GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NATIONAL SECURITY

Nine Policy Briefs on Building Stronger Institutions that Deliver Genuine Security to All

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01.

We Must Think and Work Politically

United Nations

WHY WE DO THIS

Fragility, conflict and violence massively disrupt development. But in response, too often we focus on the urgent, not the important. One essential building block for stability is to foster functioning, accountable national security sector institutions that are sustainably financed. The United Nations, in partnership with the World Bank, has commissioned a cadre of experts and research institutions to develop nine Policy Briefs on the role of security sector reform and governance (SSR&G) in preventing conflict and sustaining peace. Together, these Briefs offer a timely analysis of the risks of weakened dysfunctional security institutions, of the exorbitant cost of predatory behaviour by security providers, and of poor public financial management of security expenditures. They explore new SSR&G solutions in which the UN and the World Bank may cooperate to help countries build more affordable, accountable, and inclusive institutions that support them to transition out of fragility and create safer environments conducive to sustainable development and well-being.

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ssr@un.org | www.un.org/ssr

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Significant investments in security sector reform (SSR) in many fragile and conflict-affected countries have brought about important results, but it is often a struggle to bring about sustained transformations. Despite well-qualified advisers, programme funds and mutually agreed plans and commitments between donors and partner governments, programmes can fail or not operate as intended. **What appears as a "lack of political will" is often pointed to as a reason why progress stalls or reforms remain at surface level.**

Thinking and Working Politically (TWP) is an approach that can help to unpack what lies behind these frustrated reform efforts – and to tailor interventions accordingly. Political Economy Analysis (PEA), or the thinking part of Thinking and Working Politically, provides a framework that can help policymakers and practitioners better understand what is getting in the way of reforms taking root and what changes may be feasible.

Often, the problems that reforms seek to address are not only technical in nature but deeply political. The challenge, therefore, is not just knowing what needs to be done technically but also understanding how this might most effectively be pursued. These are political economy questions that fundamentally shape the prospects for reform of the security sector and must be integrated into programme planning and operations. This is especially important for the security sector, given that the political economy of this sector has such fundamental impacts on a country's pathways to prevent conflict and achieve sustainable development and peace.

This policy brief does the following:

- Explain what Thinking and Working Politically and Political Economy Analysis are
- Make the case for why these approaches are important in understanding the security sector

- Provide a PEA framework and steps to apply it to help staff to think and work in politically informed ways in designing and implementing SSR programmes
- Capture learning from programming experiences that have sought to embed TWP or PEA approaches
- Set out next steps to institutionalize TWP approaches in UN SSR programming.

The PEA framework focuses on the formal and informal “rules of the game” that characterize how the security sector works in practice. The intention is to concentrate SSR efforts on the **political and economic roles of the security sector and how these can hamper or support reform**. The **power relationships, interests, and incentives of a wide range of stakeholders related to the security sector** are also central to the framework – emerging as key factors in how particular reforms are likely to be supported or resisted. Combined, these two dimensions of the framework seek to identify opportunities and constraints within the local context for reform, noting too how international actors – including the United Nations – also shape the local political economy. Strategies for reform of the security sector are then devised, resulting in more realistic, politically astute programming that is responsive to the particularities of the context.

Yet conducting such analysis at the outset of SSR programming is insufficient to ensure that operations *remain* responsive to political realities and changes in the context. Political Economy Analysis is thus approached here not as a one-off report but as a lens or way of thinking and working that should be revisited routinely throughout programming, with reform strategies and activities adapted as required.

This integration of political economy thinking into security sector reform requires more fundamental changes to UN ways of working. The next steps to embed Thinking and Working Politically and Political Economy Analysis would include:

- Develop guidance/support for staff to implement Thinking and Working Politically and Political Economy Analysis across the SSR operation cycle
- Align and streamline existing assessment and diagnostic tools to incorporate TWP thinking and PEA concepts
- Pilot PEA-informed programming to generate learning and adjust the PEA framework as required
- Consider what supportive behaviours and working cultures are required for Political Economy Analysis to meaningfully inform and drive SSR programmes and make adjustments where required
- Build senior leadership support to champion PEA- informed security sector reform and the necessary organizational changes to support it
- Tailor monitoring, evaluation and learning processes to incentivize learning and embrace adaptations in light of the evolving political economy context (and the United Nations' understanding of it)
- Build partnerships around politically informed operations to leverage the knowledge, relationships, and expertise of others – including the World Bank – and to jointly strategize on pathways to change.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Significant investments in security sector reform (SSR) in many fragile and conflict-affected countries have brought about some important results, but have often struggled to deliver the sustained transformations sought. Despite well-qualified advisers, programme funds, and mutually agreed plans and commitments between donors and partner governments, SSR often falls short or does not work as intended. Institutional improvements in one part of the security sector do not necessarily deliver improved security and justice because of shortcomings elsewhere. Changes in form of the security sector are often not matched by changes in function, resulting in what has been called “isomorphic mimicry”.[1] A “lack of political will” at various levels is often pointed to as the reason why progress stalls or reforms remain at surface level and fail to instill deep institutional change.[2] Unpacking what is meant by this, to understand where the constraints and blockages lie and why, is essential to give SSR reforms traction on the ground[3] and to tease out implications for programme design and implementation.

Thinking and Working Politically (TWP) is an approach that can help to unpack what lies behind these frustrated reform efforts and to engage more effectively on the ground. Political Economy Analysis (PEA), or the thinking part of TWP, provides a framework that can help policymakers and practitioners to better understand what is obstructing reforms and what changes may be more or less feasible depending on the context. As we know from lessons that have emerged in international development over the past two decades, political economy factors and dynamics fundamentally shape the prospects for reform in the security sector. It is therefore essential to integrate them into programme planning and operations, which constitutes the working part of TWP.

This policy brief focuses on the political economy of security sector reform, highlighting how PEA can assist UN policy and programmes in designing and implementing more relevant and effective SSR interventions that respond to the contextual drivers of insecurity that people face. It provides a conceptual framework to enable staff to use PEA to inform the design and implementation of SSR programmes. This is especially important for the security sector, given that the political economy of this sector has a fundamental impact on prospects and pathways to sustainable development and peace. The hope is that the framework developed here can help UN staff both reflect on what this might imply for working differently, in ways that are more flexible and adaptive, and consider what organizational steps or changes might be needed to support a more enabling environment.

II. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO THINK AND WORK IN MORE POLITICALLY AWARE WAYS?

2.1 Why Think and Work Politically

- Traditionally, the tendency in international assistance has been to engage through technical approaches that are based on a pre-existing set of tools and to diagnose the challenges encountered on the basis of the tools at hand.[4] This is encapsulated, for instance, in the emergence of a range of “best practices”, often derived from the experience of countries from the so-called “Global North”, despite their lack of fit to the contexts where they are applied.
- Over the past two decades, we have understood that the challenge of promoting peace and development is not only technical but deeply political in nature.[5] Institutions matter, and behind institutions stands a constellation of dynamics, interactions, interests and incentives about who gets what, when, how and why. There is growing recognition that development cannot be only about what needs to be done and identifying the right “technical fix”. It must also, always, be about how it is done — which entails understanding and influencing the what needs to be done and identifying the right “technical fix”. It must also, always, be about how it is done — which entails understanding and influencing the processes, incentives and actors that facilitate or obstruct change. Getting to the “how” requires acquiring a solid understanding of underlying politics and power dynamics, as well as tailoring interventions accordingly.
- Increasingly, international development actors have stepped up their efforts to think and work in more politically aware ways. We have seen a mushrooming of initiatives in this space – including Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA),[6] Doing Development Differently (DDD),[7] Thinking and Working Politically,[8] and Adaptive Development.[9] They

share common ground in focusing on learning about the political and economic realities that shape the possibilities for change in a given context.

- **Thinking and Working Politically, or TWP**, is a deliberate process of stepping back and examining the political, social and economic factors that shape the dynamics of a given issue or challenge. This allows space to understand the context and build reform from there, taking into account key factors that will affect how technically sound programmes work in practice, and questioning and testing assumptions about how change happens.
- There are two elements to TWP. The first is **thinking in more politically aware ways.** This implies deepening understanding and analysis of political, economic, and social processes and power dynamics that impact a given context and shape prospects for change.
- Thinking in more politically aware ways – through PEA as well as other analytical tools (e.g. conflict analysis, gender and social inclusion analysis) – is essential to help make decisions about what to work on and why.
- The other element of TWP is to work differently as a result, also known as adaptive management.[10] This entails exploring what the insights gained from such analysis imply for working in more politically informed ways, developing and tailoring interventions that are more attuned to realities on the ground, testing assumptions/theories of change/hypotheses about how change happens, and shifting focus and tactics as needed.
- TWP is not a product such as a one-off PEA report. Rather, it needs to be seen as an approach, a process, a mindset. The aim should be to incorporate political economy issues and concerns as a lens in developing programming. TWP can thus be thought of as a compass helping to navigate the complexities of development, including the security sector and pathways to reform and sustaining peace.

