RESEARCH ARTICLE

Security Sector Reform and the Paradoxical Tension between Local Ownership and Gender Equality

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This article analyses the tension or conflict that can exist between the principles of local ownership and gender equality that guide Security Sector Reform (SSR) programmes when gender discrimination and patriarchal values characterise the local environment (and 'locals' do not value gender equality). In these situations, international actors may be reluctant to advocate gender equality, regarding it as imposing culturally alien values and potentially destabilising to the SSR process. It is argued, however, that the tension between local ownership and gender equality is deceptive and merely serves to protect the power of dominant groups and disempower the marginalised, often serving to disguise the power relations at play in post-conflict environments and avoid addressing the security needs of those who are often at most risk. The paper concludes that rather than a tension existing between the two principles, in fact, local ownership without gender equality is meaningless. Moreover, failing to promote gender equality undermines the extent to which SSR programmes result in security and justice sector institutions that are representative of and responsive to the needs of both men and women. It can also perpetuate structural inequalities and conflict dynamics and, ultimately, limit the success of SSR and broader peacebuilding processes.

Introduction

Security Sector Reform (SSR) is an increasingly significant feature of peacebuilding efforts (UN 2013 and 2008; Sedra 2010) in recognition of the importance of effective and accountable security sector institutions to sustainable peace, as well as regional stability and international security (UN 2008; OECD 2007). It is broadly agreed that local ownership is one of the core principles of successful SSR projects (Donais 2009; OECD 2007; Nathan 2007; Mobekk 2010b). SSR programmes that are not locally owned tend to result in security and justice sector institutions that are not accountable or responsive to the needs of the people and, therefore, lack public trust and confidence. This undermines the extent to which SSR and broader peacebuilding efforts can be successful. Similarly, it is increasingly recognised that mainstreaming gender issues and promoting gender equality in SSR programmes is

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essential to their success and is a key factor in developing meaningful local ownership (Bastick 2008; Mobekk 2010a; Naraghi-Anderlini 2008; Valasek 2008). However, while the principles of local ownership and gender equality are intertwined, there can be a tension where local actors may not share the Western liberal norms and values underpinning democratic governance, human rights and gender equality (Donais 2009). In these instances, should external actors refrain from imposing their own culturally-specific values regarding gender equality, which would undermine the principle of local ownership? Or, rather, should efforts be taken to ensure that local ownership is inclusive and not limited to members of male-dominated, state-level security and political structures and other elites, thereby avoiding further disempowering women and other marginalised groups?

This article examines examples of SSR in South Sudan and other conflict-affected environments to analyse the tension or conflict that can exist between local ownership and gender equality. What happens when gender discrimination and patriarchal values characterise the local environment and 'locals' do not value gender equality? It is argued that the tension between local ownership and gender equality is deceptive, serving merely to protect the power of dominant groups, disempower the marginalised, to disguise the power relations at play in post-conflict environments and avoid addressing the security needs of those who are often at most risk. The paper concludes that rather than a tension existing between the two principles, in fact, local ownership without gender equality is meaningless. In essence, the question that needs to be asked is: what do we mean by 'locals'? Locals are not a homogenous whole and, although SSR may be achieved more quickly by simply identifying state-level leaders as local counterparts, the results may perpetuate power divisions and conflict dynamics that undermine the value of the SSR process.

This article further argues that local ownership needs to be inclusive if institutions are to be genuinely responsive to the needs of the people, rather than the elite or dominant members of society. In particular, SSR programmes need to ensure that women actively engage in SSR programmes for their specific security and justice needs to inform decisions about future security structures. Indeed, unless the specific security needs and concerns of the marginalised are addressed in SSR programmes, post-conflict security and justice will be illusory.

This paper draws on literature concerning gender and peacebuilding, and local ownership and SSR. It will fill a gap in the existing academic and policy-oriented literature by addressing the gender dimensions of local ownership in SSR and investigating the tension that can exist in the field between gender-sensitivity and local ownership. It also draws on primary research in South Sudan, supplemented by consultation with a network of scholars, practitioners and students in the field of building security and justice after conflict (and affiliated with the Security, Conflict and International Development (SCID) MSc programme delivered by the Department of Criminology at the University of Leicester). The authors also draw from their professional experience of building security and justice sector institutions after conflict and promoting the engagement of women in peacebuilding.

The Principle of Local Ownership

It is widely agreed that the principle of local ownership is the bedrock of successful SSR (Donais 2009; OECD 2007; Nathan 2007; Mobekk 2010b). If SSR programmes are not locally owned, it is likely that security sector institutions, processes and policy will be less able to respond to local needs or enjoy public trust and confidence, and thus less likely to be effective and sustainable (UN 2013; Smith-Höhn 2010). Local actors need to be actively engaged in SSR processes in order to be able to ensure that the

outputs – including security sector institutions and policies – are responsive to local needs, resonate with cultural values, and are accepted by the populace. Security sector institutions and policies designed by outsiders and at odds with local customs, traditions and practices, are likely to be rejected by the local population (Edomwonyi 2003; Smith-Höhn 2010).

While local ownership is part of the 'contemporary commonsense' of SSR (Donais 2009: 119), it remains unclear who the locals are (Mobekk 2010b; Scheye and Peake 2005; Donais 2009) and what comprises ownership (Mobekk 2010b) or rather, as Martin and Wilson (2008: 83) ask 'Which Locals? Ownership of What?' Despite the lack of consensus over the term, the emphasis on the role of local actors has, since the mid-1990s, been a common component of the literature on SSR. As conflicts take place within societies, it is within these societies that SSR measures must be rooted. Indeed, fostering and supporting local actors with an active interest in building peace are seen as key principles of post-conflict development management, despite the ongoing confusion over who such local actors might be (Ropers 2000).

