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Security Sector Reform in Times of Democratic Reversal

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Abstract: Security sector reform (SSR) and democratisation are closely linked in both theory and practice. The high levels of volatility that characterise democratisation processes, therefore, have direct implications for SSR strategy. We identify possible scenarios for SSR in the context of democratic reversals by focussing on two observations about this relationship: first, limited progress in SSR is still possible under conditions of democratic reversal; and second, certain systematic features characterise how SSR stalls as a result of democratic reversals. On the basis of these observations, we argue that a return to SSR following a democratic reversal holds specific challenges for reform and offer recommendations for how to frame SSR in such contexts as well as "second-chance" scenarios once the democratisation process resumes.

Keywords: Security Sector Reform, democratisation, democratic reversals
Stichworte: Sicherheitssektorreform, Demokratisierung, demokratische Rückschläge

1. Security sector reform in unstable contexts

Over half of all democratic transitions are subject to backsliding toward autocracy,[1] while almost as many conflict-affected countries relapse into strife within the first five years of transition.[2] Unstable contexts characterised by reversals are thus a defining feature of security sector reform (SSR).[3] Early SSR initiatives in Timor Leste, Mali, South Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire (under Laurent Gbagbo), Iraq, Afghanistan, and

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1 Halperin, Morton, Joseph Siegle, and Michael Weinstein, 2010. *The Democracy Advantage: How Democracies Promote Prosperity and Peace*, (New York: Routledge). Also Hegre, Håvard. "Democracy and armed conflict," *Journal of Peace Research 51*, no.2 (2014): 159-72.

2 Rates of reversion vary according to definition and data sets, but a number of estimates settle at a reversion rate somewhere between 25-50%: see for example Charles T. Call, and Elizabeth M. Cousens, "Ending Wars and Building Peace: International Responses to War-Torn Societies," *International Studies Perspectives 9*, no. 1 (2008): 1-21; Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler, and Måns Söderbom, "Post-conflict risks," *Journal of Peace Research 45*, no. 4 (2008): 461-47.

3 Several competing definitions of SSR exist but what all have in common is an emphasis on improving both the effectiveness and the accountability of the security sector within a framework of democratic control, rule of law and respect for human rights. On the concept of SSR, see further: Albrecht Schnabel, "Security Sector Governance and Reform: Back to Basics," *S+F Sicherheit und Frieden* 23, no. 2 (2014).

Haiti, for example, all looked promising in the wake of apparent democratic political openings. But in each of these cases, as in many others, the initial momentum towards stronger democratic security sector governance faded and eventually lapsed into various states of reversal.[4] As Schnabel observes, "experience has shown that more often than not SSR takes place against many odds, in difficult, barely enabling, less-than-ideal political, security, economic and social contexts".[5] We argue, in short, that times of democratic reversal are commonly "less than ideal" contexts with special attributes relevant to the theory and practice of SSR.

SSR is regularly touted as a priority policy response in virtually every crisis encountered by fragile states, including democratic backsliding. Yet, such impulses fail to appreciate that meaningfully improving security sector governance is dependent on the larger political power structure and incentives in place. Recognizing the need for greater analytical differentiation among such less-than-ideal contexts, this article presents a schematic overview of possible scenarios for SSR in times of democratic reversal including what we call "second-chance" SSR contexts. We draw our insights from relevant cases and the now broad literature on SSR theory and policy. On this basis we identify key lessons for framing priority policy considerations and offer preliminary guidelines for SSR in such contexts.

The schematic overview of reform trajectories that we present points to the usefulness of a future research agenda on this subject. A more systematic exploration of prior reform experiences might, for example, lead to the formulation of explicit criteria distinguishing different reform contexts. Our intentions in this article are restricted to identifying logical trajectories of political development and reform and the potential consequences of these patterns for SSR policy.