2.2 Political Economy Analysis: The Thinking Part

Political economy analysis uses methods drawn from economics, political science, history, sociology and anthropology to understand why things work the way they do and the implications for reform. PEA looks at "the interaction of political and economic processes in a society, the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals, and the processes that create, sustain, and transform these relationships over time."[11] Essentially, **PEA is about lifting the lid and seeing what is going on underneath the surface of things.** Or, as one succinct guide puts it, PEA 'boils down to trying to understand "the lay of the land'."[12] It is not the preserve of experts alone but rather "is something that can be absorbed and implemented quickly by everybody."[13]

A PEA framework and associated steps are set out in more detail in Section 3. But in brief, PEA seeks to understand how different political, social and economic factors and actors interact to shape development, governance and security outcomes, and why. It does so by exploring:

Box 1: Avoiding gender-blind PEA[14]

Because their focus is on issues of power and exclusion, PEA frameworks need to include gender relations.[15] Among other things, this entails:

- **Remembering that gender is more than women:** While including women's experiences is fundamental, "gender" is broader than "women", and attention must be paid to issues of masculinity and gender diversity, especially marginalized gender expressions and identities.[16]
- **Ensuring analysis is participatory and inclusive:** PEA exercises should be undertaken by diverse teams that include women, to the extent possible of different age groups. Consultations should aim to capture diverse perspectives, including from women, recognizing their distinct experiences.
- **Keeping intersectionality in mind:** Women, like men, are a diverse group, and there will be variations in how different women experience conflict and security, as well as power differentials between them.
- **Nuancing power:** When thinking about who has power, one should explicitly consider those with less conventional power and more invisible or hidden sources of power, the positioning of different actors, including women, and their ability to work collectively.
- **Remembering women when identifying entry points:** Women should be thought of as active drivers of change, rather than passive beneficiaries, and support should be tailored to enable this more active role.[17]

- The role of foundational factors, formal and informal institutions ("the rules of the game")
- The incentives, interests and distribution of resources and power among different political, economic, security and social actors
- How these relationships, interactions, dynamics and behaviors evolve over time and shape prospects for change.

Through this analysis, PEA can help tease out implications for what issues or problems to work on, how and why. On the basis of hypotheses about how to foster change, PEA can help identify and inform what entry points might be available, what pressures for change can be built on, and what stakeholders and partners would need to be brought on board, including going beyond the "usual suspects" embodied by formal institutions.

PEA has been used in international development for at least 20 years – from health and education, to energy and infrastructure, to private sector development and public financial management.[18] The World Bank has used PEA extensively to support its work,[19] and a range of donors have developed their own frameworks to assist programming at the country, sectoral, problem and issue level.[20] To date, however, while a political economy lens has been applied in the wider literature on peacebuilding and statebuilding, as well as to understanding a range of country transitions,[21] there has been less application of political economy thinking to the security sector. There are a few exceptions – as in the work on violence against women,[22] or pre-trial detention.[23] This policy brief is an attempt to address the more limited application of PEA to the security sector.

III.WHY ENGAGE IN SECURITY SECTOR REFORM IN POLITICALLY AWARE WAYS

Thinking and working in more politically aware ways in SSR helps to explore how power, politics, and the distribution of political and economic resources related to the security sector influence development trajectories and the ability of a country to navigate conflicts in ways that prevent violence and sustain peace. A nuanced understanding of why the security sector operates the way it does can help UN staff to design more relevant and politically feasible assistance. Such programmes are likely to prove more effective and sustainable, give a fuller picture of how reforms are progressing and why, and indicate what adjustments might be needed to ensure that they are properly anchored in and respond to contextual realities.

3.1 The security sector is political

The security sector is itself deeply political (see Box 2). The security sector is centrally concerned with who wields the use of force; whether and how that use is legitimate and contested by different stakeholders; and how the use of power and application of rights are exercised. These are politically charged issues.

The question of which actors constitute the security sector is also linked to power and politics. In this regard it is helpful to differentiate between the security sector and who provides security.

Conventional SSR treats state security institutions as the primary – and often only – providers of security. The now extensive literature on non-formal security providers demonstrates that this is not in keeping with realities on the ground.[24] In practice, a range of actors are involved in the provision and regulation of security, with overlapping and competing sources of legitimacy and varying connections to the state.[25] In some cases, including in Sierra Leone and South Sudan, customary authorities such as chiefs and elders may be described as “non-formal” or “non-state”, but are in fact legally mandated by the state. In other cases, hybrid actors may operate more independently of – or in direct competition with – the state (such as the Taliban in Afghanistan before its takeover of government in 2021).

And in other settings, state security actors and criminal networks may have built close informal relationships that can define how things work in practice.

These kinds of hybrid dynamics are political because they involve contestation about who sets, enforces and adjudicates the rules, both formal and informal, that govern state and society – and which actors in the security space are or are perceived as legitimate or trustworthy. This contestation plays out on the basis of the prevailing power relations within a state and society, so that the powerful have a more influential role than the marginalized.[26]

Understanding who provides security, according to whom, and on the basis of what, is important in developing a more granular understanding of the security ecosystem as it exists in the day-to-day lived realities of people who use it.

In settings where UN operations are active, security institutions are often deeply politicized. The security sector may serve the interests of the ruling party or political leader and their close political, economic and social allies, rather than the needs, priorities and interests of the wider population.

Box 2: What does it mean for something to be "political"?

"Politics" is often thought to relate to formal political processes involving, for instance, presidents, political parties and parliaments. While this captures what might be called "big P" Politics, it is a narrow definition. A fuller understanding of politics refers to the processes of cooperation, negotiation, conflict and contestation within and between groups in state and society that determine the use, production and distribution of power and resources.[27] Or, put simply, who gets what, when, how and why [28] This includes what is often called "small p" politics, which draws attention to how issues such as the dominance of particular groups in the political and socio-economic spheres (be they ethnic, religious, class-based, gender-based, etc.), and ensuing inequalities and power imbalances are also political.[29]

When the security sector is talked about as being 'political' – it is in both these "big P" and "small p" senses. In some cases, the security sector may be politicized and instrumentalized by formal Politics – for instance, servicing the interests of or being aligned to one political party over others. But in addition, the security sector everywhere is influenced by how power and resources are distributed in state and society, and indeed the security sector itself plays a central role in shaping how such power and resources are managed and what this implies for prospects for peace and security.[30]

In the most extreme cases, politicization might extend to militaries taking power through coups d'état. In such cases, the military asserts itself as an overtly political actor. Even without coups, however, the politicization of the security sector in pursuit of narrower and more personalized interests rather than the public good can remain a persistent challenge. This might be parts of the security sector acting more like a unit of bodyguards to politicians and their networks than being available and responsive to citizen concerns.

Politicization can entail the security sector having control or influence over political appointments and the political process. For instance, in Sudan prior to the 2018 revolution, state governors were members of the armed forces, appointed by the military and security services, meaning that the military's role extended far beyond the barracks and into the public sector.[31]

Politicisation might mean that the security sector closely surveils or limits political opposition and media – or even forms outright alliances with political incumbents.[32]

Or it might take the form of cracking down on people's rights to organize or protest, including through the use of excessive force. It might also be apparent in the general neglect of the security needs of the population – including high rates of pre-trial detention, slow-paced or non-existent police investigations, and case backlogs in courts. These may be symptoms of other underlying problems, but they often indicate that security institutions are not serving the interests of the public because they are oriented to other ends.

Clearly, reforming the security sector is not a purely technical endeavor. While it involves significant technical know-how, the nature of the challenge is also a political one. Without integrating analysis of political dynamics into SSR planning and operations, reform efforts risk being irrelevant, unfeasible or wildly overambitious – and they could also lead to unintended consequences that do harm.

3.2 The security sector is deeply connected to the economy

Political economy analysis shows that the politicization of the security sector may be related to opportunities for those within the sector to participate in economic activities through **rent-seeking**[33] in ways that **divert their primary purpose away from serving public safety and security concerns and towards private financial or political gain**. Importantly, such rent-seeking strategies may be licit – enabled, for instance, by procurement and other laws – or illicit and linked to individual petty criminality or organized crime.

The economic incentives of rent-seeking on the part of the security sector fundamentally shape the role that the security sector plays in society. As such, economic policy, as well as the wider regulatory environment, are directly relevant to the security sector as these are intricately linked: security sector actors often have vested economic and financial interests that they will protect against calls for progressive reform.

In a growing number of contexts, the security sector's involvement in organized criminal networks similarly distorts the sector's orientation, as well as a country's prospects of avoiding violence.

In Latin America for instance, collaborations between the state security sector and justice actors and criminal networks bring together the state's legal authority with the transnational supply lines of criminal groups to enable the trafficking of firearms and narcotics.[34] These relationships are then recreated and reinforced by the interdependence of their financial interests, which can even become symbiotic.[35]

Where rent-seeking occurs, the military is often involved in more high-value endeavors while the police, possessing fewer opportunities and working more locally, may rather be involved in small-scale bribery.[36] A culture of rent-seeking can mean that security sector salaries are kept relatively low because the logic is that formal salaries will be supplemented through rents (for instance, border officials charging higher than formal prices for visas, or traffic police extracting bribes for real or fabricated infringements).[37]

Importantly, the "security sector" is not homogeneous, and neither are the actors involved, so rent-seeking plays out differently in different parts of the sector. Some individuals will be more involved, others less so. And some may even be opposed to dominant practices and try to change them from the inside. **Understanding these economic dynamics and incentives is central to accurately diagnosing the underlying opportunities and constraints in a given context, rather than assuming that the core problem is one of just limited capacity or generic "political will".**

Rent-seeking practices of the security sector are linked to the political nature of the sector. This is by virtue of the overarching political settlement that underpins a given political system, and the way in which political power and economic resources are distributed as a result. Douglass North and colleagues argue that many middle- and low-income countries can be understood as "limited access orders", in which (i) the state does not have a monopoly on the use of force and (ii) peace is maintained by a fragile distribution of the rents and power derived from the economy among competing elites.[38] These elites are incentivized to maintain peace so as to maximize their rents but also to limit who can access those rents – resulting in exclusionary economic practices that do not benefit the majority of people.[39] For instance, Somaliland's achievement of peace has been reached by political agreement and division of rents amongst warlord elites in ways that are not necessarily inclusive but sufficiently buy each warlord into the arrangement so as to deter them from using violence.[40]

In conflict settings, the political settlement itself is under contestation as groups fight over control of government, territory, resources and power. In these conflict settings, the fluid nature of the political settlement also shapes rent-seeking opportunities in the security sector, and contesting groups may attempt to build alliances with parts of the security sector to gain the upper hand in combat, in exchange for rent-seeking opportunities.

Finally, it is worth highlighting that **the political and economic dynamics of the security sector are not only domestic in nature, they are also transnational**. This is perhaps most evident in relation to transnational criminal networks.[41] But other international dimensions that remain underexplored include profiteering of the security sector in cross-border conflicts – as has been documented of the Kenyan Defence Forces engaging in illicit sugar and charcoal trade with the Jubaland administration and al-Shabaab in Somalia.[42]

The sector's political and economic dynamics also include growing transnational links and activism among indigenous peoples, environmental groups and others.

