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Respect and Security Sector Reform

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Abstract

Security Sector Reform is now widely recognized as a crucial part of any conflict intervention or post-conflict reconstruction project. Where security forces are unable or unwilling to provide the population with basic safety and security, it is difficult if not impossible for other elements of societal development and healing to occur. While more attention is paid now to the moral elements of reform, such as inculcating respect for human rights and democratic governance, success in these elements of reform has been limited. Notably, though it has been the target of several major outside reform programs, the military of the Democratic Republic of Congo remains notorious for human rights abuses. This paper argues that the limited success of human rights training as part of SSR is a result not (only) of failures to teach human rights or build requisite systems of accountability, but rather of a fundamental need to reconceive what respecting human rights involves. Reform efforts need to treat human rights compliance as the effect of rebuilt, mutually respectful, practical social relationships, not as external standards to which compliance is secured by exhortation or incentive. This shift in conceptualization has implications for both the structure of reform programs and the way that outside reformers should conceive of their own social relationships with target militaries.

It is perfectly true that they used brute force and that it is possible for us to do likewise, but by using similar means we can get only the same thing that they got. (Gandhi, *Non-Violent Resistance*, p. 10)

Introduction

Security sector reform (SSR) is a critical element of most post-conflict peace-building and many conflict prevention strategies. SSR programs aim to take security forces that are unable or unwilling to reliably protect civilian populations from violence into responsible and effective supports of state power and human security.

Part of SSR is capacity-building — proverbially, getting security forces to “shoot straight.” But SSR also targets the “unwilling” side of the equation, through training in topics such as human rights, the laws of war, and civil-military relations, coupled with an acknowledgment that accountability needs to be enhanced and incentives to corruption reduced (e.g., through developing the military justice system and ensuring regular pay). While nearly every SSR program includes these “ethical” elements, the focus tends to be on making sure security forces know the rules and taking a stab at building accountability for those who break them. Getting individuals with the power provided by the tools of violence to live up to ethical norms is not just a matter of changing their incentives, while leaving their inclinations to abuse in place; nor is it a matter of hoping that repeated exhortations to virtue will convince them to internalize norms with which external incentives are imperfectly aligned. Those with power will behave morally towards those without if they see themselves as part of a mutual project, not as antagonists or even just separate actors yoked by a political system. Dysfunctional power hierarchies are undermined and mutualistic social relationships supported by the cultivation of respect, the recognition that other people are moral equals who can make valid claims and who have meaningful responsibilities. Respect should be emphasized more in SSR, as I hope to show through theoretical reflection and discussion of field interviews with individuals involved in SSR.

A legalistic model of legitimacy places too much weight on institutions that may take years to build (especially when, *ex hypothesi*, the people with guns are not playing along) and implies a fairly cynical and perhaps simplistic understanding of morality. Without a deeper transformation of individuals’ values and self-conception than training in human rights rules provides, it will be very difficult to rein in security force abuses, because accountability structures tend to be too weak in the states most in need of SSR. Even very strong states need to rely on some level of internalization of ethical norms to keep their security forces in check — despite fairly strong accountability structures, abuses and scandals within the U.S. military and police forces

persist.

My deeper concern goes to what we count as “success” in SSR. Security forces wield coercion and violence against the population, and they can do so in oppressive ways even without breaking the law.¹ Even if we assume that a careful, professional, rule-bound, but oppressive security force could maintain control indefinitely, security sector reformers should not be content with creating forces that are well-trained enough to use their violence to dominate the population in a controlled way. The concept of respect captures what “more” we could want out of a security force’s relationship with the population, and also provides a more sophisticated understanding of the human rights standards SSR tries to impart.

I have three aims in this essay. Based on public materials and field interviews with individuals involved in UN peacekeeping and US military training, I hope to show that something like a concept of respect is implicit in the best of current SSR practice, but that making it an explicit focus would be an improvement. Second, I will discuss the concept of respect with an eye towards showing how it is best understood as relating to the nature of power relationships between individuals. And, finally, I will trace out the implications of such a social concept of respect for SSR.

Two notes are in order, the first on methodology: My interviews were semi-structured, and while I have made every attempt to interview a broad selection of individuals within my target populations of UN peacekeepers and US military involved with peace and security operations, neither the nature nor the number of interviews I collected would ground strong, statistically valid claims. Instead, the interview results I present here should be seen as part of a process of “hypothesis generation.” Interviews yielded perspectives on SSR that I would have been unlikely to consider from the comfort of my armchair, and revealed details of the experience of individuals that may not have been obvious from published materials. The justification for any claims I make about the nature of morality in SSR, however, is my theoretical argument in their favor, not the authority of my sources. Even a study that could support stronger empirical conclusions than mine would at best establish that the population studied believed certain claims about the morality of SSR, not that the morality was as they believed it to be — that would still require philosophical argument.

¹I discuss this at greater length, along with different conceptions of how we should understand the “rule of law” in Levine (“Rule of Law”).

Second, my focus in this paper will be in some ways broader and in some ways narrower than the way “SSR” is sometimes used. On the one hand, the term “Security Sector Reform” can have derogatory connotations, implying that the recipient forces are bad rather than under-resourced or acting in a difficult context, and so some actors engaged in support to the security sector will refer to their work as “capacity building” or “support” rather than reform.² While recognizing this concern, since “SSR” is in common use, I will use it to mean any program aimed at enhancing the ability of security sector actors to fulfill their duties. On the other, while SSR encompasses work with a wide variety of actors and institutions, including military, police, border patrol, corrections/penal system, and legal system, I will focus on the military. Many of my reflections also apply to other security actors, especially police (given the way in which lines between internal and external security duties are blurred in societies experiencing violent civil conflict). But I am most confident that they apply to the primary area of my thought and research, the military. Finally, while SSR is important in many contexts, I will focus primarily on the issue of SSR in states emerging from conflict, rather than transitioning to democratic rule or on the brink of failure.

Ethics Training in SSR

Current approaches to SSR do not ignore “ethical” (for lack of a better word) elements. According to the US Military’s field manual on stability operations, security sector reform “aims to provide an effective and legitimate public service that is transparent, accountable to civil authority, and responsive to the needs of the public.”³ Similarly, a joint guidance document for the Department of Defense, Department of State, and US Agency for International Development (USAID) states that the “objective [of SSR] is to design, develop, and deliver foreign assistance such that it promotes effective, legitimate, transparent, and accountable security and development in partner states.”⁴ United Nations documents emphasize even more SSR as a means to securing fundamental human goods, in addition to being about making security forces more technically proficient; a 2008 report of the Secretary-General

² For example, I was corrected on this point by a few individuals during my interviews at United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) in July 2010.

³ Headquarters, Department of the Army, Stability Operations, §6-4, emphasis mine.

