

## The Inter-Parliamentary Forum on Security Sector Governance in Southeast Asia (IPF-SSG)



### Report on the 11<sup>th</sup> Workshop

## “Security Sector Reform and Democratisation in Southeast Asia: What Role for the Parliaments?”

15-16 June 2013

Bangkok, Thailand

Organized by



## Executive Summary

- The Inter-Parliamentary Forum on Security Sector Governance in Southeast Asia (IPF-SSG) aims to promote ongoing dialogue and exchange of good practices among members of parliament in Southeast Asian countries. The 11<sup>th</sup> workshop of the IPF-SSG focused on the linkages between democratisation and security sector reform (SSR) with a special emphasis on the role of parliaments.
- SSR is a vital component of the process of democratisation. Both SSR and democratisation are impacting one another.
- The conference explored SSR in Cambodia, Indonesia, The Philippines and Thailand. It allowed participants to share experiences on their ongoing efforts to deliver SSR in their respective countries, and to highlight both strengths and weaknesses of their counterparts in the region.
- Security sector reform is a long-term ongoing process which requires the efforts of all stakeholders in society.

## Introduction

The IPF-SSG's 11<sup>th</sup> workshop examined the role of security sector reform (SSR) in the context of democratisation. The Arab uprisings that began in 2011 have demonstrated the pivotal role played by the armed forces and other security actors in not only maintaining authoritarian regimes but also ending them. Undoubtedly, they will also play a key role in determining the future course of democratisation in these countries. These developments have renewed interest among policy-makers and academics on the relationship between SSR and democratisation. Significantly, a comparative

analysis of democratizing countries engaged in SSR shows that where democratisation has stalled, so have reforms in the security sector. Conversely, democratic consolidation has usually fared better where SSR has brought about the definitive exclusion of security forces from politics. The Bangkok workshop drew on experiences made in, and lessons to be learned from, Southeast Asian countries. In particular, workshop participants exchanged experiences and fostered a dialogue about the challenges and opportunities for a role of parliament in security sector reform in the context of democratisation.

## Opening Comments

Security sector reform (SSR) has been seen as an essential part of democratisation since the 1990s. SSR is a political process which includes security provision, management and oversight in a country, as well as security for both the state and its people. However, SSR and democratisation are ongoing context-specific processes, without clear blueprints for states to follow when undergoing the processes.

This conference encourages participants from Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand to share their experiences on their ongoing efforts to deliver security sector reform in their respective countries, thus, enabling participants to learn from successes and failures of their neighbouring countries. The discussions focused on dual linkages between SSR and democratisation. Over the past decade, SSR has been a centrepiece in restoring an effective and accountable security sector in post-conflict countries. It continues to be a key concern in democratising countries that struggle with the legacy of authoritarianism.

It was argued that people in need of security and protection should be the main

beneficiaries of the security sector, and that security must be defined by the people, rather than by the security sector only. SSR is aimed at enhancing the accountability and effectiveness of security providers in a legitimate way. Meaningful SSR is contingent upon the process of democratisation as it creates a window of opportunity for SSR to occur. Democratisation and SSR can be undertaken in parallel.

Certainly, not only does democratisation facilitate SSR, but under certain conditions SSR can facilitate democratisation, this is even more the case in democratic consolidation. SSR can ensure effective democratic governance and accountability. On the other hand, an insufficient SSR can hold back the entire democratic consolidation process.

Democracy can only be considered consolidated if the security sector, including the military, is reformed, and their veto powers have been dismantled, thus making the SSR for post-authoritarian countries in Southeast Asia essential.

As governments are not eager for change once the status quo has been set, it is essential for the SSR to be undertaken while the democratisation window is (still) open, as it is quite difficult to kick-start SSR independently.



## Thailand

### Overall Experiences

Thailand's experience demonstrates that democratization does not necessarily lead to SSR, and that positive signs of reforms in the security sector may not automatically result in comprehensive and effective SSR

While some participants stated that the days are numbered for the military's position in politics in Thailand, the past has demonstrated the unpredictability and irregularity of reform efforts. Indeed, substantial efforts have been made to reform the security sector in vein. Thailand's progress towards SSR is made more complicated by its 'innovative tools' for conducting coups, in particular with the recent development of 'judicial coup' notion. Therefore, it has been incredibly delicate to assess Thailand's progress on security sector reform and its long term trajectory for achievement

It was underlined that SSR and democracy are mutually reinforcing concepts; if a country has greater democratisation, then it has greater SSR.

