and efficiency. The non-state actors and institutions that the monopoly model seeks to dissolve through reforms, often hold considerable legitimacy in the eyes of the population and may be at least as or more efficient than the formal state at providing security and justice – however patchy and illiberal.

Whereas the monopoly model suggests that the degree of state matters more than the kind of state – thus hinting that democratic forms of governance may after all be a 'luxury good' rather than a necessity for development – the hybrid model is indicating that liberal values are not universally achievable or desirable: Some people in some countries may have other values and if 'we' wish to help them, we should stop pretending that liberal democracy and rule of law is the first-best option for all countries. In some states, people may be better off and more comfortable with alternative forms of rule. As a strategy for intervention, the choice between the monopoly model and the hybrid model is therefore not simply a choice between

a top-down and a bottom-up approach to improving ordinary people's access to security and justice. The choice is between different forms of rule. One way of capturing the difference is the colonial distinction between *direct* and *indirect* rule. The distinguishing feature between the two forms is whether the aim is to create uniform conditions and standards within a territory and population under direct state responsibility; or whether some kind of accommodation is foreseen between state institutions and non-state authority under the sovereignty of the state. Whereas direct rule requires that non-state providers of justice and security are eliminated or brought under state control, indirect rule is based on some kind of screening, control and recognition of de facto authorities with the acceptance of different standards and conditions for different segments of the population. In other words, recognizing the limitations of state institutions and 'making do' with some of the existing, plural systems (Stepputat et al. 2007: 5-6).

Seen from a holistic SSR perspective, the main shortcoming of the monopoly model is its close affinity with the militaristic Train-and-Equip mentality, to which the SSR-agenda was formulated as an explicit alternative (Ball 2010). The monopoly model – which has dominated e.g. the statebuilding efforts in Afghanistan – entails a clear risk of 'sliding towards expediency': Focusing efforts on boosting the security apparatus of the central government, while paying little or no attention to questions of democratic accountability and civilian oversight (Sedra 2006). The hybrid model in contrast draws on the same developmental logic as the holistic SSR-agenda and may thus appear more compatible at face value. The emphasis placed on working with informal institutions and actual power holders, does, however, entail a clear risk of losing the transformative power of the SSR-agenda and simply reproduce the existing unfair power structures. The type of

security provided by localized, informal security systems is often based on discriminatory practices that favour armed groups, local elites and patriarchal systems of rule. Seen from a human security perspective, it is thus a clear mistake to romanticize local or community-based security solutions.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

So where does the paradoxical choice between a people-centred approach to security that has given up on liberal values, and a state-centric one that reflects the interests of the West yet maintains the belief in human rights of the rest, leave the liberal template? In some ways, it leaves it just as it was: An inherently conflicted agenda that demands a careful balancing between equally-valued objectives. In other ways, however, these dilemmas are compounded by the current fixation with the need for coherence. The sense of urgency that is placed on identifying a shared vision or strategy of intervention entails that – in principle, albeit not necessarily in practice – the fragmented peacebuilding community should choose between one model or the other, rather than seeking to balance the pros and cons of each model. Previously, it did not present a major problem to the liberal template that different actors were involved for different reasons and based their actions on different understandings of both the problem and the solution. Today, such 'pluralism' within the international community is regarded as an impediment to effective interventions, and serious efforts are accordingly being made to reduce incoherence.

As outlined by the discussion above, it is anything but simple to identify a shared strategy for 'context-sensitive interventions' even if focus remains only on the central, yet limited, field of SSR. It remains highly unlikely that the pursuit of coherence will be successful, despite

the widely shared consensus on the need for the international community to ‘get its act together’, focus on ‘the most urgent tasks’ and understand that ‘context is everything’ (Swiss 2004; UNSG 2009; OECD 2007a). Security agencies are likely to remain concerned with problems of (in)security while development agencies are likely to keep focusing on problems of (under)development. Instead of spending valuable political capital on trying to alter this, it may seem that the resources could be better spent elsewhere. The processes which the liberal template seeks to influence – be it a transition from enduring conflict to sustainable peace, or the establishment/renegotiation of the social contract between rulers and ruled – are intrinsically political. They cannot be ‘managed’ or ‘steered’ – not even through a perfectly contextualized and coherent strategy of intervention. If history tells us anything, it is that lasting ‘solutions’ emerge as the unintended consequences of social processes of negotiation, contestation, and adaptation, rather than as a causal outcome of certain inputs. In light of this, it seems that less strategy, rather than more, could be part of the way forward. After all, the negotiations, contestations and adaptations that truly matters are those that occur within the fragile states themselves, rather than among the members of the fragmented international community.



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