⁴ Security Sector Reform, p. 2.

frames the issue of SSR in terms of the principle that “men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and the fear of violence, oppression, or injustice.” The report goes on to lay out the elements of “effective and accountable” security sectors, putting a “legal and/or constitutional framework for the legitimate and accountable use of force” and “mechanisms for the direction and oversight of security... as well as the protection of human rights” ahead of the capacity to provide “effective” security (and follows up with the need for a “culture of service”).⁵

Most SSR programs seem to approach teaching human rights and other ethics-relevant topics the way that a professor might in a well-run classroom: there is some element of in-class instruction in the basic principles of human rights, especially as they appear in international law, which is then supplemented by including human rights-relevant elements in field exercises and simulations (e.g., simulating an engagement with insurgent forces near a population of refugees). This is, for example, the approach that members of the Rwandan military who had taken US-funded peacekeeper training courses described to me in interviews in Gako, Rwanda (December 2009). The interviewees estimated that about an hour was spent on human rights in a week-long class. International militaries in contact with post-conflict militaries may also emphasize the instrumental benefits of respecting human rights for “winning hearts and minds.” For example, in interviews in Goma, DRC (November 2009) members of the MONUC mission explained to me that they found it very effective to explain to Congolese soldiers how much easier it would be to work with Congolese civilians if they built good will through respecting human rights and engaging in small development projects.

If the forces to be reformed have histories of abuse, this approach may be inadequate to the impressive task of changing their basic mindset and approach. If security forces are abusive because their members are moral monsters (or, more charitably, desperate) who do not understand that abusing vulnerable populations is wrong, then it is quaint to think that training on international standards by well-heeled representatives of Western militaries will make them see the error of their ways; they may be convinced by the instrumental arguments, but those lessons will quickly be overcome in cases where abuse makes tactical sense.⁶ On the other hand, if abuses are

⁵ United Nations General Assembly and United Nations Security Council, *Securing Peace and Development*, §§5, 15.

⁶ Which it often will, at least in the short term — for a comprehensive discussion of when rational parties to a civil conflict will attack civilians, see (Kalyvas, *The Logic of*

driven by institutional pressures like lack of pay, it is almost a cruel joke to expect security forces to maintain their integrity just because they have been exhorted to do so.

But, it is not immediately clear how to improve the normative elements of SSR. The impulse is to insist on more training, if only to emphasize the importance of the issues, but this may not be appropriate. One US officer involved with managing US training programs in Africa, told me he was confident that the relatively brief human rights component of the training programs he oversaw was adequate. As he explained it, human rights norms are fairly straightforward and easy to grasp. Some issues may need clarification, such as who counts as a civilian under international law when many people not directly involved in the fight indirectly support combatants. But overall, spending a lot of time drilling on human rights rules, especially when students will be getting very similar human rights instruction as part of several different classes, is likely to be pointless or even disrespectful — it may imply that the students are too stupid to be able to learn and follow the rules.⁷

If not more training, then what? Both instruction in rules and demonstration of practical benefits for compliance with them approach morality in a particular way, closely aligned with the way human rights are treated in law. On this view, there is morality, which is “given” independently of the individual, and then there is the individual’s identity, goals, and motivational set. The problem is to connect the two — either by showing the inherent beauty of the moral law, or the benefits to the individual of following it. This image gives rise to classic problems of moral motivation, as well as questions about whether human rights norms are truly universal or culturally bound. I will not attempt to answer those questions here — the more immediate point is that training focused on closing that “gap” has had limited success, which indicates SSR may be trying to solve a misconstrued problem.

A different way of looking at morality is to take it not to be about the relationship between an individual and the moral law, but about the relationship between one individual and another. On this view, when someone acts immorally, the problem is not a failure to understand the rules, or to see where her enlightened self-interest lies; it is a problem with her interpersonal

Violence in Civil War).

⁷Confidential group interview (A) with AFRICOM personnel, Stuttgart, Germany July 2010

connections. Rather than modeling morality on the enforcement of law, this approach models morality on cooperation.

This shift is, I think, initially plausible — after all, SSR is about reforming the relationship between security forces and those they are supposed to protect. If human rights are objective standards, it is a good thing in itself if they are supported, but the role of human rights in SSR is that respecting them demonstrates a security force’s respect for the moral equality and human dignity of their charges. Similarly, though discussions of “accountability” are often framed in terms of creating institutions to which security forces can be held accountable (e.g., courts) we should not forget that the ultimate goal of institutional accountability should be making security forces, in some meaningful sense, accountable not just for violations but to the people.

Respect

Underlying the human rights tradition are ideas about the way that human beings should relate to each other — one key being respect. As the preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights puts it, “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.”⁸ The idea that respect for specific rules of morality flows from a more fundamental respect for the dignity of the human being shows up both in very “legalistic” moral approaches, such as Kant’s one, and in ones more explicitly focused on society, such as Hegel’s. But I would like to begin with a source closer to home for SSR and perhaps less expected: the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo).

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is transitioning (hopefully) to peace after a series of brutal wars that involved internal divisions and external interference — bringing in so many parties that it has been called “Africa’s World War.”⁹ Before that (as Zaire) it suffered from decades of corruption and state weakness. One legacy of that history is a severely damaged security sector. The FARDC has faced the further problem of rapidly integrating

⁸ United Nations General Assembly (The Universal Declaration of Human Rights); see also Appiah (The Honor Code, pp. 128—130).

⁹ For an overview of the conflict, see Prunier, Africa’s World War.

former rebel forces into its ranks, and the result has been a military that has been credibly accused of extreme abuses of the population and being in league with forces that continue to war (especially in the eastern DRC).¹⁰ The FARDC has been the target of a number of international SSR programs (both bilateral and via the UN), including an effort by the United States to train a “model” light infantry battalion.¹¹

A member of AFRICOM who works with the FARDC told me about her experiences with a group of FARDC officers convened as part of the project. When asked what the main problem was in their relationship with civilians, the FARDC replied that Congolese civilians did not respect them. The trainers and military then went on to discuss why it might be that the soldiers were not respected — e.g., the soldiers believed it was civilians’ duty to give them food and shelter, because they were not regularly paid by the government, and so would simply take what they needed/wanted — and how they might approach civilians so as to elicit greater respect.¹²

At least in the FARDC’s minds, what we outsiders see as military “abuses” against civilians were justified in part by poor moral treatment at the hands of the civilian population. They specifically did not refuse to justify their actions, or do so in terms of something like the right of soldiers to do as they please, or communal superiority. Of course, that perspective is likely to strike most outsiders as more than a little grotesque, given the FARDC’s record of human rights abuses. Whatever “disrespect” is shown by civilians is likely to pale before that.

At the same time, the anecdote does seem to speak to something important about the relationship between the FARDC — and, perhaps, abusive security forces in general — and the population. By appealing to the notion of “respect” the FARDC highlights the relationship between them and the civilian population. Like all relationship concepts, respect cannot simply be reduced to the observance of certain rules, and it is ideally mutual. The

¹⁰ Mahtani et al., Final Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, SS22—55 (support to FDLR), SS317, 321—323 (use of child soldiers), SS336—344 (sexual violence), SS357—370 (attacks on civilians and other war crimes), §377 (attacks on humanitarians); Sawyer and Van Woudenberg, *You Will Be Punished*, pp. 85—115, See, e.g.