The impact of relationships with former colonial powers or other states through arms sales, defence contracts, security cooperation arrangements and the like also shapes the orientation of the security sector and its prospects for delivering people-centered security – as well as the nature of the involvement of those countries as development partners.[43]

Thus, an in-depth understanding of the political economy of the security sector requires awareness of a range of regional and international networks and market dynamics.

3.3 The political and economic dynamics of the security sector are critical to sustaining peace and development

The political and economic dimensions of the security sector play a fundamental role in shaping prospects for peace and development. Depending on the underlying rules of the game and power dynamics, the orientation of security institutions has the potential to provide people with a peaceful mechanism for resolving disputes and seeking protection and redress for violence and for keeping abuses of power in check. **A people-centered security sector can be a powerful conflict deterrent**, providing peaceful pathways for dealing with grievances or disputes that might otherwise turn violent.[44] A people-centered security sector can also buttress the legitimacy of the state, trust in state institutions, and the quality and nature of the social contract. And it can be of value in addressing inequalities and exclusion by ensuring everyone has equal access to protection, safety and redress. All of these things, in turn, can in principle strengthen peace and build resilience.[45] But none of this is automatic or linear, nor can it be assumed. The challenge lies precisely in how to nurture a security sector that is people-centered in settings where structures, institutions, actors and interests may not be aligned with such an agenda.

In many contexts, political and economic dynamics are such that the security sector is not oriented towards fulfilling its role in a people-centered manner. **If power and political and economic interests in the security**

sector are narrow, exclusionary or personalized, this undermines prospects for sustained peace and keeps vast segments of the population from realizing their rights. Moreover, because parts of the security sector wield the use of force, the political and economic dynamics in this sector are especially dangerous as they can lead to violence. This can take many forms. In the absence of a security sector responsive to people's needs, people are more likely to take matters into their own hands to resolve disputes and grievances. Violence may be perpetrated by parts of the security sector itself to maintain its political commitments or ambitions or its economic interests. For instance, in Mexico, parts of the security sector have shown to be complicit in allowing violent drug cartels to operate with impunity, receiving payoffs to turn a blind eye or suspend investigations.[46] In Libya and Yemen, violent struggles for control over the security sector in the wake of popular uprisings in 2011 were central to wider state collapse and civil war.[47] Criminal or armed groups can also violently challenge the state security sector or usurp its role.[48] In Afghanistan, for instance, prior to toppling the government in 2021, the Taliban had established some degree of legitimacy by carrying out security functions in parts of the country where the state was unable to extend its reach.[49] Sustainable development is, of course, less likely to occur where violence is present.[50]

As these examples show, the political and economic interests of the security sector are central factors in shaping a country's broader experience of peace or violence, with profound repercussions for development prospects. To support pathways to peace and sustainable development, it is thus fundamental that these political and economic dimensions of the security sector are understood and taken into account in programme design and implementation.

3.4 How Political Economy Analysis can help

Without an understanding of these interests and incentives, and the broader rules of the game that shape them, work on reform will not connect with the real problems that drive a lack of people-oriented security. Rather, reforms will be operating in parallel and may achieve superficial change or “isomorphic mimicry”.[51] But they will not achieve lasting reform as they do not engage with – or challenge – the realities that sustain exclusion, lack of accountability and corruption.[52]

Approaching SSR from a limited technical lens means that these dimensions – so critical to a country’s development and peace trajectories – are overlooked. At worst, such approaches to SSR can be not only ineffective but actively harmful.

It is all too easy to assume that experiences of insecurity and a poorly performing security sector are the result of dysfunction or things not working as they are meant to – due to low capacity, lack of appropriate legal and policy frameworks, poor coordination, and so on. But a political economy lens helps reveal that **the challenge is often not that things do not work – it is that they work in the service of other interests** that have their own logic.[53]

PEA can enable policymakers and practitioners to develop more politically attuned programmes. Building on the insights from PEA, policymakers can be better positioned to design and implement programming approaches that are better tailored to respond to contextual realities, so as to support more substantive transformation. Specifically, PEA can identify the informal norms or rules that structure how the security sector operates in practice, as well as the interests, incentives and relationships that drive behavior. This goes beyond a focus on formal laws, policies and public statements of intent that typically provide only a limited and thin, if not actively skewed, picture of the situation on the ground.

At the same time, it is important to be realistic about what PEA can and cannot do. In the end, PEA is an analytical tool that is useful only to the extent that it informs and guides programming decisions. For that reason, PEA approaches emphasize the importance of embedding political economy thinking throughout the programme cycle – rather than seeing PEA as a one-off research exercise or product. The insights that PEA helps to draw out and the questions it generates should be returned to again and again as part of programme monitoring and strategic adjustments to remain relevant and effective.

3.5 UN recognition of the need for politically informed, context-relevant security sector reform

Both the United Nations and the World Bank increasingly recognize the political and economic dynamics of SSR (see Box 3). The 2018 Pathways for Peace report notes that the greatest triggers for violence – inequality and exclusion – are manifested "most starkly in policy arenas related to access to political power, … justice and security" and that these arenas "reflect the broader balance of power in society, and as such, they are highly contestable and often resistant to reform".[54] PEA can assist in taking account of the political and economic dynamics that shape the current and future orientation of the security sector – and thus the likelihood of peace and sustainable development – and enable policymakers to plan and design operations with these factors in mind.

Box 3: UN commitments supporting the use of PEA in the security sector

Effective, context-relevant and sustainable SSR is critical to enabling the United Nations to achieve its purpose of maintaining international peace and security. The Security Council notes that SSR constitutes a key element of 'conflict recovery, peacebuilding and sustaining peace'.[55] SSR is also increasingly recognized, although under-operationalized, as relevant for conflict and violence prevention.[56]

As a consequence, the UN Secretary-General has recognized that the UN's work on SSR must move beyond the historically ad hoc and under-capacitated approach,[57] and build on improvements in policies and technical guidance, specialized capacities, partnerships, and coordination and coherence.[58] The UN approach to SSR will need to focus on the political nature and increasing complexity of operations. As the Secretary-General notes: "Experience has shown that the viability of security sector reform efforts depends on the political environment in which reform is carried out."[59]

The security sector reform landscape has experienced significant change that increases the complexity of operations, including the emergence of transnational threats, the rise of intrastate conflict and criminal violence, as well as growing numbers of non-traditional actors at trans- and sub-national levels.[60]

Conventional state-centric SSR is not equipped to navigate this complexity.[61] Security Council Resolutions further recognize that SSR should:[62]

- Be 'rooted in the particular needs and conditions of … the country in question'
- Develop 'context-specific security sector reform strategies and programmes'
- Take 'into account the specific needs of the host country and its population.'

IV. A POLITICAL ECONOMY ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK FOR THE SECURITY SECTOR

This section introduces a PEA framework for SSR and steps to implement it. Some practitioners may already embed a political economy lens in their work, even if they do not use the language of PEA, and even if they are not fully aware of it. But incorporating more systematically PEA frameworks and thinking will signal a commitment at an organizational level to enable more consistent analysis shared across relevant stakeholders. This is a critical first step in ensuring that political economy thinking becomes institutionalized within work on SSR, rather than remaining dependent on a few committed individuals. Some key concepts commonly used in PEA are defined in Annex 1.

Myriad PEA frameworks have been developed by different organizations, which variously focus on the national, sectoral and/or problem levels.

- A **country-wide PEA**, or macro-level PEA, provides a general picture of the dynamics within a country.

- A **sector-focused PEA** can be useful in drilling down into how a sector operates and the challenges and opportunities it faces.

- A **problem-focused PEA** is the most specific: it aims to understand why particular problems persist, and explores how they might be unblocked or navigated. In general, it is at the problem level that PEA is the most operationally relevant, although both macro- and sector-level PEAs remain important and relevant in informing the wider context.[63]

Whether undertaken at the macro, sectoral or problem level, a PEA also looks at transnational factors, given the interconnectedness of markets, finance, politics, alliances, and personal networks.

PEA frameworks are usually developed to inform and shape the design stage of policymaking and programming. But politically astute programming cannot be achieved by simply having a politically smart design. **Day-to-day implementation must also continue to integrate political economy thinking, with implications for ways of working.** How to do this in a manner that is consistent and systematic, and that enables PEA to be more of a lens that informs practice rather than a one-off piece of analysis or product, remains a challenge. This is addressed in the final section of this brief. In any case, employing a political economy lens need not only find a place in written narrative. While reports may be useful, it is the PEA process that is most vital and the output or form that it takes can vary significantly.

Section 4.1 lays out a PEA framework for SSR that consists of a four-step process, described in further detail below.[64] While this framework aims to be as comprehensive as is practical in setting out pertinent PEA questions, these will need to be adapted and refined based on the issue being explored and the context at hand. While many of the questions included in the example will be relevant across contexts, they should be treated not as a blueprint but as guidance intended to provide a flavor for the kinds of issues that are likely to matter.

4.1 Security Sector Political Economy Analysis Framework[65]

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE ISSUE

This framework can be applied to understand the sector generally or to better understand a particular issue or problem.

- What are the security sector reform issues or problems to be addressed or analysed in greater depth and why?
- What do the security issues or problems look like? (Brief description of the nature of the issue or problem and behaviours involved)
- Why are these issues/problems considered to be a problem, and by whom?

STEP 2: DIAGNOSE WHY THE ISSUE PERSISTS

2a. Structures

- How do structural features shape the nature of the identified problem in the security sector and the way it has evolved over time?