It is generally considered that local ownership should entail a 'nationally led and inclusive process in which national and local authorities, parliaments and civil society, including traditional leaders, women's groups and others, are actively engaged' (UN 2008: 11). However, it is widely acknowledged that there is a gap between policy and practice (Donais 2009; Gordon 2014; Nathan 2007; Welch 2014), with external actors frequently imposing 'their models and programmes on local actors' (Nathan 2007: 7). Too often local ownership is reduced to limited consultation or engagement after key decisions have been made. Where local actors are engaged in the SSR process, they tend to be only a few like-minded, state-level, predominantly male members of the security and political elite who are likely to accept the decisions reached previously by external actors (Baker 2010; Caparini 2010; Mobekk 2010b; Sedra 2010). Country-wide diversity is often ignored (Baker 2010) and representatives of civil society and those at the community level tend to be engaged minimally and sporadically, often amounting to little more than initial consultation and infrequent dialogue (Capairini 2010). This has been seen in Kosovo, Timor-Leste, Iraq and Somalia, for example (Gordon 2014; Jackson 2011, 2010; Saferworld and Forum for Civic Initiatives 2007). Christian Action Research and Education (CARE 2006: 88) notes that, during the period 2004-2006 in Kosovo, international governmental and non-governmental organisations were 'biased towards working with people who are, comparatively speaking, easier to reach either because they are more moderate, apolitical or willing to cooperate.' This tended to create educational, class and urban predispositions. Other reasons why local ownership rarely includes those beyond the state-level security and political elite include concerns regarding co-ordination and resource implications as well as fears about empowering spoilers and engaging those who may lack the requisite expertise (Gordon 2014). All these factors limit the extent to which women and other marginalised groups engage with SSR.

However, narrowly interpreting 'local ownership' in terms of who locals are and what ownership constitutes is contrary to policy advice (UN 2008), undermining the potential success of SSR and, with it, the broader peacebuilding process. 'Locals' do not constitute a homogenous whole who all have the same security concerns (Ebo 2007; Mobekk 2010b; UN 2008). Especially where governments may not be broadly representative of those they represent (Martin and Wilson 2008), a narrow interpretation of local ownership is likely to particularly disadvantage the marginalised, including women. While non-state actors continue to be widely considered as only 'marginally relevant to the core concerns of SSR' (Donais 2009: 123)

without more inclusive and meaningful local ownership, the reformed security sector institutions are less likely to be responsive to the security concerns and needs of non-elite groups or enjoy broad public trust and confidence. The effectiveness as well as the legitimacy and accountability of these security sector institutions will suffer as a result, which will impact efforts to promote security and justice and thus, to build sustainable peace (Gordon 2014). It is vital, therefore, to ensure that there is a broad interpretation of who the locals are and what constitutes ownership, that the heterogeneity of society and the complexity of the reform process is recognised rather than denied (Gordon 2014), and that there are ways in which the voices of different actors across society can be heard and inform the process (Benedix and Stanley 2008; Nathan 2007).

Expanding the interpretation of local ownership beyond the state-level to civil society and the community level is likely to increase the representation of otherwise marginalised groups, such as women and other groups who may not be represented among the state-level security and justice sector elite. It is, however, important to remember that dominant power relations often permeate throughout society, and that civil society or community level groups are not necessarily more inclusive (Gordon 2014). It is equally important not to romanticise (Richmond 2011) or homogenise (Mac Ginty 2015) 'locals' and so remove agency and prevent disparate voices from finding expression. Similarly, it is important not to romanticise and homogenise marginalised groups or demonise and homogenise elite groups, including those within male-dominated, state-level security and political structures. Indeed, recognising the heterogeneity of society, the multiplicity of voices and multiple sites of agency, and the complexity of power relations demands that local ownership is inclusive and meaningful. It is also important, as Mac Ginty urges, to ask where power lies in order to ascertain the true extent of localism in peacebuilding. Questioning where 'the money, direction,

concepts and authority come from' (Mac Ginty 2015: 846) can render the concept of local ownership, no matter how inclusive, as potentially meaningless, unless ownership becomes decision-making authority throughout the SSR process and beyond. The risk is that the adoption of the term 'local ownership' in policy discourse risks legitimising interventions that are no different to previous interventions and continue to serve the intervener more than the intervened, and risks losing 'the radical import of the local' (Hughes, Öjendal and Schierenbeck 2015: 819; Mac Ginty 2015). Likewise, the discourse of gender equality can legitimise rather than challenge the dominant status quo and dominant power relations and, in this instance, how security is managed and how peacebuilding interventions operate (see McLeod 2015). It is, therefore, crucial to interpret local ownership and gender equality with a view to how power operates, an awareness of the political nature of policy discourse, and an acknowledgement of the multiplicity of local voices and gender identities.

Gender and SSR

Conflict and security are gendered. In other words, men and women can experience conflict differently and can have different security concerns during and after conflict, not least owing to gendered stereotypes (Enloe 2000). It follows that security and justice sector institutions need to attend to these concerns, which can only be done by integrating gender into SSR programmes from inception. This means that women as well as men need to be included in planning, developing and implementing SSR programmes; be represented in SSR outcomes; and have their particular needs attended to.

As outlined by the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF 2010) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2007), integrating gender issues into SSR is increasingly recognised as being instrumental to operational effectiveness (beyond the ability to better respond to the needs of

women – see Mobekk 2010a; DCAF 2010; Dharmapuri 2011; Egnell 2013; Bastick and Valasek 2008), responsiveness, local ownership, public trust and confidence and strengthened oversight. Integrating gender issues also contributes to 'creating an efficient, accountable and participatory security sector' (Bastick and Valasek 2008: 1). Similarly, the UN Secretary-General's 2008 Report on SSR, which was one of the first UN documents to underscore the importance of mainstreaming gender in SSR, states that:

> …the integration of a gender perspective in security sector reform is inherent to an inclusive and socially responsive approach to security. Gender sensitive security sector reform is key to developing security sector institutions that are non-discriminatory, representative of the population and capable of effectively responding to the specific security needs of diverse groups (UN 2008: 11).