¹¹ Mobekk, “Security Sector Reform”; Onana and Taylor, “MONUC and SSR”; Dalrymple, *U.S. and DRC in Partnership*; Security Sector Reform in the Congo; Thomas-Jensen and Gingerich, *No Will*.

¹² Confidential group interview (B) with AFRICOM personnel, Stuttgart, Germany July 2010.

FARDC members put the cart before the horse by demanding respect from citizens before they showed citizens respect, but their demand for reciprocity reflects some understanding of how the relationship should operate. In a pure case of first encounter between two moral equals, both sides could demand respect. The request is grotesque in this case because the FARDC and the civilian population already have a relationship, one that the FARDC has profoundly damaged.

The very concept of “respect” gets degraded when security forces are abusive. An understandable, cynical reaction to this anecdote would be to conclude that by “respect us,” the FARDC simply meant “give us what we want.” And, if you asked the civilians, it is not clear that they would have had a fully-formed concept of respect, either. This is not an intellectual failure. Where security forces are threats rather than protectors, it is not even clear what “respect” between them and civilians could mean. The standard images that the term calls up — calm discussion, mutual accommodation, etc. — seem laughably irrelevant. These outward behaviors of respect may seem relatively trivial compared to real abuses, but their significance is in what they express. Incivility in itself is only a minor harm. But the fact that we are generally willing to be civil to people who we hold in little esteem shows how radically social relationships have fallen apart when extending civility seems futile, or even immoral. Human rights cannot fully take hold where the social relations that make me regard you as human in the first place have collapsed. SSR programs that try to address egregious abuses without addressing this social breakdown are incomplete.

To make good on that claim, let me begin by trying to illuminate the concept of “respect,” which can be used in vague and incoherent ways.

One concept of respect for persons (basically Kant’s) is that respect is a matter of recognizing people as moral equals. This is not in the sense of being equally good, but rather in the sense that we all share the capacity to act for reasons and hence both make reasonable claims on others, and can be held accountable for our actions.¹³ Part of the value of humanity that is to be respected, on this sort of account, is that the “ultimate-ness” of our reason-giving is important; we are creatures who generate value in the world by valuing things, and so the respect we are due is unconditional. We can

¹³ The kind of respect I have in mind is associated with Kant’s argument that people are “ends in themselves,” as he argues at (Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, p. 36 (428-429)) and elaborates on at (The Metaphysics of Morals, 209ff)

compare people with respect to various standards of value, but our ability to value things stands behind all those standards. We are “equal” because it is nonsensical to try to find some standard of value more ultimate than human practices of valuing by which we could be compared.¹⁴

A different approach to respect is Hegel’s, exemplified in his dialectic of “lordship and bondage” or “the master and the slave.”¹⁵ While the concept Hegel is concerned with here is generally translated as “recognition,” the core of the concept is similar to the Kantian one in many ways.¹⁶ Hegel is concerned overall to explain how true consciousness emerges, in particular the ability to be a creature that can understand and act for reasons. An important part of that story is how we get beyond a narcissistic consciousness that recognizes only its own needs, to understand that others also have reasons and make claims on us (and, hence, to convert our mere desires/impulses into reasons that are part of this practice of claim and counter-claim). On the Hegelian account, respect is not an attitude that pure reason brings us to take toward others, it is the outcome of social struggle.

The master/slave story begins Hegel’s argument that reasoning must be a social project.¹⁷ The problem for an isolated individual is that she faces only brute objects, which cannot affirm the correctness of her actions. This problem is tied to the inherent public-ness of reasons — to know that some desire I have is backed by a reason I need to see that other reason-taking creatures also are willing to act on it. Otherwise it might just be desire in fancy clothes. But an object can’t do this — I can destroy it, or use it, or eat it, but I cannot make it recognize that it was a good idea for me to eat it. My lunch faces me in mute defiance of any demands that it submit. In Hegel’s words, “[o]n account of the independence of the object... it [the self-

¹⁴ For a technical discussion of the ultimate-ness of humans as values/ends, see, e.g., Raz (Value, Respect, and Attachment, pp. 140–158). For (a small sample of) contemporary writings that use and build upon (often in wildly varying directions) this notion of respect, see Raz (Value, Respect, and Attachment, ch. 4); Thomas E. Hill (Respect, Pluralism, and Justice, 64ff); Korsgaard (Creating the Kingdom of Ends, esp. pp. 17–18 and ch. 4); Scanlon (What We Owe to Each Other, though he distances his account from Kant, pp. 5–6); Darwall (“Two Kinds of Respect”, p. 45, a form of his “recognition respect”)

¹⁵ Hegel, pp. 111–119, Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind, pp. 170–176 (§§430–435).

¹⁶ The fact that it is natural to talk about respect in terms of “recognizing” someone’s moral equality and recognizing someone’s standing in terms of “respecting” their rights and privileges is no accident.

¹⁷ My argument in this section cribs shamelessly from the excellent reconstruction of Hegel’s dialectic in Pinkard, Hegel’s Phenomenology, pp. 46–63.

conscious agent] can achieve satisfaction only when the object itself effects the negation [i.e., the transformation into something that conforms to the agent's desires] within itself." What I need, if I am to recognize myself as a reasoner, and hence as a free agent worthy of respect, is someone else who is a reasoner and yet will submit to my reasons.

The first thing that happens when one solitary conscious agent finally meets another is that they fight. Each tries to prove his total independence by declaring himself to have no fear of death (which affects that mere object the body), and to "negate" the other by killing him.¹⁸ A fight to the death is futile, but if one combatant submits out of fear of death, a proto-social relationship is born. The one who submitted becomes the slave, and must now vet what he believes to be good reasons for action against the master's. This is an essential move in coming to have recognizable public reasons — the "public" is only two people, but the move of saying, "this is my reason, but is it one that others would accept?" is the fundamental move toward full-blooded reasoning and, ultimately, the ability to respect others.

The ironic twist in Hegel's story is that the slave ends up with a more developed consciousness than the master. The master, because he never has to check his reasons against anyone else's, is left in a sort of childlike delusion. To the extent that he believes that the slave does as he asks because his reasons are good ones, he is deeply mistaken — the slave does as he is told not because of any normative force, but simply because the master can put a gun to his head.¹⁹ If the master realizes this, he will also realize that he did not get what he wanted — he has the creature comforts of a loyal slave, but not recognition, since the slave has turned out to be "something quite different from an independent consciousness."²⁰ So long as the power relationship persists, literally nothing the slave could do could count as recognition, taking the master's reasons seriously as reasons that can be good or bad — so long as you have a gun to someone's head, there is no amount of times they can say you are right that will convince a self-aware agent. One need not be a philosopher to realize this. As former soldier with the Zimbabwean military reflected on his service in the DRC during the civil war, "there was nothing this [Congolese] woman [who was having sex with some of the soldiers] could do; she thought that we have money, food. Besides that, there is the fact

¹⁸ I generally strive to use gender-neutral language, but the behavior of "consciousnesses" in the master-slave confrontation is so swaggeringly masculine that I diverge from it here.

¹⁹ Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, p. 60.