2. Defining SSR, democratization and reversals

Democratic governance of the security sector – what is often referred to as good governance of the security sector – is what distinguishes SSR from attempts to improve only the operational effectiveness of security forces.[6] The focus on effectiveness in the context of democratic accountability is also what makes SSR integral to democratization efforts. No transition to a democratic system of government can be considered complete until the security forces are brought under the control of civilian, democratic authorities, ensuring accountability through a system of democratic oversight that is subject to the rule of law. As such SSR is necessary both as a constituent element of the transition to democracy and a part of its ongoing consolidation.

While democratization is often treated in policy circles as if it were a linear transition from one type of government to another, democratic political systems more typically develop through an iterative process characterized by spasmodic bouts of improvement and deterioration in democratic governance. The conceptual development of SSR policy and its relationship to democracy has so far focused on the more linear vision of democratic transition, which is an aspect of why it can be difficult to translate the concept into practice. As a result, the practice of SSR has been surprised by the regular fits and starts that characterize actual democratic transitions. Framing the theory of SSR strategies within the context of democratic reversals is thus an essential step towards bridging the persistent theory-practice gap and developing more realistic guidance on how to support SSR in the face of deteriorating political conditions.

We define "democratic reversal" as any situation where a democratic transition is interrupted by a period of relative deterioration in the quality of its democratic institutions such as checks on the chief executive, protections for popular participation in the political process, and genuine competition for elected office. What constitutes improvement or decline will be relative to the quality of democratic governance at the moment a period of change begins or ends. While democratic reversals are common, so too are recoveries. In 80 percent of these reversals, the transition process recovers and is able to regain momentum in strengthening their democratic institutions.[7] This resilience is seen even in cases of a full reversion to autocracy. In two-thirds of such cases, the democratization process was revived (usually within three years).

In this context of democratization, SSR is also subject to reversals. We consider as an SSR reversal any situation where the democratic quality of security sector governance deteriorates. The period of reversal ends when new progress is made either improving democratic security sector governance or restoring it to its previous level. SSR reversals may be of varying length and occur on multiple occasions. No systematic studies substantiate precisely how often SSR processes are stalled as a result of democratic reversal or reactivated as a result of democratic revival, but experiential evidence suggests this is often the case and the relationship merits closer attention.

3. Scenarios for SSR in the context of democratic reversal

While there is a wide spectrum of possible SSR reversal scenarios, this section presents a schematic overview of four discernible pathways providing an analytic framework to guide possible policy responses (see Figure 1).

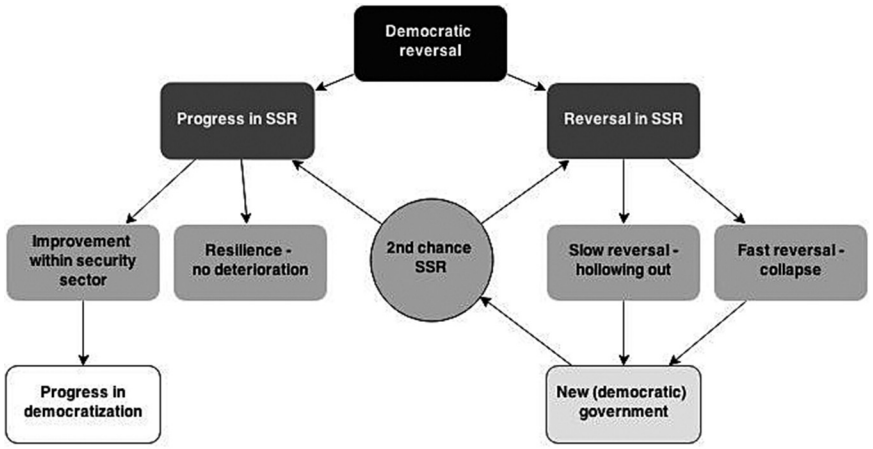
4 Case studies detailing the disappointing application of the SSR concept, include, for example: Raphaël Ouattara, "Cote d'Ivoire," in *Security Sector Governance in Francophone West Africa: Realities and Opportunities*, ed. A. Bryden and B. N'Diaye (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2011); Kamil Shah, "The Failure of State Building and the Promise of State Failure: Reinterpreting the Security–Development Nexus in Haiti," *Third World Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2009); Gordon Peake, "A Lot of Talk but Not a Lot of Action: The Difficulty of Implementing SSR in Timor-Leste," in *Security Sector Reform in Challenging Environments*, ed. H. Born and A. Schnabel (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2009); Mark Sedra, "Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan and Iraq: Exposing a Concept in Crisis," *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 3, no. 2 (2007); Derek McDougall, "The Failure of Security Sector Reform to Advance Development Objectives in East Timor and the Solomon Islands," in Born and Schnabel, 2009.

