

## Conclusions

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Parliaments are crucial for ensuring civilian control over the security sector. Parliaments are the institutions through which people express their sovereignty. They ensure transparency and accountability across the security sector, primarily by creating an appropriate legislative framework. They also use their popular mandate to investigate the management of the security sector. By holding the security sector accountable, facilitating the constructive resolution of domestic conflicts, and discouraging an aggressive foreign policy, parliaments can contribute to human rights, rule of law, democracy and regional stability.

The security sector should be subject to the same level of scrutiny that other branches of state receive. The main principles of good governance are well understood, even though practice varies from country to country. According to the 2002 Human Development Report published by UNDP,<sup>1</sup> good governance sees to it that:

- Human rights are respected, allowing people to live in dignity; and with respect;
- People have a say in decisions that affect their lives;
- People can hold decision-makers accountable;
- Rules, institutions and practices are inclusive and fair;
- Women are equal partners with men in private and public spheres and decision-making;
- People are free from discrimination based on race, ethnicity, class, gender or any other attributes;
- The needs of future generations are reflected in current policies;
- Economic and social policies are responsive to people's needs and aspirations;
- Economic and social policies aim to eradicate poverty and expand the choices that all people have in their lives.

Applied to the security sector, the principles of democratic accountability require that:

- Institutions, including the defence and security spheres, be transparent and accountable to citizens;
- Human development be dependent on peace and personal security;
- Institutions, including the defence and security spheres, not be isolated from society, but subject to democratic civil control and guidance;
- Peace building in war-torn and post-conflict societies be democratic;
- All agents dealing with defence and security and/ or democratic civil oversight and guidance thereof, be professionally trained.

<sup>1</sup> UNDP: *Human Development Report 2002. Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World*. See in particular chapter 4: 'Democratizing Security to Prevent Conflict and Build Peace' (New York/ Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002).

The exchange of experience between parliamentarians at the October 2005 UNDP/DCAF Roundtable on Security Sector Oversight confirmed that parliaments in the CIS face similar challenges in managing the national security sectors. Some have responded innovatively and sought to increase the transparency of their sectors. Others have deferred more to the executive. But all have confronted problems created by vested interests within the security sector. Overall, the parliamentarians agreed that well-conceived decisions by the executive may help accelerate reforms, while the overuse of executive power may lead to stagnation, or recreate the old status quo when the security services dominated decision-making. At that time parliaments had a smaller role to play in scrutinizing the executive's policies. They had a limited understanding of the benefits of transparency and accountability. The causes of such limitations need to be further explored in order to make policy-making in transition states more participatory, and to strengthen oversight structures.

This publication also demonstrates that people's understanding of parliament's position in the CIS is still influenced by the role of the 'Supreme Soviet' under communism. It served as a rubber stamp without any power to exercise democratic oversight.

This book addresses the need to strengthen democratic oversight in the CIS and aims to deepen the understanding of the concepts, processes and mechanisms that facilitate truly democratic governance of the security sector. By creating 'local ownership' of security problems, citizens, their institutions and leaders can constructively interact to shape a transparent security sector that contributes to ongoing development.

Democratic oversight and parliamentary control over the security sector can be strengthened in three different ways.

- First, the legal powers of parliaments need to be strengthened. Statutory powers should give parliament the legal tools to enforce cooperation of the executive and to subordinate the security sector to civilian oversight.
- Second, the ability of parliaments to exercise their oversight powers can be supported by helping parliamentarians acquire expertise in the security sector.
- Third – the most difficult part – support should be provided to ensure that parliamentarians become an equal and critical partner of the executive authority.

The willingness of parliamentarians to hold the executive accountable is dependent on fostering a political culture where parliamentarians understand their role as a counter-balance to executive authority. Civil society and the media also need to increase their role in security sector oversight to complement the work of parliaments.

In sum, parliaments and civil society have an important role to play in overseeing the security sector. Parliaments have the power to exercise supervision, facilitate public debate, prevent future abuses, and hold those in the security sector responsible for violations of the law and human rights. Civil society plays the role of watchdog and offers civilian expertise on security issues. UNDP and DCAF will continue to promote parliamentary development, support emerging human and civil rights institutions, develop capacity for independent political analysis and reform – with a view to further democratizing security in transition states.