²⁰ Hegel, p. 117.

that we are carrying the gun. You know, when you have a gun, you wonder, Is she cooperating because she wants to or is she cooperating because she is a slave to you?”²¹

On the other hand, the slave does begin to develop something like a true consciousness of reasons; once he realizes that the only reason to conform his reasons to the master’s is that gun to the head, he retains the basic framework of being able to compare his reasons to an objective standard, but realizes that the master’s desires are not that standard — he can go looking for freedom and reason with new tools.

The Hegelian framework is helpful for understanding what is going on with security relationships in need of reform because it builds in social relationships and power asymmetry. The FARDC, in the DR Congo, are in something like the position of master to the civilians’ slaves. The FARDC may genuinely feel disrespected, as if they are treated more like dangerous animals than human beings. Civilians may have no interest in granting them human recognition. As the person who recounted the story put it, “you’re threatening me with a gun; of course I don’t like you.” But the problem goes deeper than not liking someone. Even if civilians wanted to respect the FARDC, what could they do? So long as civilians are being coerced, there is very little they can do that will count as “recognizing” coercers in the way that Hegel thinks — plausibly — self-conscious creatures desire. Even if civilians are willing to contemplate the possibility that the military is making a valid claim, the military can never be sure that is the reason for compliance. Even the civilians may not really know why they are complying — our mental lives are never truly transparent, especially when we are angry or afraid.

Conversely, the sneaking suspicion that FARDC do not distinguish between “disrespect” and not getting what they want is predicted by the Hegelian picture. For the master, there is no possibility of subjecting his reasons to a standard that could show it lacking. So what could refusal to comply be, if not a failure to take those reasons seriously, in other words disrespect? Just as the slave may be unable to distinguish meaningfully between agreement and acquiescence, the master will have difficulty distinguishing resistance or mistake from withholding of recognition.²² The power relationship prevents either side from distinguishing respect/disrespect from

²¹ Orner and Holmes, *Hope Deferred*, p. 46, emphasis in original.

²² Of course, this issue does not arise for Hegel, whose slave is totally compliant.

compliance/noncompliance because they do not share a commitment to a common standard, but are just engaged in a battle of wills.

The deeper point is that respect, on this account, is about relationships and not attitudes. Respect is, in particular, not just a matter of having a particular feeling toward or belief about the other person. Feelings and beliefs can constitute respect only when they can support the right kind of social relationship. The problem with demanding that civilians respect the FARDC is not that they are asking civilians to do something that would be good, if unreasonable to demand in their circumstances. The perversity is that they are punishing civilians for failing to do the impossible. So long as someone is in a position of severe power advantage, it is not just difficult to determine whether he or she is respected, it is futile.

Building Respect

We should take some care in applying lessons from Hegel's story to the real world. First, Hegel is concerned to tell a "just-so" story of how "true" consciousness emerges, and so his version of the story has a happy ending; the master realizes that he can only achieve true freedom if he does what the slave is doing, and so begins to conform his demands to the slave's point of view and they begin to fumble towards a truly joint structure of reasons together.²³ Ultimately, power relationships largely drop out of his story, at least in a straightforward sense. In SSR, we may be concerned with power relations that remain dysfunctional. Second, Hegel is concerned to tell an abstract story and so trucks in absolutes — the master is all desire, the slave all obedience, etc. Realistically, things are more complicated than that — no one is ever in full control, or a purely passive victim.

While I brushed aside the Kantian tradition rather quickly above, it has resources that may help us understand in more detail how the master/slave opposition can be overcome. In addition to his clearly respect-focused formula of "humanity," Kant also claims that the supreme moral imperative can be understood in a pseudo-social way. "A rational being must always regard himself as a legislator in a kingdom of ends," where a "kingdom of ends" is a community of beings who all simultaneously create laws and subject themselves to them, laws that respect their mutual equality and freedom.²⁴

²³ Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, p. 62.

²⁴ Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 39-40 (433-434).

In Kant's account, this community is used hypothetically, but Kantians like Christine Korsgaard have used the basic insight to uncover the ways in which respect is tied to actual community.

Hegel moves from the master-slave dialectic to the consideration of freedom as independence of thought and the search for objective rational standards of knowing, largely leaving behind questions of how respect manifests practically.²⁵ Korsgaard starts from the Kantian insight that, if respect is about treating others as people who can act on reasons, it is a double-edged sword. If I respect you, it means that I will take seriously your reasons as reasons that also apply to me - for instance, if you want something, because you see it as good for you, I will take that to be a significant reason in favor of my helping you get it, or at least not interfering with you. But it also means that I will hold you responsible for your actions when the reasons you act for are not good ones. Treating someone who has done wrong as though she completely lacked responsibility for her actions is to treat her as something like a mere animal, and a sign of disrespect.

Responding to someone's (claimed) reasons involves action. If the core of respect is forming reciprocal relationships with others and acting together, then what you should do is simply whatever that joint project demands. The most obvious case is punishment for wrongdoing, but Korsgaard (rightly) makes the central practical attitude involved in holding someone to be responsible, respecting them, to be willing "to take a chance on reciprocity." In the abstract, this involves a willingness to "act together."²⁶ Korsgaard leaves this notion of acting together relatively abstract. In part, this is probably because she is more concerned with how it relates to Kant's concept of freedom than to the worries about power dynamics that I am drawing from Hegel. But in part, there is little more to be said in general about what it means.

Social practices both "fill in" this notion of respect and provide the point of leverage for outside intervention. In the real world, we cannot just assume that the master will "wake up," or that security forces will see the error of their ways. A focus on punishment and accountability is both theoretically and practically tempting - we have concrete institutions of punishment that help specify what we should do when someone offends against respect, and

²⁵ Even Pinkard, who stresses the "sociality" of reason in his book's subtitle, largely follows Hegel into the mental realm; see (Hegel's *Phenomenology*, pp. 64ff).

²⁶ Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, p. 196.

in the SSR context we are already focused on what is going wrong. But what respect and social practices/joint projects demand when respect is not being violated is just all the other formal and informal practices and institutions of society. An outsider looking to build respect should focus as much on creating and fostering the positive practices that bring security forces and civilians together as on the institutions of accountability that come into play when they are antagonists.

The problem with the power imbalance when those who wield violence do not make themselves responsible to the claims of civilians is objective, rather than subjective. Remember that part of the problem for the master and the slave was that the power relationship undermined the ability to distinguish between capitulation and acceptance of reasons. Even if one party commits to not using its power, the problem remains — if the only assurance you have that I will not use the gun to your head is my unenforceable promise that I will not use it, your actions will still be constrained by fear.²⁷

That said, the problem is not really about equalizing power, but about creating joint projects that change its context. It is one thing for you to promise (unenforceably) not to use your power to get something that you want and could get with it. It is another for both of us to be engaged in a joint project in the context of which what you want simply cannot be achieved by raw power. For example, if I am interested in the respect of my professional colleagues, I may outmatch them in physical strength, but that power is not very useful — exercising it against them would be brutal and counterproductive. I may be able to get them to say they respect me, but that is not the same as actually getting their respect. This is one core lesson of the Hegelian dialectic; the goods that can be acquired by violence are relatively limited in scope. Of course, you may doubt my commitment to a joint project as much as you doubt the sincerity of my promise, if you are weaker than I am, but being deeply involved in a joint project also provides more “points of contact” for reciprocity that can help reinforce both the joint commitment and evidence thereof. A security force that does not have the respect of its civilian population can control but not govern. This problem goes both ways; civilians who do not have a respectful relationship with their security forces can be free of them (at best) but not protected.²⁸

Thinking of the ethics/human rights component of SSR outside the frame-

²⁷ This parallels the republican tradition’s concerns about power, what Pettit calls “domination” (See, e.g., *Republicanism*, ch. 2).