5 Albrecht Schnabel, "Ideal Requirements Versus Real Environments in Security Sector Reform," Born and Schnabel, 2009, p.3.

6 For an early exposition of this concept, see further: Heiner Hänggi, «Making Sense of Security Sector Governance,» in *Challenges of Security Sector Governance*, ed. H. Hänggi and T. Winkler (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2003).

7 Halperin, Siegle, and Weinstein, 2010.

Figure 1. Scenarios of SSR Pathways in Response to Democratic Reversal



3.1 Progress in SSR

The fact that democratic reversals often lead to SSR reversals, does not make this outcome a foregone conclusion. Although uncommon, there are scenarios whereby SSR may continue to make improvements even in cases of democratic reversal. It may be that SSR efforts set in motion before a reversal had gained traction, making it difficult for political actors to fully halt or reverse reforms. Similarly, certain segments within the security sector may resist the pressures of a democratic reversal by continuing with reforms or preserving progress previously made. It could simply be that the specific nature of reforms underway is not perceived as threatening enough to anti-democratic forces to trigger attention. Finally, extraordinary pressure from external actors to advance democratic gains in the security sector against erosion by anti-democratic domestic forces is another means by which this outcome might come about. An illustration of this scenario is the pressure for effectiveness and accountability created by the presence of external forces from South Africa, Tanzania, and Malawi in the UN-mandated Force Intervention Brigade aimed at dislodging rebel groups that had long caused instability in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2013. The political and military engagement of these external forces compelled the Congolese troops to demonstrate unprecedented competence, dynamic leadership, and professionalism in this particular effort after years of corruption, predation, and impotence in addressing the challenge on their own.[8]

A second version of progress in SSR in the face of democratic reversals involves SSR processes that have made sufficient gains to serve as some kind of bulwark against further deterioration in security sector governance. An example of this scenario might be a military leadership, drawing on SSR efforts, refusing to take up a political role as it may have in the past in the face of political crisis. In this scenario, SSR progress does not necessarily guarantee stability (because an ongoing political crisis would continue), but it would at least prevent a further or more rapid deterioration by containing the political crisis to the sphere of civilian politics. This restraint on the part of the security sector similarly provides additional time for political solutions to take hold. We call this version of SSR progress "resilience" since, while positive momentum for reform may be lost, the retrenchment of gains made provides a more advanced starting point for the resumption of SSR efforts as the environment allows. In other words, improving the resilience of gains made in security sector governance is an important constituent goal of SSR and thus the idea that the situation could have otherwise been worse is a realistic and valuable form of progress to consider. For example, in the midst of the most serious political crisis Burundi had seen since war ended, Burundi's Force de Défense Nationale set a historic precedent in 2014 by publicly renouncing intervention in the civilian political realm.[9] While such declarations are subject to a variety of complex factors, this example can be considered a sign of the resilience created by almost a decade of SSR.

3.2 Reversals in SSR

In the scenarios described above, improvement in the professionalism and the accountability of the security sector may occur even in the context of democratic reversal, and may eventually help to push the state towards increased democratization. Yet experience shows that a democratic reversal more often leads to a reversal in SSR. In the face of such reversals, we examine two common scenarios that may unfold – either gradually, through the progressive hollowing out of the security sector to create a façade of democratic governance; or rapidly, as in examples where the security sector collapses suddenly.