### Lessons Learned

At different times there have been opportunities for substantial security sector reform in Thailand. Unfortunately, the latter have been either misused by corruption and poor politics, or suppressed by the military. The lesson to be drawn from Thailand's experience is that positive signs of SSR may not automatically result in full and successful reform.

Since 2006, there have been numerous instances where coups have been considered by opposition groups. Nevertheless, a higher level of education among the public,

globalization and easy access to information are making coups significantly more difficult to undertake. In particular, the role of a vocal international community and technological advances (internet, social media) have made the threshold much higher to undertake a coup much higher than in the past.

## Challenges Ahead

Thailand is facing a relatively unique situation where there is a great deal of tension between police and military services due to their respective political allegiances. The tension and disconnect between the police and military is particularly pronounced in the South, where Thai security forces are dealing with an insurgency.

Within the security sector, there are nuances and divisions, and the Yingluck Shinawatra government was more likely to rely on the police for expert assistance rather than on the military.

In Thailand, while the economy has developed dramatically, the political space has not been changed accordingly. The entire political process is in a perpetual state of collapse. Conflicts are increasingly complicated and difficult to control. Governments require cooperation and trust in order to make changes, which are interconnected to the effectiveness and accountability of the state.

## Indonesia

### Overall Experiences

In the past decade, Indonesia has seen great success in its security sector reform.

In the early 2000, Indonesia commenced reforms in the security sector, which were largely focused on putting in place the necessary legal and political mechanisms to

enable civilian and democratic control over the military. In particular, an outstanding measure was the official military withdrawal from political affairs. During this period, the emergence of an active Parliament drove the reforms towards effective civilian oversight and parliamentary control.

Since their withdrawal from politics, the military has been able to shift their focus to capacity building and ensuring operational effectiveness of the security apparatus. The Indonesian military has begun to focus on restructure, boosting their capabilities, improving interoperability and enhancing their deployment.

Despite challenges and difficulties that Indonesia has been facing, the overall SSR prospect is relatively promising. In contrast, some have argued that SSR has been stalled due to a lack of transparency as well as pressure and attention from the public and the media. Currently, SSR are focusing more on military reform and less on improving the democratic governance framework.

### Lessons Learned

The key lesson learned from Indonesia's SSR efforts is that progress towards SSR is not necessarily set in stone. Therefore, for it to be effective, SSR must be continually worked on, strengthened and improved. Indonesia has made enormous successes in the SSR area, but it has not been consolidated and recent progress has been very slow, with "unfinished business" in the areas of military justice and outlawing military involvement in private business. There is a substantial risk that despite the reforms that have occurred, the country might go backwards. Accordingly, there is a crucial need for a phase of transformation.

While Indonesia has made good progress in military reform, it missed early opportunities to simultaneously reform its police force. Early reforms and laws regarding the police have not been completely effective. While some measures have been put in place more recently, they have not reduced police corruption, political interference and the ability for the police to provide domestic public order and security. Indubitably, Indonesia has shown that military reform should not be the only priority for the SSR, but it must include all security forces in the country – especially the police force.

### Challenges Ahead

One of the primary challenges for SSR going forward in Indonesia is connected to challenges in consolidating democracy in the country. Politically related violence is having an increased influence on the process of military reforms. Moreover, there is an inadequate number of police personnel to resolve the violence, so the police often has to ask for military assistance; this brings the military back into the political sphere. The latter situation is to be avoided both for the military and the SSR's sake. Indeed, the more the military is planning to resolve domestic issues, the less they are able to focus on their primary mandate, which is external defence.

The capacity of Parliament and the Judiciary continues to remain very weak; although the Parliament needs to oversee and control daily functions of the military. In reality, the military still has a significant influence over the political system and continues to influence decision making process.

Furthermore, the number of non-traditional security issues is likely to undermine SSR in Indonesia. The military's increased involvement in disaster relief and

humanitarian missions, as well as counter-terrorism and anti-corruption campaigns threaten to draw the military back into the political fold.