²⁸ For a fascinating discussion of how informal security forces can play a role in “legiti-

work of formal accountability opens up the field for deeper thinking about how to build a responsive security sector, in ways that link up with other critiques of the SSR approach. SSR is generally state-centric; the basic model is that there is a state, and what is needed is to secure that state's monopoly on force while also helping it to use force more effectively and appropriately. But this assumes a lot in a post-conflict situation. All the talk of "accountability" in the SSR definitions cited above assumes that there is a meaningful state and something like a civil society that can be helped to exercise oversight over it — but this is not a generally warranted assumption. In many post-conflict areas, individuals face a set of overlapping and disunified power groups and elites, and exercise both "voice" within them and "exit" from them on a fluid basis. Civilians in such societies may not look to the state as the provider of security and hence as the locus of their demands for security to be provided in a better way. Increasing state security capacity in such a situation may mean giving better tools of violence to an institution that everyone sees as just one parochial power group among others. Increasing compliance with general good-governance principles may seem irrelevant or even nonsensical in a situation where there is limited "demand" for stronger state structures in a Western mold from civilians who are used to working in a particularistic political landscape.²⁹ In my terms, it is meaningless to try to reform the nature of the joint military-civilian project if people do not think of themselves in terms we would recognize as "military," as part of "civil society," or as engaged in a "joint project" in the first place. That sense of joint endeavour must be built. And building it may be much more a matter of knitting together many smaller existing security arrangements into a meaningful whole than starting from the assumption that either there is no security sector and it must be built, or there is one and it roughly corresponds to what would be the state's public provision of security services in a stable democratic system.³⁰

SSR practitioners should keep in mind that the problems of the security sector are likely to be rooted in deeper pre-conflict social problems. A simplistic contrast between "good" civilians and "bad" security forces may conceal the fact that security forces justify abuses to themselves in part because of real or perceived abuses of non-military power by groups that are

matings" nonviolent actors, see Lamb ("Microdynamics of Illegitimacy", pp. 390—406).

²⁹ Egnell and Halden, "Laudable, Ahistorical and Overambitious", pp. 39-41.

³⁰ See, e.g. Baker and Scheye, "Multi-Layered Justice and Security".

now vulnerable civilians; for instance, Séverine Autesserre’s research in the DRC found that some of the civilians in the most dire straits were members of the former communal leadership, who were abused by security forces made up largely of members of groups who had felt marginalized and abused under their rule before the war.³¹ Unfortunately, this means that building the joint projects from which mutual respect flows may require work on a host of underlying social conflicts that may be difficult to resolve and beyond the bounds of what interventions — especially security-focused ones — consider interveners’ job.³²

Finally, it points to something about the position of the FARDC in the broader social world that deserves more discussion — the fact that, if the ability to show respect is conditioned on being free from certain kinds of bad social relationships, then there may be pressures on the FARDC, or other military groups, besides their inherent indiscipline or evil that help to explain the difficulty of SSR.

Chains of Respect

Though security forces are locally “the powerful,” they may be globally “the weak.” Members of post-conflict security forces are themselves subject to an array of social and psychological pressures. For instance, one trainer told me that, in her judgment, everyone in the FARDC suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder.³³ Conversely, I have been told by practitioners that, in their opinion, good security institutions are the result of a good political environment — e.g., that the Senegalese police were highly valued participants in peacekeeping missions because of the lack of coups in Senegal and hence political independence of the police.³⁴ This is in addition to the ways in which mastery itself can undermine one’s ability to grant others respect.

Power relations that oppress you also stand in the way of reforming relationships with those you oppress. It is easy to look at countries like the DRC and see a fairly black-and-white picture of brutal abusers and helpless victims. But, it distorts our picture of how to deal with abusers.³⁵

³¹ Autesserre, *The Trouble with the Congo*, p. 152.

³² See, e.g., *ibid.*, ch. 5.

³³ Confidential interview (C) with AFRICOM personnel, July 2010

³⁴ Levine, *African Civilian Police*, pp. 15–16.

³⁵ It also does a moral disservice to civilians. The rural poor may not engage in armed

As Martha Nussbaum points out, it can be difficult to reconcile someone's moral agency with the idea that they are subject to forces beyond their control.³⁶ In a way, this is the problem that leads to the Hegelian master/slave confrontation — feeling that there is anything outside our control can undermine our sense that we are free and in control of our own lives at all. But, in fact, honest reflection will show that we are all subject to external forces to some extent, yet retain our agency. In fact, as the slave realizes, it is in our reaction to things beyond our control that we often find our freedom and agency most meaningful.³⁷ In a pinch, most of us are willing to recognize that people subject to unfortunate circumstances still retain moral agency, and are worthy of respect.

Being understanding of the pressures on others is fairly easy when we see people responding to external forces with dignity and good character, but it is harder when external forces impact on character itself.³⁸ It is easy to think that even those who are worst off can still develop good character and face misfortune with strong morality — in fact, there are cultural tropes of the poor being more virtuous than the rich. Unfortunately, this is not always the case in reality — being born in poor circumstances can have an adverse effect on character. It can be tricky to take proper moral notice of this fact. On the one hand, it can cast an offensive pall of disrespect over not only the person with poor character but over everyone similarly situated to say that she is not fully responsible for her poor character. On the other hand, it would seem like a cruel joke for me, a fairly affluent member of the dominant local socio-ethnic group, to tell someone less well-off that I understand their deprivation but they should not become embittered or hostile over it. I may hold that bad circumstances should not be used to justify immoral behavior toward others, but honest self-reflection will reveal that many of us do so (though, for most readers, neither the behavior we excuse nor the pressures on us are likely to be as extreme as those for members of security forces

resistance to an oppressive government, but this may represent subtle methods of non-cooperation (many of which may appear as “disrespect”) and disengagement from the state appropriate their geographical and social position, not passivity (See, e.g., Kandeh, *Coups From Below*, p. 32). And, ignoring the way in which civilians create coping and “resilience” strategies to respond to abuse may undermine practical civilian protection efforts as well (See, e.g., Bellamy and Williams, *Protecting Civilians*, p. 34).

³⁶ Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, pp. 401—414.

³⁷ Nussbaum's point about Philoctetes, (*ibid.*, pp. 408—409)

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 410—412.

undergoing reform).

Those on the receiving end of inequitable power relationships are not only unable to properly respect those who pressure them, they are likely to visit disrespect on those weaker than they are. This is both an understandable psychological response and a problem with social structures. If I am constrained by my slavery, even if I have come to realize that my master's power is not reasonable, it will be more difficult for me to practically reform social relationships, including those with people who are my "slaves."