The first UN Security Council Resolution on SSR (2151 adopted in 2014) also emphasises the importance of mainstreaming gender, underscoring:

> …the importance of women's equal and effective participation and full involvement in all stages of the security sector reform process, given their vital role in the prevention and resolution of conflict and peacebuilding, and in strengthening civilian protection measures in security services, including the provision of adequate training for security personnel, the inclusion of more women in the security sector, and effective vetting processes in order to exclude perpetrators of sexual violence from the security sector (UN 2014: 6).

Aside from normative and utilitarian reasons why SSR should be gender-sensitive (Stanley 2008), there are obligations to adhere to international instruments. The application of a gender perspective in SSR and in peacebuilding at large is often mistakenly viewed as optional, to be applied when and where it is convenient. It is often forgotten that there is an extensive legal framework ensuring in principle the application of a gender perspective, including women's participation, in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction.

In 2000, the UN Security Council adopted the landmark Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), the first of seven resolutions (1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, and 2122) making up the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda (UN Women 2015). The WPS Agenda established that women and men experience conflict differently and that women are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence. It also established that women's active participation in peacebuilding and in ending sexual violence in conflict is fundamental to ensuring international peace and security (1325 Policy Group 2015).

As a Security Council Resolution adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, UNSCR 1325 and the following six resolutions are legally binding upon all of the UN's 193 member states (Shepherd 2008).

UNSCR 1325 (2000) calls for:

> …Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict.

UNSCR 2122 (2013) mentions SSR specifically and states that the Security Council:

> …further expresses its intention to include provisions to facilitate women's full participation and protection in… disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs, security sector and judicial reforms, and wider post-conflict reconstruction processes where these are mandated tasks within the mission.

Moreover, it is important to note that the WPS Agenda does not exist in a legal vacuum; it is part of an existing legal framework of both international humanitarian law and human rights, with their respective enforcement mechanisms (Rees 2010). The WPS Agenda is complimentary to the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW 2013) and is supported by CEDAW's General Recommendation 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations.

Despite the promise of gender mainstreaming, gender-sensitive SSR has often been reduced to recruiting and retaining women in the security sector (Baaz and Utas 2012; Hendricks 2012; Mobekk 2010a), based upon the assumption that this will enhance women's security and security sector effectiveness. Increased recruitment and retention of women may neither impact the institutional culture of security sector institutions nor, therefore, result in enhanced security for women. In fact, a small number of women recruited to or promoted within these institutions can be exposed to risk (Barr 2013), may not be in a position or inclined to promote gender issues, or may be more likely to 'out-male' their colleagues in order to succeed in spite of male networks and expectations' (Hudson 2012: 452). A gender-sensitive SSR requires inclusion of women during and throughout the SSR process as well as throughout the security sector, including at decision-making levels. Beyond this, decisions reached throughout the SSR process and within the subsequent security sector institutions need to attend to gender issues, and consider the gender implications of each decision made. Structures, processes and policies need to be in place which will foster a culture that promotes gender equality within the institutions, as well as in respect to the services provided.

Kunz (2014: 616) suggests that rather than restricting a gender-sensitive SSR to recruiting and retaining women in the security sector, it is about 'gendering differently such as through reforming violent masculinities.'

However, in practice this serves only to reproduce gendered (and racialised) binaries, without recognising and accepting a multiplicity of subjectivities: SSR delivered by external 'experts' tends to constitute 'others' as needing protection (women) or reform them into professional security sector personnel displaying acceptable forms of masculinity (rather than the violent hypermasculinity associated with conflict-affected environments) (Kunz 2014). Indeed, some argue that the WPS Agenda also legitimises (and depoliticises) the international community's will to empower and protect women, which can 'replace the mobilization of genuine political will and commitment, treating symptoms rather than structural root causes of war' (Pratt and Richter-Devroe 2011: 499). It can also exclude those women who don't fit neatly into the frames of reference and expectations contained within the WPS Agenda (Gibbins 2011).

However, a gender-sensitive SSR is not just about recruiting and retaining women (Mobekk 2010), redefining acceptable masculinities or imposing altered gendered binaries (Kunz 2014), or limiting possible subjectivities or alternative narratives and constraining opportunities for change (Gibbins 2011). It is about responding to the challenges of reforming the security sector with a view to how power relations operate and how they produce and are reproduced and reinforced by the security sector institutions. The risk is that gender-sensitive SSR and the broader WPS Agenda legitimise the very things that they seek to challenge. Including women in SSR, and the subsequent security sector institutions that are formed, can legitimise these processes and institutions and, alongside, the dominant gendered power relations that perpetuate conflict (Cohn 2008; Puechguirbal 2010), It is, therefore, important to look beyond inclusion and redefining acceptable masculinities, to attend to the various ways in which power manifests itself and is reinforced through security sector institutions. It is also important to recognise that gender and gender security is perceived

differently by different people (McLeod 2011 and 2015) and also women (or 'locals') are not a homogenous whole. What is required, therefore, is a context-specific approach to SSR that attends to the political nature of SSR and how power relations can be altered or reinforced through it. Through so doing, SSR does not seek to impose normative goals but to enable the security concerns of all groups, not least the most marginalised, to find expression through SSR and, ultimately, be addressed through the subsequent security sector institutions.

Tension between Local Ownership and Gender Equality

Ironically, the principle of local ownership is often used in defence of a reluctance to promote the engagement of women in SSR programmes and mainstream gender throughout SSR processes, as suggested by the following case study and examples. When it is perceived or presented that gender discrimination and patriarchal values characterise the local environment and 'locals' do not value gender equality, it has been argued by practitioners that to promote gender equality and mainstreaming would undermine the principle of local ownership. This, in turn, would undermine the prospects of successful SSR and, with it, effective peacebuilding. Hence, the apparent tension between local ownership and gender equality.

The authors argue that rather than a tension existing between the two principles, local ownership without gender equality is meaningless. Adopting a gender lens can broaden the concept of local ownership (Naraghi-Anderlini 2008); indeed, genuine and inclusive local ownership entails engagement by a cross-section of society (Mobekk 2010a). As Naraghi-Anderlini (2008) has described, a gender-responsive SSR also resonates with and promotes the democratic values of accountability, transparency, inclusion and equality that local ownership aims to instil in the security sector. The question, in essence, that needs to be asked is: what do we mean by 'locals'? Locals aren't a homogenous whole and by simply identifying state-level leaders as local counterparts, SSR may be smoother and quicker but the results may perpetuate power divisions, structural inequalities and conflict dynamics and, thus, undermine the value of SSR and, moreover, undermine the peacebuilding process (on the links between gender violence and discrimination and armed conflict see Anderlini 2011; Caprioli 2003; Greenberg and Zuckerman 2009).