- Historical legacies and societal characteristics: How have these influenced the way the security sector has evolved?
    - Colonialism
    - Authoritarianism
    - Elite capture
    - Ethnic, religious, linguistic, class, age, gender fault lines
    - Conflict, organized crime
- Geography and demography:
    - State authority and state presence/reach
    - Border and coastline length in relation to population
    - Border accessibility
    - Frequency of natural disasters, climate security
    - Population distribution and challenges/opportunities this creates
- Economic base
    - Main sources of economic activity, diversification
    - Illicit economy: sectors, size, links to political class and to security sector

2b. Rules of the game

- **Political landscape**
    - What is the nature of the political settlement and how does this affect the challenges regarding the security sector? Where are decisions made, in practice, regarding the allocation of resources? Are there formal checks on these processes, formal or informal?
    - What influence do economic power and the way economic resources are distributed have on the security sector? E.g. do they exacerbate rent-seeking opportunities; do they orient the security sector towards protecting particular industries; do they encourage the involvement of parts of the security sector in illicit activities; what do these patterns mean for perceptions of inclusion?
    - What roles do different institutions and actors in the security sector play in the political landscape (participating, supporting, or contesting)?

- **Formal and informal institutions**
    - What are the formal laws, policies and rules relevant to the issue that are intended to regulate behavior?
    - How do these relate to informal norms, rules or customs that influence behavior in practice and to what effect, including in relation to inequality and exclusion?

	How is the security sector meant to work? (Formal rules)	How does the security sector work in practice and why? (Informal rules)
Roles and responsibilities	Who are the formally mandated security actors/ sources of authority in a given setting, and what are their roles?	Who is actually involved in the security sector (broadly including formal, statutory bodies and private and informal/ non-state actors)? What roles do the various security actors actually play, and how are they perceived? Focus in particular on closeness to the centers of power, division of labor (armed forces, presidential guard, gendarmerie, police) and respective stature with the population. Who or where do people turn to, in practice, for safety or to deal with disputes or crimes, including marginalized groups?
Leadership and decision-making	Who is formally in charge and responsible for decision-making in the relevant component/ institution or segment of the security sector? Who is formally on board with SSR efforts? If leaders pay only lip service to SSR, why would they do that?	Are formally made decisions implemented? Who actually wields authority, power and influence within the security sector? And what does this say about the influence that marginalized groups can exercise? How are decisions made within the sector and why? Who is party to decision-making processes? Who is left without voice or influence and to what effect? Who is genuinely committed to SSR within the sector (beyond official statements), and who is opposed and why?

Laws and policies	What laws and policies are in place relevant to the functioning of the sector? Are laws and policies relevant and up to date, including in relation to inclusion? Are there important policy areas that are not covered or regulated by law, and if so why and to what effect?	How are laws and policies implemented / enforced in practice, including regarding inclusion?
Service delivery	Have values been formulated for the security sector? What groups in state and society are they intended to serve and why? How is inclusion formally considered in service delivery? What is the formal balance between central and local authorities in the provision of security services?	Who are the primary groups of people that benefit from security, how and why? Who is included/excluded from receiving security services, how and why? Are user fees (formal or informal) common in accessing security? To what effect?

Oversight and accountability	What civilian oversight and accountability mechanisms are formally in place (internal to the security sector; within government or parliament; independent bodies; media/civil society)? What groups are intended to be empowered through these mechanisms, and are special considerations to gender and social inclusion made formally? To what extent are these mechanisms and groups resourced and empowered?	How do oversight and accountability mechanisms work in actual practice, and to what effect, including in relation to gender and social inclusion? To what extent are civilian oversight and accountability mechanisms effective and operational (e.g. are civilians providing oversight, command and control)? Who participates in these oversight mechanisms, and to what effect? Is there significant rent-seeking/ patronage/clientelism in the security sector? How does this work? Where is it most prevalent and why? Who benefit, and who are marginalized?
Financing	How and to what extent is the security sector formally financed? (sources, amounts, timeliness, decision-making process pertaining to the military and security expenditures, etc.)	How does the financing of security operate in practice? Where does funding flow from and to in the security sector, and where is it underfunded? What alternative sources of finance are used (private funding, legal and illegal rent-seeking, etc.)? How does this impact the way elements of the security sector work, why and to what effect?

- How do the formal rules (the way things are meant to work on paper) and the informal rules (the way things work in practice) interact? Are they mutually reinforcing, or do they pull in different directions? What drives this and to what effect, including in terms of gender and social inclusion? Are there beliefs, norms, customs, values or allegiances that help explain their alignment or disjuncture?

2c. Actors, power and interests

- How are different actors and groups (ministries, ministers, politicians, criminal networks, armed groups or disarmed / demobilized groups, civil society, religious groups, traditional or customary leaders, media, men, women and children) positioned in terms of the power and influence they can exercise, and to what effect? (e.g. what are the leading sources of power and influence, including elections; the barrel of a gun; access to media, moral authority, etc., and how are these used)?
- How do the incentives and interests of different stakeholders shape their behavior and views related to the SSR problem?
- How supportive are these stakeholders of security sector reforms? Who is likely to “win” and “lose” from reforms?
- How do different stakeholders in the security sector influence how policy and policy reforms are developed and put in practice, and to what effect?

2d. Dynamism/Opportunities

- How do structural, institutional and actor-related factors interact to shape the issue, and how do these influence prospects for change?
- What current events or junctures are playing out, and what impact do they have on the security sector and behavior of key actors?
- How is the security sector now perceived by different groups in state and society, and to what effect (e.g. legitimacy, trust)?
- What is in flux or under pressure from domestic, regional or international forces that may open or close space for change in the security sector?
- How do security sector and other relevant actors (including women) reinforce, challenge, contest or subvert structural and/or institutional dynamics and to what effect?
- Based on the mapping of stakeholders, what opportunities exist for forming coalitions for progressive change, giving greater voice to certain groups in the SSR process?

STEP 3: PROGNOSIS

- What does the analysis in the diagnostic stage suggest about potential pathways for change in the security sector or how the SSR process might happen?
- What are the most important dynamics identified in the analysis explaining the nature of the issue within the security sector?
- Where are potential openings and internal/external pressures for reform of the security sector? Where are there bottlenecks? What are the implications for groups that can exercise voice and influence?
- Who are the key SSR champions and blockers, and why? What is their respective power and influence, and what does this imply for the traction of reform?
- How might change happen in light of these power dynamics within the SSR process, and what kind of change can be expected?

STEP 4: PROGRAMMATIC IMPLICATIONS

- How can UN SSR programming support reform pathways that are better anchored in contextual realities and take account of PEA insights?
- How can UN SSR programming support the identified pathways of change, including in collaboration with relevant domestic actors, the World Bank and other partners?
- How would the suggested reforms affect the interests and incentives of key political and sector leaders? How would programming navigate this and the potential tensions, dilemmas and trade-offs that may emerge? (this is important as it would check the political feasibility of proposed approaches)
- What are potential entry points (issues; stakeholders on the basis of the analysis that has been undertaken) and why?
- What assumptions are being made that would need to hold true for SSR to be effective, and how can these be tested (and adjusted if necessary) on a routine basis?

4.2 Step 1. Issue identification

Issues can be broad and macro (for instance, focused on what governance in the security sector in a given country looks like and why) or more targeted (for instance, focused on specific security and justice problems that people face, such as the prevalence of cattle raiding or human trafficking). Defining the issue sets the broad parameters of PEA and requires clarity about the purpose for undertaking PEA in the first place.

The more specific the PEA focus – for instance, on a particular problem, like why there is impunity in relation to violence against women – the more granular and detailed the analysis and implications will be. Where the focus of PEA is broader – on the nature of security sector governance at the national level, for instance – the analysis and implications will tend to be similarly broad. For this reason, there has been a growing focus within the World Bank and other donors on problem-focused PEA, given its potential to support more operationally relevant findings than a national or even sectorally focused PEA.[66] Yet, it is also important for more sectoral or problem-focused analysis not to lose sight of relevant factors and dynamics at the macro level, as these will likely condition the nature and characteristics of a given issue or problem and shape room for maneuvering. As problems are identified, it is likely that there will be multiple component problems to be unpacked. What might begin as a general problem, such as high rates of violence perpetrated by the security sector against communities, might then be broken down into multiple component problems. For instance, the problem might include police using excessive force in dealing with the public; police colluding with criminals to perpetrate violent crimes; armed forces attacking particular communities; and so on. Each of these problems would need to be unpacked individually, recognizing overlaps.

A focus on problems is intended to be specific about "entry points and positive motivators of change" and to get away from solution-led approaches that begin with what will be done, before determining whether it is appropriate in a given context.[67] For this reason, it is important to reflect on who, in fact, sees the problem as a problem and why. The issues identified should resonate with and reflect the views and priorities of domestic actors, in order to ensure internationally supported programmes focus on issues that have relevance and traction in people's lives. For instance, coordination of the security sector may be a problem – but it is not one that most people would recognize as impacting their lives. It may contribute, however, to high rates of custody or high case backlogs. These are real problems that people face. **The more that identified problems connect with people's lived experiences of security and justice, the more likely it is that programmes can be tailored to deliver real-world impact.**

The PEA framework above can also be used to understand how positive outliers have come about. If, for instance, there is one issue area or region in which performance of the security sector – or citizen experience of security – is significantly better than elsewhere, the PEA framework can be used to explain what enabled this to come about.

4.3 Step 2. Diagnosis: What dynamics create or sustain the issue ?

Having identified the issue to be unpacked, the diagnosis is the analytical step in the process. It seeks to understand the nature of the problem, how it has evolved over time, and why it persists. This step also begins to explore opportunities for change. The diagnosis involves attention to four components, with gender and social inclusion considerations infused throughout:

- **Foundational or structural factors**: These are deeply embedded national, regional and international features that shape the character of the state, the nature of state-society relations, the political system and economic choices.[68] They tend to be difficult or slow to change and so tend to constrain what is possible. Examples include geography, borders with conflict-affected countries, natural resource endowments, colonial legacies, class structures and patriarchy. For instance, security and justice problems might be shaped by a geography in which state institutions are distant from areas where conflict is concentrated and where the state's authority contested, by skewed demographics that create a youth bulge, or by the presence of natural resources that provide opportunities for rent-seeking or illegal activity.