This is just a theoretical way of putting a well-attested practical point. Soldiers may be unpaid or poorly paid, and be in resource conflict with civilians — the infamous practice of asking soldiers to "live off the land." They may be indoctrinated into a very rigid hierarchy, where those at the top of the hierarchy do not encourage respectful behavior toward subordinates, and may in fact demean it.³⁹ The military may be subject to external pressures that undercut its ability to create a functional relationship with civilians, whether from a domestic government with untoward ends or from international actors. Individual soldiers may lack skills beyond using their weapons to impose their will — we should not forget that being a member of a modern, functional military requires more than the ability to shoot straight, especially for militaries that may have domestic security, "human security," counterinsurgency, or counterterrorism mandates. Imagine, for instance, the position of a Hegelian master who recognizes his untenable moral/epistemological position, but knows no other way of accomplishing his goals than wielding the whip hand against his slave.

The basic point is that respecting others is an ability, not just a state of mind, and one that depends in part of some degree of "self-respect." Respect is a capacity to see oneself as subject to and able to act sensitively on reasons, not dominated by outside forces. It has a social structure like a chain — each person's ability to respect the next is in part conditioned on their being respected by those with greater power. Of course, part of Nuss-

³⁹ I periodically hear from Westerners who work with African militaries that the "big man" idea in African culture, where the "chief" is responsible for everyone, and all decisions go through him, leads to a similar culture in the armed forces, where soldiers are very unwilling to think about things for themselves and will do what they are ordered to do without question. While I am skeptical of the general anthropology expressed by these kinds of claims, the description of the behavior of militaries specifically is much more plausible (and is something of which the people describing the situation generally have first-hand experience).

baum's point is that this domination and conditionality is never the absolute mastery of Hegel's dialectic. People find ways of evading power, of making space for their own self-respect and respecting others, even in the face of problematic social relationships — otherwise, we would be stuck either with Hegel's *deus ex machina* of the master realizing his empty existence or social life, once disrespect infected it, would be forever locked into a disrespectful configuration.

Respect and SSR

If we take seriously the idea that SSR is at least as much about reforming the civilian-military relationship as it is about building military skills, these reflections have important implications.

It supports the view that more classroom training on human rights norms misses the point. If human rights, or moral issues more generally, are not handled effectively in SSR, additional harping on the rules will not be an improvement. We should re-think what we are doing when we teach people human rights.

Abuses are committed by people who understand them well enough, but commit them nonetheless. They may even “understand” the abusiveness of their action in a way that goes beyond the formal recognition that it violates a commonly accepted moral or legal rule. One trainer told me of sitting with FARDC soldiers who had committed rapes and holding them while they cried.⁴⁰ More instruction on international humanitarian law will help neither the soldier who feels pressured into abuses that traumatize him along with the victim, nor the soldier who has defined his victims out of the realm of human respect.

Instead, we should take seriously the Kantian idea that respect, even though it may seem like a thin philosopher's notion, is in fact the core of morality. Taking the Korsgaardian view that respect is a function of reciprocal social relations and joint projects, what soldiers need to come to respect human rights may be primarily the support and skills to engage productively with civilians. SSR practitioners have what may be a limited, but is surely an important role here. There are “classroom” activities that can contribute to joint projects — some civil-military skills can be learned, but conflict resolution and negotiation skills, e.g., should be seen as part of the human rights

⁴⁰ Interview C

project, not as an optional add-on primarily useful for specialized missions, like peacekeeping.

Second, SSR programs are — or should be — part of a larger approach to post-conflict peacebuilding or conflict prevention (as appropriate). Unity of effort is easier to talk about than to implement, but if SSR is isolated from other elements, its moral aspect is very likely to suffer. How well-trained a military is, in the narrow sense, may actually help with its tendency and ability to respect civilians — I have been downplaying psychology, but militaries the world over have made discipline and professionalism a core element of their strategy for instilling the kind of pride in a social role that keeps soldiers from abusing their power, and I see no reason to think they are wrong about its effects. But a well-trained military that is part of a society in which the government does not work on behalf of the people will find that the societal role they have been exhorted to fill does not exist. SSR needs to be part of an intervention that helps civilians and military build the joint project — whether a mega-joint-project called a “nation-state” or smaller ones — that mutual respect requires as its social basis. People committed to joint projects will refrain from abusing each other because the project itself becomes important to them, and hence the people in it become important to them, too. Refraining from abuse goes from having the character of an externally imposed constraint to a natural consequence of a social relationship.

This recommendation is consonant with the focus on “local ownership” in SSR, but shows a different, overlapping, aspect of the problem.⁴¹ “Local ownership” concerns are generally driven by the (very real) need to assure that security structures put in place are culturally appropriate, reflect the real security needs of the population, are sensitive to the particular political dynamics in place, and are sustainable because embraced by the people who will be using them, not just by outsiders.

The “joint project” perspective may mean we need to expand our understanding of “local ownership,” though. For one thing, “local ownership” is sometimes seen as being in tension with the creation of professional and legitimate security forces — part of the tension between “getting it right” and handing over sovereignty so as not to go beyond the legitimate bounds of

⁴¹ Panarelli, Local Ownership of Security Sector Reform, See, e.g., Ball et al., Security Sector Governance in Africa, §6.3; Ball, Promoting Security Sector Reform, p. 13; Yasutomi and Carmans, Building Local Ownership.

involvement.⁴² The conceptual tension arises if we think of the security sector (and governance in general) as something to be “built” and then “handed over.” Practically, this conceptualization is reinforced by SSR approaches that conceive of legitimacy largely in terms of accountability.⁴³ I recommend instead seeing accountability as one outgrowth of joint and reciprocal involvement in providing for human security. To the extent that external actors can help foster this, there may still be a question of when to “step back,” but reforming the security sector appears to be part of the process of building a sovereign community, rather than a task that must be completed before sovereignty can be granted.

In addition, SSR practitioners should seek to foster self-respect in soldiers that goes beyond instilling a sense of “professionalism” in a rule-like manner. Self-respect is not just about feeling that one is able to conform to an admired external standard. Even Kant, while he emphasizes the transcendence of the moral law, insists that the characteristic of human beings that makes us worthy of respect is that we give ourselves the moral law. Self-respect is recognizing the same thing in oneself that my potted Kant and Hegel ask us to recognize in others — that we are actors-on-reasons and originators of valid moral claims. This requires not just that SSR bring soldiers to understand best practices and rules, but that it foster their moral autonomy.

Given a chance, soldiers in even very damaged militaries will often show themselves capable of serious moral reflection, and will respond to the opportunity for it. The same member of AFRICOM personnel who worked with the FARDC soldiers who committed rapes told me about a sexual violence curriculum being developed for the US’s FARDC SSR project, that has emphasized getting soldiers to talk to each other about what it means to be a man in their society, the pressures they feel to act in ways they often acknowledge are wrong, and what elder soldiers wish they could tell younger men who have grown up in the context of the civil war, an approach in which many students enthusiastically participated.⁴⁴

Another told me of a training program in which he had participated, focused on civil-military relations. During one lecture — the subject of which, as the interview partner put it, was “coups are bad” — several Mauritanian officers in the audience challenged the instructor. Mauritania had recently

⁴² Evans, “Moral Responsibilities”, pp. 157—160; Bellamy, “The Responsibilities of Victory”, p. 621, On the tension in general, see, e.g.