An SSR programme that merely resonates with the dominant values of a society risks resulting in a security sector that merely attends to the security needs of dominant groups and protects their interests. If security sector institutions are not representative of and responsive to the needs of the wider public, they will not be effective, nor will they enjoy broad public trust and confidence. Consequently, the potential success of SSR and sustainable peace will be undermined. It is particularly important that those who have the least access to security and justice should be able to be actively engaged in the development and implementation of any SSR programme and have their security and justice needs addressed. It is argued that it is precisely those societies where promoting gender equality and mainstreaming may be considered to be unrealistic where its promotion is most needed; it is ironic that gender-sensitive SSR should be less likely to be promoted in places where women are marginalised, discriminated against and violated.

It should be questioned why the disregard of one principle (gender equality and mainstreaming) is justified on the basis of another (local ownership), particularly when they are so integrally related. It should also be asked why the principle of gender equality and mainstreaming is disregarded (despite policy and legal obligations) on the basis of protecting the principle of local ownership, which is generally not adhered to any case, as mentioned earlier.

It is suggested that the tension between local ownership and gender equality is deceptive and merely serves to protect the

power of dominant groups and disempower the marginalised, often serving to disguise the power relations at play in post-conflict environments and avoid addressing the security needs of those who are often at most risk.

Marginalisation of Gender-Related Principles as the Reinforcement of Dominant Power Relations

Cockburn (1999) has suggested that gender power shapes all human interaction, including political power. Hudson (2005) points to the fact that both men and women are affected by organised violence and that the roles of men and women in time of war and peace is complex and multi-faceted. Caprioli (2000 and 2003) has identified political inequality as central to the degree of power between men and women and Peterson and Runyan (1999) assert that this lack of political equality is accentuated in times of violence. Olsson (2009) agrees that gender power relations are more evident in times of conflict and post-conflict recovery. Women are less likely than men to be involved in military organisations in interstate conflict and overwhelmingly remain in non-combatant roles. This can serve to give men dominance in terms of political legitimacy. Enloe (2004) points to the case of Israel, where combat experience is considered a badge of political robustness and competency that is denied female politicians who have not served on the front line. It might, therefore, be argued that the more traditional role of the male warrior is used as a means to promote, secure and hold power. In intrastate conflicts, however, the balance of male and female combatants tends to be more equal and consequently women can have more of a political voice. For example, Mazurana and Proctor (2013) list 59 countries where women have been combatants in insurgent and non-state armed groups between 1990 and 2013. Thompson (1999 cited in Okome 2005) observes that women involved in the Lebanese and Syrian fight for independence were able to further the call for women's votes. However, the empowerment of women, by their moving away from

their more traditional non-combatant roles in times of conflict or radical change, is often recognised by holders of political power who then engage other means of impeding the advance of gender equality and power sharing. Geisler (2000) points to the fact that the African National Congress (ANC) in 1980's South Africa considered women's emancipation and feminism as divisive. Women were blocked from the training and self-development accessible to ANC men and turned to community development instead, thus remaining in their more customary roles. Thompson (1999 cited in Okome 2005) cites Nigeria in positing that even when they gain political office, women feel beholden to their male benefactors and do not necessarily promote gender issues as they are unwilling to jeopardise their hard-earned positions.

Away from the African continent, the involvement of women in the politics of post-conflict or transitional states can also be superficial. In southeast Europe, during the communist era, one-fifth to one-third of the members of state parliaments were women, but very few had real political power (Brunnbauer 2000). Since the fall of communism, women have been the object rather than the agents of change. Women's lives in the successor states of the former Yugoslavia have undergone profound economic and social transformation as a result of post-socialist, post-conflict transition, and as a consequence of globalisation. However, women's access to political influence and involvement in security, including championing gender and minorities' protection, remain largely unresolved in the Balkans (Kvinna till Kavinna 2012).

In many states the political elite have risen from the ranks of freedom fighters or the military and militia. While women may have been granted minor roles or symbolic positions in government, power remains in the hands of the male dominated 'club' of war heroes and activists. The shaping of values and norms in society is influenced by the strong position that men hold and this male dominated power base diminishes and

constrains the socio-economic position of women, whilst cementing the position of the elite (Kameri-Mbote 2004). Thus, by denying women a voice in the shaping of their own and their State's security, the needs of those who are at most risk are often ignored.

As Olsson (2009) has described, unless peacebuilding processes are gender-sensitive, the level of security between men and women is likely to be markedly different. Men who do not conform to stereotypical expectations can also suffer in conflict and its aftermath where there is a close link between masculinity and military might. Moreover, in societies where masculinity is exploited for the purpose of war (Cockburn 2010) all people suffer. Where there is also a link between military prowess and political power in the immediate aftermath of conflict, the subsequent militarisation of society undermines prospects of sustainable peace. A gender-sensitive approach to SSR can thus help address the security concerns of those most in need as well as help contribute to the development of a society which does not ascribe the possession of political power to one gender. Such an approach can also help contribute to the development of a society which helps to liberate both men and women from pre-determined roles and, in so doing, increase the prospect of liberating society from the constraints of armed conflict. Until then, patriarchal gender relations will continue to marginalise women and constrain men within certain expectations associated with masculinity, which it will then exploit for the purposes of war. As suggested earlier, a gender-sensitive SSR should not be simply reduced to inclusion or redefining gendered binaries, but should respond to the challenges of reforming the security sector by attending to how power relations produce and are reproduced by the security sector institutions. As argued by Cockburn (2010), Enloe (2004), Sarosi (2007) and others, a gender-sensitive approach to peacebuilding and security policy will help build a more lasting peace and more equitable security. More radically, such feminist writers

also argue that addressing gender power relations can help prevent conflict and build peaceful societies and that, indeed, it may be the only way to do so. As Sarosi (2007: 1) has said, 'sustainable peace requires a more permanent transformation of social norms around violence, gender and power.'

