Call for Papers for the Seminar 'Security Sector and its Reform in the MENA Region'

The seminar 'Security Sector and its Reform in the MENA Region' will be held in Barcelona on the 25th May, 2017. The seminar is organized in the framework of the research project "Security Sector Reforms (SSR): the need for a socio-political analysis", coordinated by Prof. Dr. Laura Feliu and funded by the Catalan Institute for Peace (ICIP).

The selected papers will be published in a monographic journal issue.

Context:

The poor results shown by the implementation of the theoretical framework on SSR have received much critique. Even scholars close to the conceptual birth of SSR are asking for an open academic debate and a reformulation of its theoretical framework (Sedra 2010; Jackson 2011; Riis Andersen 2011). The main failures of SSR programs pointed out by scholars and practitioners alike are:

- an excessively technical implementation off SSR programs and a failure to integrate the political dimension.
- the difficulties to identify and truly incorporate the 'local ownership' and the 'civil society engagement/participation' in the praxis, the actual novelty elements of the SSR framework
- the inability to integrate the 'governance' dimension

The mainstream debate on SSR revolves around the discrepancies between theory and praxis. Nevertheless, the true obstacle remains to our opinion that of SSR becoming a real instrument for political, cultural and institutional change from an autochthonous approach.

New proposals and case analysis are thus needed outside the SSR orthodox theoretical framework, so far based in the principles of liberal peace, of technical and bureaucratic approaches to state building and to a security-development nexus that underlines the idea that only SSR programs can secure the 'development' of 'receiving' States.

From within critical security studies, development or peace studies, other scholars see SSR programs as instruments for (post)liberal peace (Riis Andersen 2011; Chandler 2010); a western instrument for intervention (Sayigh 2007); and one of the essential mechanisms for 'imperialist biopolitics' (Mustafa 2015). SSR is further regarded as an instrument of population control; of strengthening of local elites in order to fight threats perceived and identified by western elites; or as a tool for neoliberal globalization

(Chandler 2010). The culpable of violence and poverty is in this framework the fragile State, or the State lacking institutions or knowledge to maintain security. The state's inability legitimizes foreign intervention and the strengthening of certain local elites.

The failure of SSR is a theoretical one as it ignores the political dimension, does not dig deeper into fundamental concepts such as local ownership, and eludes the debate on the adequacy of neolibreal globalization and its role in each context. The failure is nevertheless practical in that SSR has not been applied with the philosophy and goals of 'governance', nor with the necessary coherence that external actors' rhetoric announces.

We face a debate about the convenience of discarding SSR, of deepening its true meaning for change and transformation of the security sector, or of simply avoiding the label and focusing on the need to reform security systems. The hegemony of the perceived 'terrorist threat' as a global threat seems to dismiss the philosophy of the SSR proposal, prioritizing a new 'hard security' within the global narrative and rather perverting SSR into a stand-alone tool for enhanced military assistance.

We do not intend to elude the need for a transformative analysis of security systems, merely by critically pointing at international SSR programs. We are on the contrary trying to bring a closer look, a local or autochthonous viewpoint, without ignoring the effect that any transformation or reform performs on local populations, as well as regarding power relations (between global elites and local elites, among local elites themselves or between elites and local populations).

SSR in the Arab World.

The debate on the SSR did not penetrate the Arab region during the 90s, nor during the early 2000s (Luethold 2004; Sayigh 2007). Despite the investment of EU and some member countries (UK, the Netherlands) in SSR, most SSR interventions had so far been limited to South-Saharan Africa (Guinea-Bissau, Congo, Sierra Leone). SSR was in fact conceptualized for post-authoritarian and post-conflict contexts. The only case where the EU has funded SSR in the MENA Region is in the post-Oslo Palestine (Mustafa 2015).

After the 2011 uprisings, some authors advocate a debate on SSR for the region (Luethold 2004) in order to build an autochthonous agenda that will overcome the international donors' rhetoric and practices (Sayigh 2007). Some wonder if SSR is even possible without radical change or without a total crisis in a region where security sector is often the backbone of regimes. SSR might in fact be in need of a more holistic approach, a change based in human rights and dependent on civil society's and activists' agendas and tempus. (Sayigh 2007; Kodmani and Chartouni-Dubarry 2009).

We encourage authors to submit papers for the seminar focusing not only on the theoretical framework of SSR, but also on a broader approach to the security sector and its reform in the countries of the MENA region. Papers do not necessarily need to focus on foreign-driven SSR programs. Research on the following topics will be welcomed:

- The Security Sector Reform in the MENA Region and the validity of the instrument after the anti-authoritarian uprisings
- Case studies on SSR and security sector transformations
- SSR as an instrument of foreign intervention in the MENA Region
- Endogenous initiatives on SSR
- The development of civil-military relations in the MENA Region

Goals of the Seminar:

- To present the selected papers
- To discuss about the state of the security sector in MENA countries
- To discuss the research approaches on the security sector and their implications for SSR policies

Authors must send an abstract of their paper (max. 400 words) with their name to: Blanca Camps-Febrer blanca.camps@uab.cat before the 31st of January 2017. The selected papers must be submitted before the 31st of February 2017.
Articles may be submitted in English, French or Spanish.

Funding will be available in order to cover the participation costs for at least one of the selected participants. Preference will be given to those without funding and students.

References

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