⁴³ As, e.g., Ball et al., *Security Sector Governance in Africa*, §3.

⁴⁴ Interview C. The curriculum is still in evaluation.

had a coup, and the officers argued that, where civilian leadership had become very corrupt, the military was not only permitted but obligated to step in. My interview partner's opinion was that the conversation that ensued — in which the instructor tried to engage with the objection — was exactly what a training program should do (“that is what getting it right looks like”), based on his experience with members of African militaries and judgment about what they wanted and needed out of training, and that the only failing of the instructor was that his contractual obligation to present a specific viewpoint prevented him from genuinely entertaining the Mauritians' arguments.⁴⁵

The United States has also been running a program for non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and warrant officers, aimed at increasing their professionalism.⁴⁶ A key member of the warrant officer/NCO program was quick to characterize the value of the program as increasing the self-respect of warrant officers and NCOs, as well as the respect that their superior officers had for them (his emphasis on the importance of respect was unprompted). He also made much of the importance of “professional military education” (PME) — programs that focus on providing members of the military with broad educational opportunities more similar to university classes than military training — for warrant officers/NCOs. His reasoning was that warrant officers/NCOs in developing militaries, more than anything, needed the critical thinking skills and flexibility that such courses provided — teaching them “how to think,” in his words, rather than the “what to think” of traditional training.⁴⁷ The ability to reason creatively and flexibly is the cognitive basis of respect, and what we hope to be respected for, as rational beings.

Given what I've said about the nature of respect above, however, we should keep in mind that SSR is not just about training provided, however nuanced. The conditions of respect have to do with social relationships, and so the relationship between the outside SSR intervener and the subjects will be important. This has both a micro-scale and a macro-scale aspect.

On the micro-scale, SSR practitioners should model respect to their partners. One contractor who had been involved with training officers from a number of Francophone African countries talked at length about the importance, in his mind, of informal conversations that took place outside the

⁴⁵ Confidential interview (D) with AFRICOM personnel, Stuttgart, Germany July 2010.

⁴⁶ United States Africa Command, Warrant Officer and Noncommissioned Officer Resources, “Improving Warrant Officer and Noncommissioned Officer Capability and Capacity”.

⁴⁷ Confidential interview (E) with AFRICOM personnel, Stuttgart, Germany July 2010

training sessions. One of the few US personnel who spoke French (the other trainers worked through interpreters), he was also the only one who spent time socializing with the African officers. As he described it, while they participated in joint activities as part of the program, when it came time for meals, or breaks, etc., the US personnel and African personnel would go to their own sides of the room. His being willing and able to socialize with the Africans had two benefits for him. First, he was brought into their confidence and told about elements of the program they disliked and undermined their commitment to it, such as feeling that they were not given enough time for breaks and for the Muslims to pray, that they declined to raise with other trainers. Second, he was able to build friendships with them to a degree beyond that other trainers were able to.⁴⁸ What may seem like trivial slights betray indifference to participants as human beings, and may send the message that powerful outside trainers need not concern themselves with the human needs of their trainees. This behavior carries with it broader and damaging implicit lessons about relationships between the powerful and the weak.

The anecdotal evidence I have gathered of how well these issues are recognized by US personnel (the SSR “provider” with whom I have had the most contact) is mixed. Some interviewees were quite agitated over the lack of respect they felt most US personnel showed African personnel. In their view, most US trainers just wanted to put in their required hours of instruction and go home, had a contemptuous attitude towards African militaries, and some even went so far as to insult African soldiers while the targets of the abuse were clearly within earshot.⁴⁹ Other interviewees reported that, by and large, the need for mutual respect was well-understood by US personnel, particularly those involved with civil-military projects and training, and that any difficulties likely arose from a need to understand the cultural specificities of how respect was expressed.⁵⁰ Whether these lessons are currently well-understood or not, if my argument is correct, building social bonds of respect between SSR practitioners and their partners, not just improving the quality of the education, should be seen as a core task.

⁴⁸ Confidential interview (F) with AFRICOM personnel, Stuttgart, Germany July 2010.

⁴⁹ Interview B.

⁵⁰ Confidential group interview (G) with US Army personnel, Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, Carlisle PA July 2010. In my terms, this would have to do with being able to “learn the ropes” of particular joint social practices that may serve as a social basis of respect, but be unfamiliar to the trainer.

In addition to the main point that the skills of respect must be fostered and modeled as a core part of the human rights project, making respect central has two other implications for SSR.

First, the joint project concept of respect shows that there is a danger of SSR programs becoming self-undermining. Above, I argued that we should reconceptualize the idea that there is a tension between reform and handing over sovereignty — they are part of the same process. But the tension just re-arises in a different form. SSR programs are generally part of external interventions that include significant material support for national institutions, including the security sector. This can make security forces more accountable to outside donors than to locals. Part of creating a joint project is “working out” the divergences in interests and views between members of the security forces and others in the society, both civilian elites and the rest of the public.⁵¹ External actors can have a role to play in this process — e.g., providing conflict resolution training, creating opportunities for dialogue, and ensuring a fair hearing for groups that do not possess the power of violence. But SSR programs need to be careful not only to build a reciprocal relationship with local security forces, but to ensure that their relationship does not replace the one between security forces and the rest of the population. This is a tricky balance, for which very little general advice can be given. But the danger is greatest if accountability is thought of as something that can be institutionally created by external actors and then “handed over” to local civilians, especially if the relationship between civilians and security forces is conceived of as inherently an antagonistic one, where the power of armed actors is checked by giving the power to oversee and punish to local civilians, who are likely to have less power to do so than external actors.

Secondly, respect often requires moral engagement, not disengagement. In some conversations the issue of respect for others was identified with relativism. For instance, one interviewee, who worked with AFRICOM on issues of cultural understanding, told me that she was an “extreme cultural relativist.”⁵² In the course of the interview, it emerged that she did not mean to reject any notion of moral truth, but nonetheless that she felt it was important to refrain from judging the views of people from other cultures. Another interviewee told a telling story from his experiences in Sudan.⁵³ He had been

⁵¹ I am indebted to Robert Lamb for making this point forcefully.

⁵² Confidential group interview (H) with AFRICOM personnel, Stuttgart, Germany July 2010

⁵³ Confidential interview (I) with AFRICOM personnel, Stuttgart, Germany July 2010

assigned a translator who was very focused on emigrating to the US — and did not care if he had to leave his wife and children behind, or what their fate would be. After several conversations on the subject, my interview partner “snapped” and told the translator that he considered him a “scumbag.” My interview partner was categorical that expressing his views was the wrong thing to do, first because “scumbag” was a culturally-specific judgment, and second because it violated his obligations as an anthropologist — for an anthropologist, he told me, people from other cultures should be like “ants:” “if ants eat their babies, you don’t get angry, that’s interesting.”