- **Rules of the game**: Political settlements and formal and informal institutions (rules and norms) influence the way different actors behave, their incentives, their relationships and their capacity for collective action. This component encompasses both the formal rules and legal frameworks (e.g. a constitution), as well as informal norms, and social and cultural traditions that guide behavior in practice (e.g. gift-giving practices, elite membership based on narratives around national independence, hierarchies between ethnic or religious groups).

Combined, these formal and informal rules determine how power is exercised, how resources are distributed and how state-society relations are articulated. Importantly, it is often informal institutions that are most influential in driving people's behaviors and decisions but are harder for outsiders to understand. In the security sector, formal laws and policies may set out strong integrity standards with harsh penalties for corruption. But in practice, informal norms may mean that predatory behavior and patron-client relationships are common. Building a nuanced understanding of how formal and informal rules interact, requires a deep knowledge of the context, which local staff are often better placed to understand than outsiders.

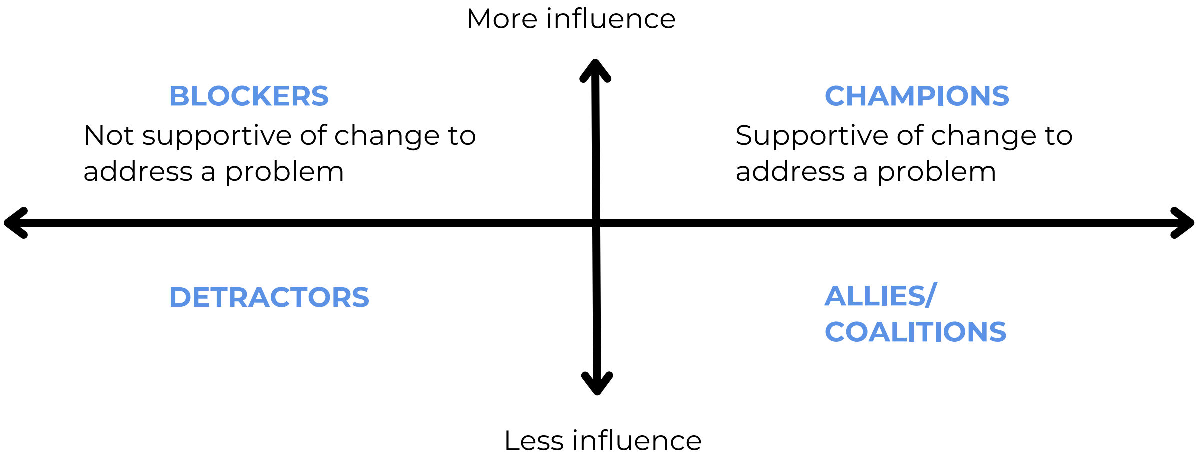
- **Stakeholder interests, incentives and power:** How do different actors exercise their influence, interests and incentives to resist or support change? This part of the analysis aims to understand:
    - who is relevant to the problem at hand and why
    - how actors are positioned in relation to the problem by taking account of their interests (what they care about) and their incentives (what drives them)
    - the power or influence the different actors wield, and the relationships between them.

Using stakeholder mapping (see Figure 1) to locate actors according to their relative power, influence, and positioning in relation to the problem can help to visually capture the efforts that security sector reform is up against. Stakeholder mapping can help to be realistic about where powerful actors stand in relation to reform efforts beyond how they might pronounce themselves in public. It can also help to identify potential coalitions of those supportive of reform to amplify their collective power.

- **Interactions and opportunities:** The final step in the analysis looks at how structures, institutions and stakeholders interact, and how collectively they shape prospects for reform. This might capture current events and circumstances, as well as influence the objectives and behavior of key actors and how they respond to opportunities for or impediments to change. This could include
  - leadership changes
  - electoral processes
  - the passage of new laws
  - corruption scandals
  - natural disasters
  - how actors are trying to reinforce, challenge, contest or subvert structures and institutions
  - the opportunities or roadblocks for change that emerge from these dynamics.

For example, a newly elected government and ministry of interior might be pushing for reform of the security sector and fresh recruitment. In turn, existing security sector personnel might resist the reform – at times overtly but also more covertly. This analysis can help highlight potential partners or coalitions for change, as well as potential blockers that need to be brought on board. In addition, it is important to consider what kinds of opportunities or roadblocks might emerge related to ongoing or upcoming processes or events, such as peace agreements, decentralization reforms, or elections. How are these likely to play out given the analysis of structure, institutions and agency?

Figure 1: Basic Stakeholder Map


More influence
BLOCKERS
Not supportive of change to address a problem
CHAMPIONS
Supportive of change to address a problem
DETRACTORS
ALLIES/ COALITIONS
Less influence

4.3 Step 3. Diagnosis: What does the analysis suggest about pathways for change ?

The third step considers the potential implications from the analysis about how change might happen, given the political economy that is shaping the security sector and the issue at hand. Once the problem has been analyzed and the embedded dynamics and factors that give it shape have been more fully understood, this step can be used to help distill what pathways to peace and sustainable development are realistic. It involves **synthesizing information from the analysis stage, zooming in on the most important features, and developing hypotheses about how change might happen.**

Given the difficulty involved in thinking about how change happens and identifying realistic pathways for change in the complex environment in which SSR operations take place, this step is also best undertaken over time, through multiple conversations among teams and partners.

It may be that multiple pathways of change are identified. In this case, each pathway can be considered an experiment, with a focus on capturing learning about each strategy to achieve change, understanding what works well and why, and making needed adjustments on the basis of such learning. Thus, pathways of change should not be considered fixed or permanent but rather require regular reassessment and testing to ensure they remain valid.

4.5 Step 4. Programmatic implications: How can the UN support reform pathways anchored in contextual realities?

With hypotheses in place about how change is likely to happen in a given context, decisions can then be made about how the United Nations, specifically, can seek to support those pathways and identify potential entry points for reform. **If UN operations delay their identification of what they will focus on until after the diagnosis and prognosis, interventions will be more grounded in the political economy of the context** rather than based on assumptions or predetermined solutions.

This step is intended to be the bridge between the PEA elements of Thinking and Working Politically, and it is probably the hardest in the process – because there is nothing automatic about PEA that will elucidate what international development actors should focus on and seamlessly chart the way forward.

Rather, this last step offers UN staff the opportunity to digest the analysis and to reflect collectively on its implications for what the UN is already doing in this space, and whether it should be doing different things or do the same things differently. This is also the time to reflect on what the analysis means for the UN's collaboration with the World Bank and other partners in terms of programme content (e.g. focus and approach, theories of change and embedded assumptions, overall relevance of interventions on the basis of the analysis and/or adjustments that might be needed) and modalities (e.g. procurement mechanisms, budgets and procedures, partners or personnel involved). For the implications to get meaningful traction, it is essential to ensure that stakeholders who will need to lead on altering and refining programmes are meaningfully involved in the process of teasing them out.

V. WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Here we provide an array of lessons from diverse efforts not only to think in more politically aware ways, but also to work differently as a result in relation to security, justice and transitions to peace. These examples are intended to demonstrate both important learning that has emerged from experiences of undertaking PEA, as well as the breadth and diversity of how TWP – including PEA – can be operationalized. This Policy Note sets out a PEA framework that can assist in thinking politically, but it should be treated as a starting point that can be applied in many different ways. It may be used as a methodological framework in a research exercise; as a jumping-off point for further development of a context-specific PEA framework (see the Sudan case study below); as a series of prompts for continued team reflection (with partners where appropriate) in designing programmes; or as a personal checklist that serves as a reminder of issues to think through that may easily be overlooked in the day-to-day work on programming.

The lessons laid out here are not exhaustive. There are lessons from development programming more generally that are relevant to SSR as well – such as the political nature of development and the transformations being sought, the centrality of context, the complex and non-linear nature of reform processes, and the need to work in ways that are much more locally led, flexible, adaptive and grounded in real-time learning as a result.[69]

5.1 Lesson 1: Start with how people access security and develop best-fit approaches

SSR programming often takes place with deep-seated assumptions – mostly derived from the experience of the "Global North" – about how security is accessed and provided. These assumptions privilege formal, statutory security agencies, such as state police services and armed forces, with SSR programming primarily oriented towards strengthening and improving their capacities and reach. Yet in many parts of the world, people rely on a wide range of security providers that go beyond formal, statutory bodies. In many countries, up to 80 per cent of the population rely on what are variously called informal, non-state, customary or other security providers.[70] A range of actors draw on diverse sources of legitimacy and authority (partly legally mandated by the state, partly cultural, partly popular).[71] Particularly in conflict-affected settings, where the security sector has been implicated in violence or in enforcing authoritarian rule, large parts of the population may have greater trust in security providers not connected to the state.[72] Of course, transforming the orientation of the security sector and (re)building trust with the population they are intended to serve is important. But strengthening the formal sector is a long-term process that does not necessarily coincide neatly with the disappearance of non-formal security providers. Indeed, the latter may well continue to play a significant role in the delivery of security and compete with formal institutions for legitimacy in both the short and long terms.

For SSR operations to be relevant and connect with the lived realities of the people whose security they are meant to be serving, it is therefore important to recognize and work with this hybridity. This means, at the outset of planning, **building a solid understanding of who the "real" providers of security are, and of how people actually access safety and deal with crimes and grievances**. This will be context-specific and likely differ even within a country, as well as among different parts of the population (women, for instance, are likely to access security in different ways to men; and minority or marginalized groups may also have distinct pathways). Integrating a nuanced understanding of how people interact with the security sector – broadly understood – can help to develop more realistic and relevant reform programmes that go beyond how international actors think security should be provided and recognize how in fact it is provided and accessed. In the end, the emphasis will be less on "best-practice" solutions, and more on "best-fit" approaches to reform.