Our review of SSR reversals indicates that the most common scenario for SSR setback is the gradual reversal. This possibility describes a scenario whereby there is a gradual deterioration of democratic civilian control, oversight, and rule of law of the security sector. As the decline of the security sector unfolds in a piecemeal fashion, the real nature of governance transformation may be hard to discern for some time. In such cases, it may be important to the ruling authorities to maintain the appearance of security sector professionalism and democratic governance – by, for example, retaining the same programmes, institutions or personnel. However, the locus of control behind the scenes shifts to reflect a new, undemocratic political dynamic. This type of slow reversal may continue for a relatively long time before a change in political dynamics or the larger security context exposes the deterioration and precipitates either a total collapse or a new opening to democratization. This was arguably the experience of SSR efforts in Mali, where a coup derailed

8 Evert Kets and Hugo de Vries, "Limits to Supporting Security Sector Interventions in the DRC," in *ISS Paper 257* (Institute for Security Studies, July 2014).

9 Patrick Nduwimana, "Burundi Army Won't Intervene in Political Crisis: Minister," *Reuters*, February 17, 2014.

21 years of democratization efforts in a country formerly considered a leading reformer. Retrospective analysis revealed how the depth of corruption, top-heavy management, and lack of support to the security sector amounted to dramatic shortcomings in both effectiveness and accountability. Similarly, the disintegration of the Iraqi defence forces against a numerically and technically inferior enemy in mid-2014 illustrated this type of scenario, insofar as weaknesses in the security institutions could be traced directly back to actions by the executive designed to undermine democratic control and accountability.[10]

In the rapid version of SSR reversal, a democratic setback leads quickly and directly to the disintegration of democratic governance of the security sector and, oftentimes, a return of authoritarianism or even state collapse. This type of worst-case scenario is likely in cases such as a violent coup d'état or a descent into open warfare whereby the security forces take on an overtly politicized role, flout the legal basis of democratic control and rule of law, and begin to use repressive tactics to support an undemocratic regime at the cost of public and human security. South Sudan provides a tragic illustration of this type of scenario whereby a power struggle between the president and the vice-president led the country into civil war in 2013. The collapse of democratic governance derailed the comprehensive attempts at SSR that had been underway since 2005, beginning a bloody conflict wherein both the armed forces and opposition rebels were accused of human rights abuses.[11]

3.3 Feedback loops and second chances

A review of SSR cases indicates that, as with the broader democratization process, SSR reversals are not necessarily permanent. Eventually, wars end or autocratic governments are forced from office. Sometimes a collapse is so complete that international intervention is precipitated. As transitional administrations follow, they sometimes bring a new commitment to democratization – and an opportunity to re-launch the SSR process. Certain distinguishing features mark this type of "second-chance" SSR as a new and specific sub-context for SSR.

Perhaps most important is the different basis of SSR knowledge and expectations in place in second-chance SSR contexts. Thus, for example, where SSR has been attempted in the past, it may have left behind a certain foundational understanding about what SSR is and how it could work among national elites in government and professional civil servants at all levels in the civilian and security sectors. The knowledge and capacity developed at a programming level can be useful when it comes to starting project implementation again. External actors also may have achieved a level of familiarity with the local context that facilitates SSR the second time around. In some cases, one of the most useful developments in external capacity has come in the form of a more humble and respectful attitude towards national reform priorities and SSR approaches in general. For example, in reinvigorating SSR in Timor Leste following a reversal that had taken place in 2006, external actors evinced a more inclusive attitude towards national inputs to reform.[12]

Second-chance SSR may also have better strategic and institutional foundations to build on. Former strategies, projects and programmes may still be relevant. To a certain extent, it may be possible to pick up where prior efforts left off, saving time and resources.

Similarly, the experience of reversal may itself be a useful resource for SSR if it provides a clear explanation of 'what went wrong' the first time in relation to the security sector. For example, it may only be clear after the fact that the failure to reform a certain service, or to put in place a particular set of democratic safeguards, facilitated a reversal. Certain actors may have revealed themselves as reform champions or spoilers during a period of reversal. New priorities for democratic security sector governance may thus snap sharply into focus in the second-chance context.