While there is little wrong with the new National Security Act of Indonesia, problems begin to emerge in reinforcing legislation, regulation and jurisprudence, particularly in issues pertaining to SSR. In particular, there are still problems with the State's capacity to increase military spending; the Parliament must find a better way to resolve the outstanding problems with military funding. It has been suggested that improving capabilities and capacities of the Parliament to deal with security sector issues should be prioritised. The establishment of a Parliamentary Library and a Think Tank institution, as well as availability of expert researchers and human resources staff to Parliamentarians could reinforce parliamentary oversight of the security sector and its reform. Furthermore, participants suggested that the role of the Defence Community and Civil Society organisations should be expanded and better utilised by the Parliament.

## Cambodia

### Overall Experiences

Since the elections of 1993, Cambodia has moved away from conflict towards peace and stability, but its democratic institutions are still struggling to cement their relevance, finding the best ways to work and identifying the most appropriate democratic principles to adopt.

Participants believed that SSR is incredibly important for the future stability and sustainability of Cambodia. As Cambodians begin to embrace the principles of SSR, they need to foster a set of institutions that uphold

and defend democracy which are predicated on the notion of the rule of law.

Having this oversight does not mean that it will always work, but establishing these mechanisms is essential for Cambodia's reform efforts.

### Lessons Learned

To date, Cambodia's progress on security sector reform has been limited. Nonetheless, Cambodia's early experiences with SSR have revealed some interesting lessons.

Cambodia is still undergoing a generational shift from regime security to democratic security, and there appears to be a new generation which is open for reform and change. At the same time, the older generation is understandably hesitant about jeopardizing the peace they have achieved. To overcome this, the youth has to find a confident voice and work with their senior counterparts to reform the political and military sectors.

There is a misconception that SSR is only there to reform the military and the police, but in Cambodia it is evident that there also needs to be a reform of the Parliament and an engagement with civil society, the business sector and other stakeholders. For SSR to be successful, these groups must also be included in a cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder process.

The lessons learned from other countries show that SSR only comes when authoritarianism fails and the democratisation process is underway.

### Challenges Ahead

There is a challenge and an opportunity to convince all stakeholders that SSR is a win-win situation for both the security sector and the

civilian sector as SSR aims for an accountable and effective security sector.

Despite the fact that Cambodia enjoys peace, the security forces are still being used as a tool by the government. The military and the police are used in election campaigns to win the votes. Besides, although internally Cambodia is peaceful, the military is still used by the government to crack down on protests or demonstrations. This has resulted in a concentration of power of the military, thus making politicians hesitant to seize control of the military or upset their top-brass.

Civil Society, particularly those dealing with public safety and security policy, remains very weak in Cambodia.

## The Philippines

### Overall Experiences

Democratisation facilitates SSR, and, vice versa, successful SSR is essential to the process of democratisation. After the ousting of the Marcos regime and the end of the Cold War, the Philippines went through a strong phase of democratisation. It was during this period that the Constitution enshrined political governance over the military, however, it left a provision to limit alleged human rights grievances which let the armed forces back in as "Protectors of the State." The military saw themselves as having a mandate to step in when the government was acting in contravention to the security of the people.

The Philippines is again going through SSR. It is important to note that in the Philippines, the military was split from the police after the end of the Marcos' dictatorship. This is an essential task for democratising governments looking to reform the security forces.

## Lessons Learned

For the Philippines, the military still plays a vital, two-fold role in national security. First, it has retained its historical external defence role, particularly in light of threats from China's more assertive posture in the region. However, it has also taken on a developmental role at the internal level. These two concepts are discordant; the military's effectiveness may be handicapped by these twin responsibilities and it may give the military a way back into influencing policy making in the country. To overcome these threats, there must be a strong and confident civilian control over the military; there needs to be effective parliamentary oversight, and independent oversight institutions which have the capacity to undertake checks and balances. There must be strong support from the public and there must be a vocal civil society. Importantly, there must be a rigid conceptual clarity and joint vision for the future from all stakeholders otherwise the security sector will not be able perform its duties effectively.