SSR Case Study: South Sudan
Three years into its independence, South Sudan is experiencing fragility, conflict and a peace process which, to date, has been largely futile. The relationship between gender and local ownership in SSR in South Sudan is complex as security issues are highly sensitive in the militarised South Sudanese society and actors who want to influence decision-making on security are viewed with suspicion by traditional security actors (Kammars-Larsson 2012).

Prioritising Gender
As in many other patriarchal societies, the South Sudanese security sector is male-dominated and gender discrimination is common (Institute of Quiet Diplomacy 2013). On the surface, local security actors do not oppose gender equality, but in reality little is done to empower women in the security sector and engage with women's organisations about security issues. Women's organisations are often excluded from security forums and decision-making processes, and find it easier to interact with international actors such as United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) and United Nations Police (UNPOL) in the hope that they will be able to facilitate dialogue with the South Sudanese Liberation Army (SPLA) and the national police (Kammars-Larsson 2012). Nevertheless, UNMISS influence over the SPLA was limited prior to the break out of conflict in December 2013 and is now greatly reduced.[1]

Gender, even though viewed as a priority at the policy level, has not generally been prioritised by the international community in SSR programmes in South Sudan. Although there have been gender training programmes for

the national police and the SPLA, the international community has not been able to convey why it is important or contribute to an in-depth understanding of how to operationalise the training provided in the South Sudanese context.[2] As one former UNMISS SSR Officer put it: 'You work in a society that does not prioritise gender whatsoever, so you start working with structures that are already in place and then you work on gender when you can.'[3] This is a perspective shared by many working with SSR and gender in South Sudan. Gender is applied if and when other priorities are not too demanding or urgent, leading to a lack of systematic mainstreaming and implementation.

Local Ownership and Women
There are a number of examples of tension between gender and local ownership to be found in the South Sudanese context. One such example is the requirements by the international community that the SPLA is professionalised and that personnel serving are literate and educated. Since women are less educated than men, and often illiterate, they are frequently left out of initiatives and programmes. The United Kingdom's (UK) Security and Defence Transformation Programme (SDTP) is an illustration of this: training opportunities were open for both men and women, and women were encouraged to apply, but few women were accepted due to a failure to meet entry requirements such as literacy and English language skills. Some language training was given, but the level was too advanced for most women.[4] The UK, in common with most donors, are interested in transforming the military and working on SSR. They are not interested in providing basic education, as they do not view it as their responsibility. The international community's idea of local ownership is ownership by educated personnel and it is not clear whether it understands that the implications of these requirements are damaging the participation of women.[5] Nevertheless, SSR and gender experts

working in South Sudan believe that a co-ordinated effort among different stakeholders to provide basic literacy and English training to women, followed by SSR training, could yield positive results over time. One Security Sector and Gender Advisor based in Juba believes that illiterate women could also be valuable within the security sector and could be given practical training (for example, driving lessons) that does not necessarily require literacy.[6]

Reconfirming Stereotypes and Bad Practices
An aspect affecting the quality of gender training for the SPLA and national police, conducted by international actors, is that advisors and trainers often lack gender knowledge and understanding, as well as an awareness of how to operationalise what is being taught in the South Sudan context. Many of the training teams have been comprised of retired military male advisors from donor countries and completely lack female advisors.[7] One SSR expert based in Juba stated: 'In donor countries gender trainings were developed for people like them; now they are the so called experts supposed to contribute to changing the mentality of their South Sudanese counterparts.'[8]

Another factor having a negative impact on gender training is the desire of the advisors to ingratiate themselves with the South Sudanese being trained by reconfirming stereotypes about women in the security sector. An example of this was an advisor who told a group of trainees that he would not want his wife to work in the security sector or join the army.[9]

Compromising Gender
Another example of tension between local ownership and gender is the Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) programme, which ran between 2009 and 2011 and was designed and supported by the UNDP and co-ordinated by the National DDR Commission. The programme is recognised

by many as largely unsuccessful (Small Arms Survey 2013). One of the main reasons for its lack of success was the fact that the SPLA was unwilling to downsize in a transparent manner. The programme did not respond to the local context, and when the international community met resistance to demobilise abled bodied male soldiers, the programme was redesigned with an increased focus on the disabled, the elderly and women. The SPLA was content with a DDR programme designed for 'getting rid of women', as it enabled them to take women off the pay-roll and not demobilise too many able-bodied male soldiers. There are no statistics on the numbers employed by the SPLA or how many employees are women, but it is estimated by the SPLA's Female Affairs Directorate that 230,000 were employed before the breakout of conflict in 2013 and that roughly 2,000 of them were women. However, despite women making up less than 2 per cent of the SPLA, about half of the personnel participating in the DDR programme were women. Therefore, instead of designing a programme that supported women, the organisers created a programme depriving women of a salary by taking them out of the SPLA, which is one of the few paid jobs in South Sudan's weak economy. Moreover, many women did not see the value of the DDR programme, despite the livelihood skills training, and had already reintegrated into their communities (Small Arms Survey 2011).

It appears as though the international community played into the biases in the local context and yielded to the demands by the South Sudanese government. Nevertheless, the UN and the National DDR Commission hailed the DDR programme as a success, due to the high participation of women. The truth was that it was detrimental to women and did little to increase their status and ability to influence and participate in the security sector.[10] Moreover, the DDR programme did not lead to a decrease in soldiers employed, since the SPLA have continued to recruit personnel.[11]

Consultation with SSR Actors
Local ownership, gender mainstreaming and context-specificity

The research conducted with those engaged in SSR and broader peacebuilding processes in South Sudan was supplemented with a small number of interviews and online discussions with a network of scholars, practitioners and students affiliated with the Security, Conflict and International Development (SCID) MSc programme delivered by the Department of Criminology at the University of Leicester. This network includes members of the SCID Panel of Experts, comprised of over 70 international experts in the field of conflict prevention and recovery, principally in the security and justice sector. Those directly consulted have direct and extensive practical experience of developing and implementing SSR projects around the world, primarily working as consultants in governmental and intergovernmental organisations.