An illustration of second-chance SSR is the experience of trying to reform the police force in Rio de Janeiro's favelas or shantytowns, known for increasing violence, drug trafficking, and police corruption. After numerous previous SSR efforts emphasizing improved capacity building had been ineffective, the Secretary for Public Security resorted to deploying rookie forces within an alternative chain of reporting bypassing the corrupt hierarchy that had undermined previous reform efforts. While inexperienced, these young officers, supported by training and equipment, were committed to citizen protection and gaining citizen trust. The program sharply reduced homicides and forced the drug traffic to move elsewhere.[13]

Yet all of this knowledge and familiarity with SSR may be a knife that cuts both ways since it can also be accompanied by a clearer sense of the danger that SSR poses to vested interests or a profound sense of failure. Thus, national actors may be sceptical of SSR based on the fact that it failed to prevent a democratic reversal in the past, and may thus seek new solutions. Some may simply be more practiced in the art of telling reformers what they want to hear while avoiding meaningful implementation. For donors, attention may have shifted elsewhere or there may be a sense of fatigue, hopelessness or mistrust creating a lack of will to reinvest in a project that may be perceived to have failed. Amongst the general population, there may be a palpable sense of disillusionment and disappointment that feeds a demand to 'try something new'. This is the logical inverse of the observation that post-conflict contexts are typically marked by a clearer sense of awareness of the dangers that are posed by a *lack* of SSR. An example of this is Sierra Leone following the debilitating conflicts of the 1990s and early 2000's. Citizens had become acutely aware of the need both for an effective fighting force to fend off future opportunistic insurgencies and for the security sector to earn the trust of citizens. This led to a more

10 Andreas Krieg, "ISIS' Success in Iraq: A Testimony to Failed Security Sector Reform," (Security Sector Reform Resource Center, 22 July 2014).
11 Human Rights Watch, "South Sudan: War Crimes by Both Sides," (New York: February 27, 2014).
12 Deniz Kocak, "Security Sector Reconstruction in a Post-Conflict Country: Lessons from Timor-Leste," in *SFB-Governance Working Paper Series No. 61* (Berlin: SFB 700 Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood, October 2013).
13 Richard Bennet, "Asserting the Presence of the State, One Step at a Time: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 2008-2010," *Innovations for Successful Societies,* 2010

highly integrated role for civil society in the transformative security sector reform process that was undertaken.[14]

For these reasons, (and others we have not the space to mention), reinitiating SSR after a period of reversal creates a special type of reform context for both national and external actors. It also factors into a logical feedback loop within the broader governance context, since whether SSR progresses or not will play a part in the future democratization of the state (see Figure 1). SSR can contribute to improving democratic governance of the security sector, but these gains can only be consolidated in the context of broader democratisation. Where SSR stagnates or reverses, whether due to its own shortcomings or broader political conditions, the cycle of deterioration risks repeating itself. This parallel feedback loop reflects the reality that democratization is always an iterative process vulnerable to some degree of reversal.

On the basis of this schematic presentation of scenarios of reversal, the next section will propose some insights into how approaches to SSR can better respond to the potential for SSR reversals.

4. Policy Implications

This review has highlighted that SSR reversals are commonly driven by reversals in the democratisation process. A number of policy relevant implications thus emerge within the parameters of what SSR can achieve pre-reversal, post-reversal, and in recovery.

In the pre-reversal period, recognition of the propensity for reversals during democratic or post-conflict transitions underscores the critical importance of establishing buffers within the security sector as early in the SSR process as possible to serve as bulwarks against political reversals eroding all progress made. In practical terms, this strategy emphasizes depoliticizing the security sector by creating buffers between the chief executive and the leadership of the security sectors as soon as feasible. A key mechanism for doing so includes establishing control over the selection, promotion, and setting of salaries and benefits of senior officers independent of the executive. If these processes are deemed to be based on merit, it simultaneously fosters a culture of professionalism and reduces the leverage of dominant political actors to co-opt the security sector (often on ethnic and financial grounds) for their political advantage. Knowing that one's career would not be jeopardized by refusing to follow a politically-motivated command would also help security personnel take a longer planning horizon (for themselves and their institutions) in their decision-making. Setting a clear legal framework that stipulates sanctions for both security officials and political actors found to be acting in collusion in pursuit of their private interests at the expense of public service represents another such buffer. Instituting a more prominent oversight role for legislatures in the review of policy, budgets, and staffing would represent another balancing influence. While these types of activities are emphasised in conventional SSR efforts, they take on even greater significance in view of likely reversals and the imperative to create buffers against erosion.