Box 4: Grounding reforms in how people actually access security and justice

In **Solomon Islands**, the World Bank Justice for the Poor (J4P) programme aims to reinvigorate local-level justice systems following the 1998-2003 violent conflict known as the Tensions, recognizing that much international assistance focuses on state security and justice institutions that struggle to reach and serve 80 per cent of the population.[73] Before designing interventions, the J4P team undertook extensive local research to understand how people resolve disputes and conflict and the relationships between communities, local governance and the state. This ensured programming was grounded in local realities and built sustainability from the outset.

The research found multiple, overlapping dispute resolution processes, including state institutions, such as the police and courts, as well as non-state systems including the customary *kastom* system and church groups.[74] The composition, effectiveness and legitimacy of providers varied; however, where the kastom system was functional, it was generally the most commonly relied on, with churches also frequently used. In some places, the kastom system was seen as increasingly fragile and unable to respond to issues such as land disputes and substance abuse, and some chiefs that preside over the kastom system were viewed as embroiled in personal power struggles. While generally relying on non-state systems, people also looked to state institutions to be more responsive.[75]

Building on these findings, a Community Governance and Grievance Management (CGGM) Project sought to build stronger linkages between communities, police and government.[76] Under CGGM, community officers (COs) were appointed by communities and employed by the provincial government to resolve disputes, refer serious matters to the police and channel government service providers into communities.

Recognizing the diversity of contexts even at the subnational level, in some places the COs are referred to as Peace Wardens or Community Liaison Officers, depending on their distinct roles, emphases and relationships. This can differ from province to province or even from island to island. Two COs were appointed in each community, initially one male and one female, on the assumption that this would encourage women to access the COs. This was especially important given that Solomon Islands has one of the highest rates of family violence in the world.[77] Yet the gender balance has become a point of discussion, as Solomon Islanders – men and women – have reported that balance is not necessarily a priority given that gender-based violence is rooted in issues of masculinity; men who are sensitive to women's concerns can be seen as better placed to deal with issues of family violence.

The COs have helped to rebuild trust in the Royal Solomon Islands Police Service – which is now more responsive instead of being overwhelmed by minor complaints.[78] The COs provide a focal point for other Solomon Island government services, so that information from provincial and national governments is better communicated to communities, benefiting connections between government and the people.[79] With CO salaries paid for by the provincial government since the project commenced, the sustainability of the project is also on strong footing, with the World Bank supporting the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening to increasingly take over management.

In **Myanmar**, the Danish-funded "Everyday Justice and Security in the Myanmar Transition" (EverJust) project (2015-2021) used qualitative, ethnographic research methods to build in-depth knowledge about how people deal with insecurity, disputes and breaches of the law at the local level, providing insights on larger questions about authority, peacebuilding and state - society relations.[80] Research sites combined urban Yangon, as well as conflict-affected ethnic-minority states, where formal and informal authorities exercise varying levels of authority.

While highlighting significant diversity, the project found a strong preference for resolving disputes and crimes as locally as possible, mostly through informal mechanisms and widespread efforts to avoid state institutions.[81] It also found that cultural and religious norms weigh heavily in how people formulate their understanding of everyday justice, and that identity politics influence how they negotiate everyday justice.[82] EverJust findings have been fed into policy and programming discussions about peacebuilding, governance and justice in Myanmar to influence the way in which development partners engage.

5.2 Lesson 2: Building on what works with partners that already understand the context and Thinking and Working Politically

SSR operations have a tendency to view the contexts they work in through a deficit lens – that is, a focus on what is lacking and the many problems that require fixing. Such approaches overlook some of the positive dynamics that are present and that can be supported and expanded. An intentional approach that looks for **positive outliers**, or “positive deviants”, can be useful to go with the grain of what already works in a given context. These are parts of the security sector – be it a region, a neighborhood or a particular issue area – where things work comparatively well, despite being subject to the same wider political economic environment. For instance, it might be that crime rates are lower in some parts of a city compared to zones with similar features. Or it could be that the justice sector operates with significantly less rent-seeking than the police. In such cases, understanding what works can help to expand positive practice.

Finding these positive outliers is challenging and requires a deep understanding of the context. Here, local partners can be key. They often have a better understanding of the places where they work and rich connections that UN programming otherwise has to build largely from scratch. Working in support of local partners can help to leverage this contextual knowledge in support of change. In the example in South Sudan in Box 5, for instance, the Dutch non-governmental organization Cordaid supported local civil society organizations that had established networks and relationships with customary authorities and that had a nuanced understanding of the interests of the actors involved and what was most likely to incentivize change in the penalties imposed by South Sudan’s customary law courts. Change was not likely to be achieved through the use of expert-led, train-the-trainer approaches to educating customary leaders on international human rights. Rather, change came about through peer exchange after pairing generally rights-respecting customary leaders with less rights-respecting customary leaders. In this case, working politically and understanding the local political economy meant recognizing the relationships between customary leaders, as well as their power and moral authority.

Supporting local partners by drawing on an understanding of their political economy can itself be a demonstration of working politically, especially where the partners themselves are adept at Thinking and Working Politically. This is often the case for local organizations of women. Many women’s organizations use politically smart approaches to advocate for change, even if they do not necessarily use that terminology.[83] Supporting such contextually grounded and politically adept local partners has helped, for example, to reduce female genital mutilation in Senegal and to expand rights for women in Kenya’s constitutional reform process.[84]

Box 5: Ending the use of human compensation in customary courts in South Sudan[85]

Until recently, in some communities of South Sudan, customary courts used human compensation as a punishment for serious crimes, such as murder. Although illegal according to formal laws, the perpetrator's family would be ordered to provide the victim's family typically with a young girl. For years, three local civil society organizations – STEWARDWOMEN, the South Sudan Law Society and the Justice and Peace Commission – worked with customary authorities and courts in South Sudan, developing strong relationships with local leaders and a deep grasp of the nuances of how customary justice worked in different ways across the country. With support from Cordaid, these local partners were able to address the issue of human compensation.

Instead of taking the commonly used approach of delivering human rights training, which the local organizations knew would gain little traction and would prompt resistance, they worked with selected progressive customary leaders to influence those who continued to promote human compensation. Such an approach required a profound understanding of how customary laws varied at the subnational level, as well as of the personalities of the customary leaders involved. Chief exchanges allowed the chiefs who were still using human compensation to visit those communities where the punishment had been replaced with monetary or livestock compensation. They would experience how this did not erode the value or strength of customary law, making room for motivation to change.

Reportedly, human compensation has now ceased in the area. Importantly, seeing the possibility for change within their own cultural context was important for the chiefs: not imposed by outsiders but rather undertaken by their peers living and providing justice in similar contexts.

5.3 Lesson 3: Understanding the role of financing and sustainability

The role of financing in the security sector has been an underexamined component in most SSR programmes.[86] Yet it is central to how the sector functions and can reveal much about how it works in practice – and to whose benefit and detriment. Political statements and policies may articulate priorities that align well with development partners' expectations, but budgeting may reveal that stated priorities are not well supported in practice. In other cases, **a deeper understanding of security sector expenditure can reveal rent-seeking strategies.** For example, analyzing staffing expenditure can expose ghost employees (where there are more staff on the payroll than exist in reality, with senior staff pocketing the incomes of staff who have died or never existed).

Reports from Afghanistan in 2016 mentioned that "the actual number of police and soldiers might be around 120,000 while official figures state that there are around 322,638 assigned personnel."[87] Significant international reform efforts can themselves drive an increase in such rent-seeking behavior, signalling the need for robust oversight of donor funding.[88]

Finally, an understanding of security sector financing is key to developing **sustainability** in reforms. SSR has been a culprit for setting up unsustainable high-tech case management systems, for instance within the police, corrections, and courts. These can only work in settings of durable availability of information technology literacy, maintenance and repair skills, supporting hardware, Internet connectivity and electricity. It is impossible to design financially sustainable reforms if what is affordable in a given context is not known. The Justice for the Poor programme in Solomon Islands, highlighted above, is a good demonstration of reform designed with affordability and financial sustainability in mind. Questions of financial sustainability will be especially important as international assistance begins to draw down (although these questions should feature early on in SSR as part of long-term planning), and as the government is expected to take on a greater share of the security sector costs.[89]

Box 6: Essential element: the public expenditure review

A public expenditure review (PER) is “an analytical instrument that examines government resource allocations within and among sectors, assessing the equity, efficiency and effectiveness of those allocations in the context of a country’s macroeconomic framework and sectoral priorities.”[90] In essence, PERs help give a better picture of the money spent on security – what it is spent on and how. PERs can identify budgetary and administrative reforms that can support a right-sized, appropriately resourced, efficient and sustainable security sector. They can also highlight concerns related to budget execution and support the development of oversight and control mechanisms to ensure funding serves its intended purpose.[91]

In Niger, a 2013 PER conducted by the World Bank identified that a lack of strategy to prioritize between competing internal and external threats hampered an effective security sector.[92] While the security sector budget increased in response to a more volatile region, the PER found that the majority of the increase was allocated to capital expenditure, while funding for security sector operations was reduced. The accuracy of the budgets was precarious, and there was a failure to capture costs associated with increased staffing levels in forward planning. In short, “a disconnect between the armed forces’ estimates of their requirements and the formalized sector strategy” meant that government plans were not realistic or sufficiently prioritized given budgeting.[93]

In Afghanistan, costings of security sector expenditure in 2005 revealed that the sector “cost some $1.3 billion per year, or 23 percent of gross domestic product, made up largely of donor contributions along with some government financing. Security spending therefore exceeded domestic revenues by over 500 percent. Questions on the sustainability of security sector spending, and on the handover from international forces for policing and military functions, have been at the fore of policy making for the country ever since.”[94]This level of spending did not prevent the 2021 collapse of the Afghan government.

The World Bank has taken the lead in supporting security sector public expenditure reviews, at times in collaboration with the United Nations, to address precisely these challenges. As described in Box 6, public expenditure reviews can make valuable contributions to our understanding of the political economy of the security sector, revealing how certain security and justice functions are valued, determining the sustainability of approaches to reform, as well as enabling a robust assessment of potential rent- seeking.