A number of comments reflect anecdotal evidence that there is a widely held belief that promoting gender equality and mainstreaming within SSR programmes should not be a priority and, indeed, could be counterproductive. Some suggested that gender equality should not be promoted to avoid undermining the principle of local ownership. As Naraghi-Anderlini (2008: 123) has said:

> SSR practitioners can point to key local actors involved, who may be dismissive of gender issues, and make the case that it may not be possible to have SSR that is both gender-sensitive and locally owned. State or military representatives may imply that gender issues are not relevant to their context, or that the participation of women in the security sector is not socio-culturally acceptable.

By imposing what might be judged to be alien cultural values, the effectiveness of

the security sector will be compromised and with it the peacebuilding process. One respondent argued that 'the security sector will not be effective' if it does not resonate with informal social structures and processes and if there is no indication 'that the security forces are enforcing the population's own norms.'[12] The need to be context-specific was emphasised by most respondents, as was the need to recognise that promoting gender equality is a political as well as a technical issue, and has significant repercussions in terms of power relations and wider societal dynamics: 'You can't, as some countries have tried to do, insist on gender equality in the security forces without recognizing that this both assumes and will then provoke, massive changes in the structure of society as a whole.'[13]

Whilst this is accepted, it should not necessarily follow that promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming should be avoided. SSR is in itself a highly political exercise, which can provoke significant shifts in power relations and social structures. Similarly, the SSR principles of accountability, transparency and affordability can engender power shifts. Moreover, it is unlikely that those engaged in designing SSR programmes would avoid promoting these principles on the basis that they are not be familiar concepts and might, therefore, undermine local ownership. Furthermore, context-specificity should mean being informed of the context and its complexity, not just being driven by those values and those groups that are dominant within the society. Likewise, when considering local ownership and the imposition of values, we need to be highly critical about which locals we mean and whose values should take precedence.

Principles of gender equality may be at odds with the principles cherished by dominant elite groups in society, but they may not be antithetical to others within society. Naraghi-Anderlini (2008: 123) suggests that if women in insurgencies or human rights groups were asked whether the promotion

of gender perspectives constitutes imposition of culturally-alien values, they:

> …would argue that state laws and policies should provide equal opportunities to all. For them, the principles of equality and inclusion are in fact local values, for which many have paid with their lives. Indeed, these stakeholders could be highly critical of international actors who supported the views of the government in contravention of international obligations (including Resolutions 1325 and 1820).

We may think it not our place to impose gender principles that may be alien to another culture, but we rarely ask women in these cultures what their perspective is (and whether these principles are alien to them). As local ownership in SSR tends to be restricted to engagement of state-level members of the male-dominated security and political structures, external actors engaged in SSR will not necessarily be exposed to the views of a wide cross-section of society and may rely on the views of male-dominated privileged groups with respect to determining local values and norms. As Salahub and Nerland, (2010: 275) argue: 'while there might be a broader constituency for gender-sensitive reform in the conflict-affected society at large, donors and policy makers rarely hear their voices.'

There is research based upon public surveys to suggest that, in fact, people in certain post-conflict environments may be more receptive to mainstreaming gender into SSR and to increasing the number of women in the security sector than is popularly perceived by those who make policy decisions. For instance, a public survey conducted in Nepal in 2011 revealed that 77 per cent of people thought that there needed to be more women in the Nepal Police (Gordon, Sharma, Forbes and Cave 2011). In Afghanistan, a UNDP (2012) survey showed growing support for female police officers (53 per cent in 2011), albeit alongside concerns that, should female

relatives join the police, they would be subject to harassment and abuse in the workplace[14]. This example highlights the need for gender-sensitive SSR to be more than just promoting the recruitment of women in the security sector: significant organisational change and support mechanisms are also required. It also highlights the possibility that those who may not push for gender-responsive SSR for fear of undermining the principle of local ownership may be responding to the politics of fear and marginalisation rather than 'what locals want', particularly if they are primarily consulting those in male-dominated security sector and governmental institutions.

These privileged groups may also have a vested interest in rejecting those values which would entail the empowerment of marginalised groups, including women, and the consequent divestment of their own power. Even if the principles of gender equality and inclusion were not broadly supported in wider society, a gender-sensitive approach to SSR would not constitute imposing culturally-alien values. Aside from promoting gender equality and inclusion in the SSR process and outputs, a gender-responsive SSR means considering the gender implications of each policy decision and ensuring processes that reform the security sector and deliver security and justice are inclusive and equitable:

> Ironically, sensitivity to gender is the opposite of imposing external values on a local culture. It is about listening to and addressing the problems and solutions that women and men have identified within their own cultural context, and responding to their needs (Naraghi-Anderlini 2008:106).

While some respondents argued that 'Local custom, politics, education, social health considerations etc. need to be incorporated if unrealistic expectations about gender respect and inclusiveness are to be avoided'[15], it becomes unclear how the security of women can be better promoted and how they can have a say in rebuilding the

security sector unless certain aspects of the status quo are challenged. Indeed, it could be argued that the whole *raison d'etre* of any external SSR intervention is that change must occur, or at least the dynamics that contributed to the outbreak and development of conflict are addressed. The security sector (and the wider society if conflict has been recent) needs reforming and reconstructing. It is also worth considering that in times of flux, such as in the immediate aftermath of conflict, an opportunity presents itself (along with a plethora of risks) to address structural inequalities, some of which may have contributed to the outbreak of conflict. The authors suggest that reluctance to promote gender mainstreaming and equality does not equate to refraining from imposing culturally-specific values; it equates to validating and reinforcing dominant social structures and power relations. The authors argue that SSR programmes which do not promote gender principles, in environments which marginalise and discriminate against women, result in reflecting and reinforcing these power dynamics.