In security sector reform, context is crucial. In the Philippines, one of the key questions they have to face is, 'Who defines Security?' If it is the military, then "who is tasked with defining what security is?" In a democratic system, in an inclusive national security policy development process, it is the political leaders, security officials and representatives of the people who define together what is meant by security.

In the area of SSR, the Philippines is seen as a "Civil Society Superpower." The vibrancy and outspokenness of its civil society is one of the most positive elements of SSR in the Philippines. It has stepped in and acknowledged its responsibility in SSR, and in many ways it has an accepted oversight role.

In spite of that, civil society must recognise that it needs to constantly develop its capacities, increase independence, and develop its credibility with the military. Likewise, civil society organisations need prove that they have not been co-opted by the military. In fact, civil society must always try to find ways to demonstrate its legitimacy.

## Challenges Ahead

The Philippines has had incredible success in the area of security sector reform in recent years. There are hard tasks that remain ahead. There is a need for a galvanisation process; the Philippines is aware of the difficulty to retain the achieved results through experience of the neighbouring countries. Despite the early progress, success is not guaranteed.

The process towards SSR, democratisation and good governance remains ongoing. There is still a terrible lack of transparency and a great deal of corruption. There needs to be transparency from the military sector all the way down to civil society. There even continues to be allegations of money passing hands in certain anti-corruption mechanisms in the Philippines. Furthermore, the government needs to institutionalise constitutional bodies that are intended for democratic governance, especially for the security sector.

The current role of the military in peace and development remains contested and the military is torn between domestic development and external threats to the country. The respective stakeholders must ensure that the military's role is clearly defined.

## Conclusion

The discussions on SSR in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand highlighted that change is a protracted process. The proceedings of the 11<sup>th</sup> IPF SSG also showed that security sector reform is a long-term ongoing process which requires patience and efforts of all stakeholders in society.

The 11<sup>th</sup> IPF-SSG created a regional platform for sharing national experiences with SSR on the regional level. The discussions reflected once more the utility of the forum as an incubator of national multi-stakeholder dialogue processes. It allowed SSR stakeholders from around the region to share ideas and lessons learned on the SSR and democratising processes in their respective countries.



**Workshop series of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum on Security Sector Governance in Southeast Asia (IPF-SSG)**

<b>Title of Event</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> IPF-SSG Workshop on Parliamentary Accountability and Security Sector Governance in Southeast Asia	7-10 Feb 2006	Siem Reap, Cambodia
2 <sup>nd</sup> IPF-SSG Workshop on Strengthening the Role of ASEAN Parliaments in Security Policy Review	10-11 Mar 2007	Manila, Philippines
3 <sup>rd</sup> IPF-SSG Workshop on National Security Policy Reviews in ASEAN member States: A Parliamentary Perspective	23-25 Nov 2007	Denpasar, Bali/Indonesia
4 <sup>th</sup> IPF-SSG Workshop Defence Budgeting in ASEAN Member States: Parliamentary Perspectives	23-24 May 2008	Phuket, Thailand
5 <sup>th</sup> IPF-SSG Workshop on Defence Procurement in Southeast Asia: Parliamentary Perspectives	12-13 Oct 2008	Phnom Penh, Cambodia
6 <sup>th</sup> IPF-SSG Workshop on Police Governance in Southeast Asia: What Role for Parliament?	29-30 May 2009	Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia
7 <sup>th</sup> IPF-SSG Workshop on Police Reform in Southeast Asia: What role for Parliament?	13-14 Nov 2009	Davao City, Philippines
8 <sup>th</sup> IPF-SSG Workshop on Towards a Political-Security Community in Southeast Asia: What Role for Parliaments?	19-20 June 2010	Jakarta, Indonesia
9 <sup>th</sup> IPF-SSG Workshop on Justice Reform in Southeast Asian Countries: What Role for Parliamentarians?	17-18 Sept 2011	Phnom Pen, Cambodia
10 <sup>th</sup> IPF-SSG Workshop on Learning from National Approaches to Security Sector Governance in Southeast Asia	6-7 Oct 2012	Manila, Philippines
11 <sup>th</sup> IPF-SSG Workshop on Security Sector Reform and Democratisation in Southeast Asia: What Role for the Parliaments?	15-16 June 2013	Bangkok, Thailand