Another mitigative priority in the pre-reversal phase is the importance of maintaining space for civil society and the media. Experience from reform settings more generally indicates that demands for more accountable norms often originate from these non-state actors.[15] Consequently, as long as there is space for civil society and freedom of expression, there will likely be domestic voices for raising standards of accountability for the security sector. Fostering such norms is all the more vital in settings with weak state-based institutions of accountability (i.e. those especially vulnerable to potential reversals. It is the depth and coherence of civil society networks, moreover, that sustains this pressure (against inevitable resistance) and which leads to reformulating state-based accountability institutions. In addition to encouraging and building the capacity for civil society and media, a key policy implication from this priority is that constraints on police or other security agencies that may feel compelled to crack down on civil society groups must be established early in a democratic transition process, lest the police nip in the bud the reforming benefits these groups can have.

In the post-reversal phase, conditions for SSR are likely to deteriorate since the political will to push forward with SSR will have been weakened. These observations are reinforced by what we already know about SSR: that local buy-in and political will are prerequisites for sustainable reform.[16] New national power-brokers may seek to renegotiate the foundational strategy for SSR, try to co-opt the process to serve particular interests, or simply shut down all such efforts entirely. Supporters of SSR will need to adjust their objectives and expectations accordingly, at least in the near term. In addition to maintaining ties to so-called reform champions within the security sector, such adjustments may entail initiatives that help build political will as such engagements may have a greater impact on the performance of the security sector than any technical force modernisation programme. Actions that can facilitate political dialogue to reconcile competing agendas directly shape the scope for SSR. Similarly, initiatives that promote transparency, checks and balances on the executive branch, strengthening the independence of the judiciary, and greater democratization of the political party process, for example, will all have direct implications for the security sector. In other words, some of the most critical expertise required to advance an SSR agenda may not reside within traditional security sector institutions.

Post-reversal cases also show that accountability processes must accompany any efforts to improve security sector effectiveness. Since many reversal contexts comprise actors who

14 Kellie Conteh, "Security Sector Reform in Sierra Leone and the Role of the Office of National Security," in *Security Sector Reform in Sierra Leone, 1997-2007: Views from the Front Line,* ed. Jackson and Albrecht (Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces, 2010).

15 Joseph Siegle, "ICT and Accountability in Areas of Limited Statehood," in *Bits and Atoms: Information and Communications Technology in Areas of Limited Statehood,* ed. G. Walter-Drop and S. Steven Livingston (London: Oxford University Press, 2014).

16 On the imperative of local ownership, see for example: Laurie Nathan, "No Ownership, No Commitment: A Guide to Local Ownership of Security Sector Reform," (Birmingham, UK: University of Birmingham, 2007); Timothy Donais, "Inclusion or Exclusion? Local Ownership and Security Sector Reform," *Studies in Social Justice* 3, no. 1 (2009).

have attained dominance through their capacity for violence, corruption, or ability to undermine the democratic process, enhanced effectiveness is a recipe for disaster and is arguably a means for rewarding or propping up ruthless individuals. Indeed, these features are likely causes of grievances that have driven instability in the first place. The implication is that international partners should avoid the impulse to rush in to do train-and-equip operations in post-reversal contexts until there is confidence such investments will be oriented towards human and citizen security.