Nonetheless, the authors recognise that promoting gender equality and mainstreaming without knowledge of the context can be counter-productive. Some respondents highlighted the tendency of elements of the international community to promote gender equality with little regard for the consequences, rather than having a nuanced and context-specific understanding of gender relations. One respondent said:

> There is a tendency for donors to push for female representation in committees, councils, etc, without taking into account what is sometimes a long-standing reality of the role women play. This has left examples of women being included on the books, but the role they play within the committees are more akin to secretaries/tea makers rather than having genuine decision-making/ influencing roles.[16]

Likewise, some respondents drew attention to the significant security risks that face women who are recruited to security sector institutions in places where gender equality and inclusion are not accepted principles. Other respondents, conversely, suggested that these views are informed by gendered assumptions about the risks that men and women are exposed to, should be exposed to, and knowingly expose themselves to. This can reinforce the protected/protector paradigm and undermine prospects of enhancing the security of women and consolidating sustainable peacebuilding:

> I have talked to women politicians and security personnel in countries like South Sudan, Sudan, Iraq, and Libya and they have all said the same thing, that they are aware of the risks, but that they are willing and proud to take the risks involved for the future of their country. These women do not view the risks they are taking as much different from that of men and feel that it is their right and choice to risk their lives.[17]

Aside from promoting gender equality and mainstreaming without sufficient knowledge of the context, some respondents also criticised the international community for treating women as a homogenous group: 'donors need to act carefully not to just tick the "inclusion of women" box but rather unpack which groups the women put forward are representing, the extent to which they are reflective of vulnerable groups or are actually part of an elite.'[18] The example of DDR in South Sudan above also highlights the ways in which the blind promotion of gender equality can be counterproductive and can actually undermine women's security. The focus on the generic category of gender can also disguise the multiplicity of needs, demands and potential contributions of different women, as well as ignore the specific security needs, demands and potential contributions of men who may not fit the

traditional expectations and roles (especially vulnerable men). Neither men nor women are homogenous categories and a focus on gender per se without a nuanced, context-specific and critical approach can disadvantage both men and women (Domingo, Holmes, Menocal, Jones, Bhuvanendra and Wood 2013).

Gender, security and knowledge

With regard to external actors engaged in SSR, while some respondents considered that those who advocate gender-related principles can have little knowledge of the local context, some suggested that those who advocate gender equality are unlikely to have an understanding of the security sector or security issues. There was an assumption that those who promoted gender equality would not be members of the security sector or have had extensive experience working in or with them. One respondent suggested that 'if you are a children's rights campaigner, a human rights activist or a gender theorist, how much are you actually likely to know about security issues and the causes and nature of conflict?'[19] As the South Sudan case study above shows, there also appears to be a widespread belief that security experts lack knowledge and awareness of gender issues. The perceived divide between security expertise and gender expertise echoes the traditional concept of security as being related to the state rather than the individual. This is contrary to the premise of SSR that recognises security of individuals as critical to the security of the state and that the security of the individuals depends on more than providing territorial security (Ball 2010). The perceived divide between security and gender expertise can be self-perpetuating as security experts are not expected to have expertise in gender issues, and so those contracted to support SSR processes potentially become less likely to have experience of developing gender-sensitive SSR programmes. The difficulties this presents in terms of instituting gender-sensitive SSR is compounded by a lack of meaningful representation of women

engaged in SSR (both among external and local actors) because of lack of women within security sector institutions, particularly at the higher levels.

The collision of normative and pragmatic ideas

The need to be pragmatic, and the sense that promoting gender equality might run counter to that, was also mentioned by some respondents. The argument ran that there is a 'tendency of human rights advocates and others to adopt normative ideas, which are by definition true in all places and at all times, and which do not require you to know anything about the situation on the ground.'[20] One respondent proposed that the investigation into the conflict between the SSR principles of gender equality and local ownership could be viewed as 'the collision of normative and pragmatic ideas.'[21] It was suggested that 'it is not really possible to explain to locals why we think that these gender and other balances have to exist in the security sector, except for tautological arguments about fairness and justice. Nor do we have an agreed concept which explains what a satisfactory representative situation would actually be.'[22] As detailed earlier, however, there are both normative and pragmatic reasons why gender equality and mainstreaming should be promoted, as well as obligations to adhere to international instruments.

Blaming the locals

Other respondents suggested that the challenge of gender equality and mainstreaming in SSR cannot be 'explained by ownership per se.'[23] 'There is often the temptation to attribute responsibility for a failed effort (or absence of effort) to the national partner. However, the problems are usually more complex and attributable to a number of factors.'[24] Such factors include local social mores, such as early marriage and childbirth; high levels of violence against women; and limited access to education for girls.[25] These factors inhibit the extent to which women are represented, and their concerns

addressed, in SSR programmes and in security sector institutions. Other factors which negatively impact efforts to promote gender equality and mainstreaming in SSR processes and outputs include the fact that women are significantly underrepresented in the security institutions of donor countries and organisations involved in supporting SSR. As one respondent said:

> [I]n order to press a national partner to be more inclusive of women and marginalized groups, one must have credibility. Such credibility can only exist when donors and partners lead by example. In the United States, for example, only 14% of the active duty forces are women. The numbers are worse when it comes to high-ranking officers, where only roughly 7% are generals or admirals. The United Nations, which is often a significant partner in SSR particularly in states emerging from conflict, has just appointed its first woman Force Commander and even then, it is to lead a small force (1000 strong) in Cyprus.[26]

As such, external actors engaged in SSR may not prioritise gender-related principles, may seek out local counterparts who share similar views (Sedra 2010), and may find it problematic to successfully advocate such principles; it may be easier to blame the locals and argue that such advocacy would compromise the principle of local ownership. It may also be the case that assumptions that local actors, even those among the security and political elite, are not interested in a gendered approach to building security and the institutions of the security sector are wrong (Naraghi-Anderlini 2008).