5.4 Lesson 4: Helping reformers hone strategies for change through inclusive Political Economy Analysis

PEA is often undertaken as a donor-led exercise, to inform the programming of external actors so as to make it more locally relevant and effective. In order to ensure that any PEA process (whether a written product or not) reflects the diversity of views in society, it must pay attention to issues of inclusion. This includes thinking through who is involved in undertaking PEA to **ensure that there is a diverse representation of perspectives, disciplinary backgrounds, gender and any other identity features that are relevant in a given context.** In some places, ensuring ethnic diversity will be critically important; in other contexts, issues of religion or geographical representation may be more relevant.

However, PEA can also be oriented not towards donor programmes but to empower in-country individuals or organizations to understand and influence their own political environments. In the Sudan example below, the United Kingdom supported a Sudanese team to deliver a locally adapted PEA training course for young activists in the lead-up to the 2019 revolution. The emphasis here was on supporting those directly involved in a reform process with tools to navigate complex political dynamics and move beyond business-as-usual approaches. For the security sector, such an approach could involve supporting civil society, journalists, activists or even reform-minded parts of the security sector itself – such as women's associations within the police – to think through how to carry out reforms within their own context. Many in civil society already knows it must operate in politically smart ways to navigate opposition and make their voices heard.

Box 7: Inclusive Political Economy Analysis training in Sudan

In 2017, the UK-funded Kulana Liltanmia Programme delivered PEA training for young activists in Sudan to help them identify opportunities to change the way citizens engaged with the government. Given the constrained civic space in Sudan, the training was framed as "context analysis" and conducted in a low-profile manner outside of donor offices, so as not to attract the interest of the security services or government surveillance.

The training was designed and delivered by three Sudanese governance experts – avoiding the usual reliance on international experts. It was delivered over eight months, with two days of training per month, bringing together diverse participants from civil society who all shared an interest in political change.

Importantly, while the training used international PEA frameworks from the World Bank, DFID and others as a starting point, the frameworks were adapted and localized to better fit the Sudanese context and resonate with participants. This "vernacularization" of the training was undertaken together with training participants, so that the product was genuinely owned by them and made more relevant and useful. For instance, ethnic, family and cultural perspectives were more integrated than most PEA frameworks, responding to the participants' impressions of what was important in the Sudanese context. Training participants then applied the learning from the training to their day-to-day work, continuing to meet to share, reflect and strategize on how to work politically in practice.

In December 2018 a revolution took hold; in April 2019 President al-Bashir was ousted and a civilian-military transitional structure was set up. Some of the participants in the PEA training were involved in the events surrounding these changes. Training participants described how the course shaped the way they engaged with the political transition – helping them to see the world differently, analyze the power dynamics behind what was happening and see opportunities in desperate situations. Training participants also took what they learned back to their organizations – and set up new ones – further spreading PEA knowledge and approaches.

(For a fuller paper on the PEA training see B. Jones, and D. Oosthuizen, with A. Elmekki and E. Ahmed (2024) "Political Economy Analysis in Sudan: Handy Tools for Everyone?" Birmingham: TWP Community of Practice)

5.5. Lesson 5: Keeping Political Economy Analysis “alive”

A key challenge is how to keep PEA “alive” beyond the initial analysis. This is the challenge referred to throughout this policy brief as “working politically”. Some already work politically in practice – such as the feminist groups discussed above. Certainly, more and more programmes and organizations are putting in place processes to make this routine.[95] Box 8 documents the experience of one such programme, the Legal Assistance for Economic Recovery (LASER) programme.

Inevitably, in fragile and conflict-affected settings, the **context is highly dynamic** and will change throughout the course of programming. In addition, practitioners will **successively learn more** about the context, as well as about what works and what does not, in the process of programming. For SSR to remain relevant and be more effective, this information needs to be fed back into programming. Thinking about how change can be facilitated is often done in structured sessions within teams, held every three to six months.[96] Such meetings typically are used to critically interrogate the programme’s reform strategies and assumptions and whether these remain valid considering the political economy of the context.

Beyond these meetings, support to staff to work politically can include cultivating a team environment that encourages creativity and “out-of-the-box” brainstorming with a more diverse group of interlocutors, as well as – where possible – providing devolved authority to test ideas.[97] Staff should also be actively encouraged to gather information – from literature, news sources, social media and interactions with stakeholders – and to see that process as a valuable use of their time. As much as possible, staff should focus on testing ways to achieve overall outcomes, rather than simply delivering pre-determined outputs.[98] **The approach needs structure, so that it is not haphazard but rather involes an intentional strategy of testing, feedback and learning.** The final section of this brief sets out more detail on the organizational culture required to achieve this.

Box 8: Working politically in practice – the Legal Assistance for Economic Recovery (LASER) Programme

The LASER programme was a £4.3 million United Kingdom-funded initiative to strengthen and reform the investment climate in fragile and conflict-affected states, that ran from 2014 to 2017. It began with the recognition that reform of the investment climate contained a political element: the interface between business and the state, money and power. With such reform, legislative change could be expected, as well as alterations to the "rules of the game" and operations of organizations that have vested interests.[99] A technical approach to reform was therefore deemed insufficient. The programme developed an approach that was:

- **Problem-focused:** the entry point was technical assistance to address a locally identified problem
- **Incremental:** solutions were developed iteratively, tested, adapted and scaled or abandoned
- **Context-specific:** solutions were not pre-determined but based on ongoing political and contextual analysis of "best fit", with a focus on what was feasible and realistic in the context
- **Locally led:** reforms were led by local actors with LASER staff working as facilitators
- **Learning-oriented and adaptive:** reforms involved ongoing exploration and "learning by doing"
- **Flexible**: a programme logframe enabled adaptation in light of changing contexts and ongoing learning; workplans and outputs were developed on a rolling basis.[100]

Programming began with some initial PEA of locally identified problems then quickly moved to learning about potential solutions through "a process of discovery, rather than […] a process of analysis."[101] This required engagement with diverse stakeholders, as well as ongoing reflection. LASER staff, usually embedded within government, had to work politically and were encouraged to take a learning approach through the use of problem diaries – in which staff documented identified problems, what was learned about them and possibilities for change. The problem diaries fed into monthly team meetings to reflect on strategies to address the problems.[102]

Working politically helped the LASER programme to focus on "working with 'what is there', however functional or not."[103] This led to some impressive reforms. I**n Kenya, LASER helped the judiciary to introduce court-annexed alternative dispute resolution (ADR) into the Kenyan justice system.** This issue had been discussed for over 15 years but had not progressed due to resistance from parts of the judiciary and legal profession. LASER initially assisted the judiciary through a workshop to consider the issue and, on request, provided international examples of court-annexed ADR. LASER facilitated participation from Uganda and Nigeria, where court-annexed ADR is well-developed. This helped reformers within the Kenyan judiciary to secure an agreement for the piloting of ADR. The pilot was led by the judiciary with project management support provided by LASER. The end result was the roll-out and adoption of ADR within Kenya's judicial system.[104]

In Rwanda, LASER played a key role in **building relationships between the private sector and the justice sector**, ensuring that private-sector concerns were, for the first time, built into the planning processes and ongoing justice reform process. The first step was to assist the Ministry of Justice in inviting foreign investors and domestic companies to forums to discuss justice-related constraints they face and subsequently support the Ministries of Justice and Commerce in an ongoing dialogue. As a result, private-sector concerns were reflected in Rwanda's national Justice Sector Reform Programme and in government budget allocations.[105]

5.6 Lesson 6: Managing the risks associated with the sensitivities of Political Economy Analysis

PEA, by definition, touches upon sensitive political and economic issues that can endanger relationships, pose personal risks to local interlocutors, researchers or staff, and create reputational and security risks for the commissioning organization if findings are leaked or made public. The risks involved in undertaking PEA will vary from place to place, and judgment will need to be exercised in terms of how these risks are best mitigated. Ensuring the ongoing safety of those involved in undertaking PEA – particularly local staff – is critical. Maintaining the possibility for engagement is also key and may have an impact on how thorough, critical or public PEA can be. Two points are worth noting given these challenges.

First, **PEA need not be a written report**. In some circumstances, putting down politically sensitive details in writing, attributable to individuals or organizations, will not be possible without the risk of harm or reputational and relationship damage. In such cases, PEA as an ongoing and more informal process of inquiry, thinking and exchange may be more appropriate.

Second, where PEA is to be undertaken as a report in dangerous settings, **it may need to be confidential**, in part or in full, and not shared beyond the commissioning organization. This is the approach pursued, for instance, by the UK in carrying out Serious and Organised Crime Joint Analysis, set out in Box 9. More often than not, however, it is possible to make public much of a PEA, with some redactions or edits to remove or soften politically sensitive information. This option usually works quite well as most of the intended audiences will be able to read between the lines and understand what might not be explicitly stated. This approach can also be paired with more frank presentations of the PEA findings with appropriate audiences and/or an unredacted version of the PEA that is shared more selectively.

Box 9: Keeping PEA confidential – The United Kingdom's Serious and Organised Crime Joint Analysis

Serious and Organised Crime Joint Analyses (SOCJAs) are premised on the understanding that tackling serious and organized crime requires a deep knowledge of how criminal networks operate and how they relate to the broader political and socio-economic context[106] They use similar methods to PEA, including unpacking structural and institutional features, as well as mapping actor networks and understanding whose interests criminal activity serves and who stands to gain or lose from efforts to prevent or interrupt organized crime.[107] Market analysis is also integrated. SOCJAs form the basis for the development of cross-government regional strategies and programmes. SOCJAs draw on cross-government inputs and wide consultations with a range of partners where relationships are in place and trust enables frank discussions. Despite the extensive consultations, expectations are made clear so that partners do not expect the resulting reports to be shareable. That being said, as the final reports are long, often some parts can be declassified or summarized to share with partners. In this way, the reports can include all the information but contain different products made available depending on the sensitivity of the information.