Closely related to institutionalising accountability is the principle of investing in people before assets. This observation holds that it is the attitudes, culture, discipline, and ethos of the security sector personnel that matter most. Developing a sense of pride, duty, and respect for the rule of law creates stable foundations on which genuine reform can take place. Without this foundation, expanding the asset capacity of a force will not contribute to enhanced performance. Empowering a force with assets before an ethos of responsibility and public service is in place will only magnify the dysfunctions and will, in fact, diminish incentives for reform. Establishing this ethical foundation will take considerable time (months or years), however, it is not a passive approach. It will need a dedicated focus and require the engagement of a cadre of qualified trainers in order to 'get to scale' and reach a tipping point in the attitude of the forces. At the same time, it is less costly than an asset-focused approach.

Changing attitudes requires changing incentives for individuals at each level of a security sector hierarchy. A policy implication targeting mid- and senior-level officers is the importance of investing in professional military education efforts even among politically closed governments. When possible, a much broader selection of security sector actors should also be included in such training, including civil society actors, parliamentary representatives and staff, and civilian civil service professionals in relevant ministries (such as foreign affairs, defence, internal security, justice and public finance). Such investments plant seeds of values that may generate valuable yields in the years to come. Naturally, some individuals in the security sector may be so deeply compromised and discredited that they cannot be part of a genuine reform process. However, in nearly every security sector there are committed professionals that may have survived under odious regimes, and, yet, when given the opportunity will opt for reform. Such was the improbable scenario in the transition process in Guinea following the incapacitation of junta leader Dadis Camara in 2009. General Sékouba Konaté became the acting president and, drawing on his professional military exposure, set the long misgoverned country on a path to democracy. In other words, incentivizing mid- to top-level security sector leadership within SSR strategies during times of democratic reversals can create openings for future breakthroughs in reform.

Engagements with enlisted personnel post-reversal are also vital. Experience suggests that a first priority is establishing trust. Ordinary soldiers in many transition contexts live in deplorable conditions and may feel exploited by their superiors, prompting poor discipline, and, at times, mutinies. Investments in the well-being of this cohort through improved barracks, basic supplies, and transparent and reliable processes for paying salaries can be indispensable for laying the foundation for future, more substantive reforms. This "pots and pans" approach involving reaching out to the rank-and-file in the Burundian army in the early years of the SSR effort evidently had such a tangible attitudinal impact.[17]

The reality that SSR initiatives are vulnerable to setbacks also has implications for how observers assess improvement both during periods of improvement and apparent reversals. Although political backsliding is common, so too are recoveries. As the experiences of SSR all too vividly show, initial advances are no guarantee of success. The objective of the SSR process is to build enough resilience to ride out the periods of contraction so that further progress can be realized when the political context allows. A lesson learned from reversal cases, therefore, is the importance of not making premature judgments of success or failure. Establishing professional, accountable, and effective security institutions takes years. Assessments of SSR efforts should *focus on progress rather than success*. Measures of such progress would include demonstrations of more ethical and service-oriented attitudes among security personnel, officers and enlisted forces; merit-based recruitment and promotions; inter-ethnic collegiality within the security sector; space for media and civil society to operate; and growing trust of the population toward the security sector, among others.

While democratic reversals typically represent serious setbacks to security sector professionalism and citizen security, this review has highlighted that reversals are not the end of the SSR process. The strong tendency for democratization efforts to rebound may open the door to a revitalization and more substantive pursuit of SSR. In fact, some of the SSR initiatives that have seen the most sustained progress, such as in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Burundi, and El Salvador, all occurred after earlier reversals in the SSR process. These "second chances" were all accompanied, in one way or another, with a political transition that brought a new, more democratic leadership to power. These experiences suggest that mistakes made and lessons learned from previous SSR efforts may be applied when second chances emerge. The policy implication is that second-chance SSR experiences, especially where there has been a legitimating process that has reoriented the priorities of political leaders, are golden opportunities to realize meaningful advances in SSR that should be prepared for and seized.

17 Nicole Ball, *Putting Governance at the Heart of Security Sector Reform, CRU Report* (The Hague: Clingendael Institute, 2014).