Conclusion

To summarise, it appears that the principles of gender equality and mainstreaming may not always be prioritised in SSR. Such principles are also often reduced to only recruiting

women to security sector institutions (Baaz and Utas 2012; Hendricks 2012; Mobekk 2010a) or 'treated as a late add-on to a pre-existing model of SSR' (Salahub and Nerland 2010: 263). This is despite policy advice to the contrary (UN 2008; OECD 2007) and despite being supported by a comprehensive legal framework. The reason given for not promoting a gender-responsive SSR is often, as indicated above, that gender-related principles are alien to the specific context. Promoting such principles would, therefore, undermine the principle of local ownership; a principle that is considered to be instrumental to successful SSR and the reform or construction of a security sector that is accepted by the local population and, thus, more likely to be effective and sustainable. As has been argued, however, such a position uncritically accepts the status quo and assumes that dominant norms and values in patriarchal societies are shared by all members of that society. In actuality, as has been shown, gender equality and local ownership are mutually supporting. If SSR is to be genuinely locally owned and security sector institutions are to enjoy widespread public trust and confidence, it is important that such programmes are inclusive and responsive to the needs of those beyond dominant or elite groups, and that women and other marginalised groups are able to inform decisions about their security.

It is argued that gender-sensitive SSR is not promoted, despite the fact it is likely to lead to a more inclusive and successful process, because of reluctance among dominant groups for power relations to be exposed and to be changed within male-dominated institutions, societies and the broader international community. It is suggested that it is this resistance to change and reluctance to relinquish power that undermines the effectiveness of SSR and broader peacebuilding processes; it is not the promotion of gender-equality and mainstreaming than can inhibit potential success. Moreover, the concept of the 'protected' and 'protectors' being ascribed to women and men in all patriarchal societies

hinders the advancement of gender equality: reinforcing rather than questioning and challenging this can undermine the security of women and compromise the security and stability of the broader society.

There are risks associated with promoting gender equality and mainstreaming, especially where ill-informed of the local context. There may be power shifts and potential destabilisation as a result. Similarly, problems may arise with co-ordinating a wider set of actors and concerns, or there may be real fears about security risks facing women pioneers in the security sector. However, there are also security risks associated with not promoting gender equality from the outset of any SSR programme (particularly considering high levels of gender-based and sexual violence in the immediate aftermath of conflict, and reluctance to report cases of abuse or even discuss such phenomena). And while it may be less risky to address gender issues once mainstream society is more receptive, it is likely that efforts to address gender issues and promote women's security will be successful once the structures, policies and power bases have been constructed.

While the research that has informed this paper is limited, it has indicated a need for further research into the relationship between the SSR principles of local ownership and gender equality. Moreover, it has indicated a need to determine, based upon comprehensive data, whether or not promoting gender in SSR can be counterproductive, undermine SSR principles and the sustainability of outputs, and compromise the security of women engaged in SSR as well as the security of the broader society more generally. Such research is needed in order to counter the views that prevail within the international community or, if such views are corroborated, identify ways in which women's security and their engagement in decisions about security can be better promoted. Either way, such research can potentially have a positive impact upon efforts to build security and justice after conflict for all.

Notes

1   Interview with Security Sector and Gender Advisor based in Juba 27/06/2014.
2   Interview with Security Sector and Gender Advisor based in Juba 19/06/2014 and UNMISS SSR Officer 15/08/2014.
3   Interview with UNMISS SSR Officer 15/08/2014.
4   Interview with Security Sector and Gender Advisor based in Juba 19/06/2014 and UNMISS SSR Officer 15/08/2014.
5   Interview with Security Sector and Gender Advisor based in Juba 19/06/2014 and UNMISS SSR Officer 15/08/2014.
6   Interview with Security Sector and Gender Advisor based in Juba 27/06/2014 and SSR Expert based in Juba 12/08/2014.
7   Interview with SSR Expert based in Juba 12/08/2014.
8   Interview with SSR Expert based in Juba 12/08/2014.
9   Interview with Security Sector and Gender Advisor based in Juba 19/06/2014.
10 Interview with Security Sector and Gender Advisor based in Juba 29/06/2014.
11 Interview with Security Sector and Gender Advisor based in Juba 19/06/2014.
12 Online communication with member of the SCID Panel of Experts, academic and practitioner with conflict-related SSR expertise and over 30 years of experience in the security and defence sector 02/06/2014.
13 Online communication with member of the SCID Panel of Experts, academic and practitioner with conflict-related SSR expertise and over 30 years of experience in the security and defence sector 02/06/2014.
14 Online communication with SCID student and UN staff member 03/06/2014.
15 Online communication with member of the SCID Panel of Experts, former UK Chief Police Officer with extensive experience in conflict-affected environments 03/06/2014.
16 Online communication with member of the SCID Panel of Experts, Senior SSR Advisor with extensive experience in conflict-affected environments 02/06/2014.
17 Online communication with member of the SCID Panel of Experts, Expert on 1325 with extensive experience in conflict-affected environments 19/06/2014.
18 Online communication with member of the SCID Panel of Experts, Senior SSR Advisor with extensive experience in conflict-affected environments 02/06/2014.
19 Online communication with member of the SCID Panel of Experts, academic and practitioner with conflict-related SSR expertise and over 30 years of experience in the security and defence sector.
20 Online communication with member of the SCID Panel of Experts, academic and practitioner with conflict-related SSR expertise and over 30 years of experience in the security and defence sector 17/06/2014.
21 Online communication with member of the SCID Panel of Experts, academic and practitioner with conflict-related SSR expertise and over 30 years of experience in the security and defence sector 17/06/2014.
22 Online communication with member of the SCID Panel of Experts, academic and practitioner with conflict-related SSR expertise and over 30 years of experience in the security and defence sector 03/06/2014.
23 Online communication with member of the SCID Panel of Experts, UN Military Justice Advisor 02/06/2014.

[24] Online communication with member of the SCID Panel of Experts, UN Military Justice Advisor 02/06/2014.

[25] Online communication with member of the SCID Panel of Experts, UN Military Justice Advisor 02/06/2014.

[26] Online communication with member of the SCID Panel of Experts, UN Military Justice Advisor 02/06/2014.

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