SOCJA is as much about the reports as the *process* of bringing together multiple parts of the government to collaborate and jointly strategize on countering serious crime. The integrated analysis informs the development of UK regional strategies for preventing serious crime. PEA exercises, in a similar way, can be more about the process than the final product, with some redacted versions made public or shared with partners when useful.

Yet it is important to note that the sensitivity of the issues involved in a PEA can themselves be a trigger for discussions with partners. This is demonstrated in the case of a USAID project in the Central African Republic, detailed in Box 10.

Box 10: Leveraging politically sensitive information for change in the Central African Republic

In the Central African Republic (CAR), a study by USAID's Artisanal Mining and Property Rights project of smuggling in the diamond industry fundamentally shaped the project's approach to reform and discussion with the CAR government.[108] The study found that formal systems for diamond exports were excessively burdensome, that alternative networks of trust developed following the 2013 crisis and that patron-client relationships with the government sustained diamond smuggling. These findings were highly politically sensitive, and publication of the report was initially blocked by CAR government officials. Yet the findings - highlighting the revenues lost to neighboring Cameroon from the illicit trade - alongside a year of negotiations and advocacy, ultimately led the CAR government to approve the study's release and to turn the recommendations into an action plan for diamond sector reform. [109]

VI. NEXT STEPS: WHAT CAN WE DO TO EMBED THINKING AND WORKING POLITICALLY?

This note has provided a rationale and approach for integrating political economy thinking into SSR, as the “thinking” part of Thinking and Working Politically. It has also set out a range of lessons that have emerged from experiences of applying political economy thinking to security sector issues. Where does this get us? While integrating a PEA lens into UN SSR work is important in order to develop more relevant and realistic programming, it is insufficient on its own. This final section sets out possible next steps to embed TWP in practice.

Politically smart ways of working that are more flexible and adaptive cannot seamlessly be added to existing ways of working. Rather, they require fundamentally changing certain conventional development partner practices in order to take root.[110] This is easier said than done. **The ability to embrace TWP principles is challenged by some common constraints** that emerge across all international development organizations. These include:

- Perceived or actual pressures or requirements to disburse and show results quickly
- Organizational cultures and monitoring and evaluation systems that focus on quick, tangible results and do not adequately support learning and adaptation
- The practice of engaging on the basis of a pre-identified, normative “solution” built using what a given international development actor may have in their toolbox, ignoring the need for more context- specific approaches that value local dynamics, cultures and knowledge
- Accountability focused on upward reporting rather than on learning and building trust
- Limited support from senior leadership, who may be facing pressures from host governments, limited operational mandates or other pressures that make it difficult for them to prioritize learning, testing and experimentation
- Political, economic, human rights and security “silos” within an

organization or between the potentially complementary efforts of different parts of the UN system

In light of these challenges, the following steps can help to **embed TWP more systematically in UN SSR thinking and practice:**

- **Align and streamline assessments and diagnostic tools**: Existing UN assessments and diagnostic tools, as well as other formal guidance, mandates, systems and processes, should be reviewed to assess the extent to which they are aligned with the PEA framework and whether they are fit to enable TWP in substance.
- **Embed PEA across the SSR operation cycle**: To move beyond the idea of PEA as a one-off research exercise, a mapping should be undertaken to determine at what stages of the SSR operation cycle PEA would be useful. For instance, this might include informing SSR mandates developed by the Security Council, when undertaking threat assessments or monitoring and evaluation processes (see below).
- **Socialize PEA to institutionalize its practice**: To be used in practice, the PEA framework must be socialized, with thought given to how it will be shared and communicated across the United Nations and partner organizations, what kind of support will be provided to staff to use PEA and how PEA will be updated and refreshed on an ongoing basis (including, for example, through "Everyday Political Analysis"[111]). This might include a combination of staff webinars, training on PEA and TWP approaches, and guidance or support for staff and programmes to undertake PEA.
- **Pilot PEA-informed programming to generate learning**: The framework set out in this policy note provides the beginnings of an approach that can be piloted in UN SSR operations to test its utility, with ongoing action research or regular monitoring, documenting what is learned. This learning can then be fed back to refine and improve approaches to PEA for SSR operations before they are rolled out more broadly.
- **Consider supportive behaviors and working cultures**: Behaviors, incentives and working cultures need to be aligned in ways that can embrace TWP principles, for PEA to meaningfully inform and drive SSR programmes. Consideration will need to be given as to whether such behaviors and working cultures are in place and, if not, what adjustments would be needed.

A key example here is the need for the implementing field staff to have the space, autonomy and authority they need to make decisions and test, reflect and create feedback loops at the frontline of implementation. This requires a high degree of trust between headquarters and field staff; headquarters can then be confident that decisions are based on evidence and learning to improve effectiveness.[112] This requires a shift away from management systems, mindsets and relationships reliant on tight central control and upward reporting, towards a focus on learning and trust.

- **Provide senior leadership**: In order to support UN staff to implement TWP approaches in practice, senior leadership will need to be supportive and work in these ways themselves. Senior leadership must have the desire (including a collaborative process, incentives, resources and vision) to push for changes in ways of working and to provide space and cover for staff to work in new ways.[114] Organizational leadership is indispensable to fostering a supportive management culture that encourages collective learning and adaptive ways of working.
- **Ensure monitoring, evaluation and learning**: Monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks similarly need to be adjusted to enable ongoing reflection on the wider political economy and – flowing from this – how overall SSR strategies and operations might require adaptation. This requires less focus on pre-determined output-based targets and more focus on process and narrative forms of reporting to assess a programme’s impact and contribution to systemic change.
- **Build PEA partnerships**: To leverage the knowledge and relationships of all those pursuing reforms, the United Nations should consider partnerships to pool PEA thinking, most obviously internally and with the World Bank, as well as with wider development partners and research and civil society organizations. Importantly, such partnerships should go beyond formal meetings to share information for joint analysis and strategizing. Consider supporting behaviors, incentives and working cultures that are aligned with TWP principles. is essential for PEA to meaningfully inform and drive SSR programmes.

Consideration will need to be given as to whether such behaviors and working cultures are in place and, if not, what adjustments would be needed.

These steps will assist the United Nations in institutionalizing PEA and enabling it to drive SSR efforts that are politically informed in their thinking, as well as in their practice. In turn, adopting such an approach will support more relevant and effective SSR operations that connect with the lived experiences of security and foster sustainable pathways to stability, peace and development.

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ANNEX I: KEY POLITICAL ECONOMY ANALYSIS TERMS

Structural/ Foundational factors	Deeply embedded, longer-term national, subnational and international socio-economic and power structures that shape (i) the nature and quality of a given political system, security sector or problem and (ii) why it works or looks the way it does. These features or characteristics change slowly over time and are often beyond the immediate control of actors. For example, geography, demography or the economic base.
Historical legacies	Key trends, events and processes in the past that have relevance for the present and define the parameters of the kinds of changes that are possible or options that are available. For example, the experience of conflict or colonization and how it influenced the history of the security sector in a country.
Institutions or "rules of the game" (formal and informal)	The rules that shape and influence human behavior in the security sector and in the economic, social and political life. These rules can be both formal (clearly defined/*written*) or informal (*unwritten* rules, norms, conventions, practices). For example, formal rules include legislation and government policies or decrees related to the security sector. Informal rules include patriarchy, patrimonialism, kinship or classism that shape how power and security actors really operate in practice.
Political Settlement	The expression of a common understanding, usually forged among powerful groups, about how political power, security services and resources are organized and distributed across both state and society to yield a distribution of benefits and a political structure that is acceptable to them.

Elite Bargain	A discrete (and often clandestine) agreement, or a series of agreements, often brokered and supported by international military, political and economic interventions to end violence, that explicitly re-negotiates the distribution of power and allocation of resources between elites.[114]
Clientelism/ Patronage	A political or social system based on the relation of client to patron with the client providing political, financial, security or labor support to a patron in exchange for some special privilege or benefit. For example, political hopefuls may pay constituents to vote for them, in return for them delivering benefits once in power; members of armed groups may fight under patrons who provide them with food and access to resources.
Rents (rent-seeking)	Economic benefits above market value generated by privileged access or politically created opportunities. For example, police eliciting informal payments for traffic infringements or charging for exam results; or non-competitive government procurement processes that favor certain providers or enable monopolies.
Actors/Stakeholders	Individuals and groups who have a stake in or stand to benefit or lose out from potential changes or policy reform. These can be domestic as well as international and include, for example, the executive, parliament and members of parliament, the military, security actors, political parties, women's groups, the United Nations, private sector organizations, the media, religious actors, international development actors, multinational corporations, organized crime networks, etc. These groups are rarely homogeneous themselves, so it is important to disaggregate them.

Power	Traditionally defined as “power over”, that is, the ability of A to get B to do that which s/he would not otherwise have done. “Power over” is a coercive form of power that takes a zero-sum approach. While important, this definition excludes other forms of power that build consensus and seek to empower. “Power with” underlines the importance of collective power through organization, empowerment, solidarity and joint action – such as the ability of female parliamentarians to come together to support legislation on women’s quotas. “Power to” relates to the ability of individuals or groups to exercise effective choice, the capability to decide actions and carry them out. For example, a girl’s ability to choose not to undergo female genital mutilation or forced marriage. Recognizing these multiple forms of power is important so as not to exclude groups who might not appear conventionally powerful, such as women and marginalized groups. Power also exists in the relationships, for example, between security sector actors and the population, which entails an understanding of the rationality behind security forces’ behaviors, the mechanisms/tools they use to exercise their power, but also the resistance they find in the population.

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LIST OF POLICY BRIEFS

01.
We Must Think and Work Politically

02.
World Bank / United Nations: Towards Shared Understandings of Power Dynamics

03.
Assessing Risks, Preventing Grievances

04.
Inclusion of Women Builds Trust and Legitimacy

05.
Sharing Authority, Legitimacy, Capacity: Non-formal Security Providers

06.
‘Rightsizing’ Security Institutions

07.
Reliable Financing Needs Countering Corruption

08.
Bringing Revenue Volatility Down: Sustainable National Financing

09.
International Funding in Fragile Contexts