This “anthropological” perspective is antithetical to true respect. Respect is not only consistent with telling people that they are morally wrong, it often requires it. We do not condemn ants, but neither do we respect them.⁵⁴ In this respect, the approach of the instructor in the case of the Mauritanian officers is more nearly correct — he was willing to engage with them to some extent, even while maintaining that they were wrong.

This certainly does not mean that SSR practitioners should preach their moral views at any opportunity. Treating people’s moral views seriously means treating them as views that can be right or wrong, but it also means taking seriously how important they are to people, and not attacking them in ways that will seem overbearing, insulting, or hostile. We can be moral realists while still agreeing that sometimes the best thing to do is hold one’s tongue. And even if I do not embrace the “anthropological” view sketched by some of my interview partners, it contains important insights. Most importantly, what appears immoral to us may in fact be a reasonable or moral response to a very different cultural context, and there may be multiple morally worthy ways of looking at the world. Apropos to the above discussion, it may also be an immoral but comprehensible response to a damaged social relationship. SSR practitioners should be prepared to engage with the moral views of their partners, even including explaining why they believe some of them are wrong, while still keeping in mind that they should show respect for the fact that others’ views, even when wrong, may express genuine insights, and deserve some respect and deference merely for being held sincerely. In fact, Kant — no friend of moral relativism — argued that a key duty of respect was trying to understand why an incorrect view seemed

⁵⁴ Our relationship to animals and humans is different. Humans deserve respect, so failing to respect them is to disrespect them. Animals are the sorts of things that do not act for reasons, and so we neither respect nor disrespect them. Thanks to Robert Wachbroit for pressing me to clarify this.

reasonable to its holder.⁵⁵

Finally, the use of military contractors for SSR and training programs should be carefully considered. It may well be the case that contractors can provide instruction that is as good, or even better, than military trainers. But genuine military-military contact sends a different message than the use of contractors. First, the use of contractors may be seen (rightly or wrongly) as a lack of “seriousness” on the part of the SSR intervention that can undermine respect. Second, I have argued above that SSR is about supporting the creation of a social relationship between the military and the civilian population. Since military contractors, whatever their personal skills, do not play the same social role as the active-duty military, they model a different kind of institution than the military. I will not argue here that it is better or worse — just different, and different in a way that should make us consider when the relationships we are trying to support would be better served if our representatives were themselves models of that sort of relationship.⁵⁶

Global Chains of Respect

Though there is a limited amount that individual SSR practitioners or programs can do about it directly, we should not forget the macro-scale aspects of respect. On the smaller macro-scale, US (e.g.) security assistance often comes with “strings attached.” US military capacity-building programs in Africa often focus heavily on counterterrorism, which is one of AFRICOM’s stated priorities.⁵⁷ This focus on counterterrorism can undercut the idea that the US genuinely respects local priorities when it gives assistance. For instance, when a military official characterized US military humanitarian operations in Tanzania as a way of combatting the root causes of terrorism, it actually lessened the extent to which trust was built with local populations, because terrorist organizations were not present in the area and were neither

⁵⁵ Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 210.

⁵⁶ Incidentally, this same consideration may mean that members of non-Western militaries may make better SSR envoys in some cases, especially where the fundamental military orientation is different. For instance, Americans are used to the idea that the US military is a tool of external force projection, beyond narrow and immediate national interests, that very rarely operates under international command, and is barred from internal security operations — a very different set-up than many other countries have.

⁵⁷ The actual rank-ordering of US military priorities is classified information

an attraction nor a concern for most of the people there.⁵⁸ An interviewee familiar with the incident was less circumspect than the article — in his telling, the Tanzanians had viewed the effort positively, because they saw it as coming from genuine concern for their well-being (they were not naïve enough to think the US had no self-interested motives, just that the US was genuinely interested in a prosperous and stable Tanzania, even if for its own purposes). But after the official’s statement, they were disillusioned and angry at being used as instruments for a foreign policy goal that was not only tied up with US interests but irrelevant to their own lives — in my jargon, they felt disrespected.⁵⁹ Members of militaries who are exhorted to take genuine notice of the needs of civilians and not use them merely as tools for their own ends may do as we do, not as we say. From the practical standpoint, we will be providing them with tools appropriate for a counterterrorist military force — which may not be a social role they would play in a truly well-functioning local society. Counterterrorists may not be the right partners for a project that could be shared with local civilians. However, when the US is coming in with money, training, and equipment, local militaries are much less likely to bite the hand that feeds them than to quietly plan to put things to use for their own ends. The mutual disrespect and use of the other as a “mere means” in such a relationship, even if in some sense consensual or at least expected, is toxic.

On the broader macro-scale, SSR interventions need to acknowledge that there are global power relations that are often very damaging, and of which SSR partners are certainly aware. The US did not come out of nowhere in the DRC. FARDC members know that we were long-time supporters of Mobutu, and the US is widely perceived (with some good reason) as friends and backers of Rwanda, which was one of the major instigators of the civil war in the DRC, and has been credibly accused of continued involvement in violence in the eastern part of the country. Similar direct histories underly many other SSR projects, such as the US in Liberia, which was founded by Americo-Liberians and where the US was seen as involved with Charles Taylor; the UK in Sierra Leone, its former colony; and the US and coalition forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, where the need for SSR is most immediately the result of US-led invasions. Beyond these direct effects, SSR interveners are often powerful nations that wield immense geopolitical influence, and

⁵⁸ Varhola and Varhola, “Avoiding the Cookie-Cutter Approach”, p. 74.

⁵⁹ Interview I

who are perceived (rightly or wrongly, but not without reason) as using that influence to perpetuate economic, political, and military inequities that victimize recipients of SSR programs.

Powerful nations can create dysfunctional power relations without malice or conspiracy. The US is currently the clearly dominant military power in the world. US military power so far outstrips any other nation's (and even most plausible combination of nations') that it can be persuasively argued that, at least on a straightforward reading of the just war principles of "likely success" and "proportionality," conventional military resistance to any US operation would be immoral, because it would be futile.⁶⁰ What kind of relationship does that set up with other nations' militaries? To some extent, it puts them in the position of the slave and the US the master — even if the US does not concern itself right now with the nation's goals, the military cannot hope to pursue its nation's foreign policy goals (even the "foreign policy goal" of national defense) unless the US acquiesces. In this international context of domination, the practical project of creating a military that is beholden to a joint project with the local civilians is not available, since that project would be constrained by the whims of the US, which is not a party to it.

It would be overblown for me to draw a direct line from US military pre-eminence to, e.g., abuses in the DRC. The actual situation is more complicated, especially because, as noted above, domination is never absolute in the real world. But the situation is genuinely dangerous. Militaries who depend on outside support are less beholden to their civilians. If they see themselves less as partners with civilians in the nation-state and more as players in an international game dominated by Western states, this undermines the basis of respect — leaving only the relatively weak bulwark of judicial accountability for human rights abuses, at best. At the same time, talk of "local ownership" and other attempts to build and model respect in the training itself will likely ring hollow, much as humanitarian assistance did to the Tanzanians when they realized it was about counterterrorism. What does "local ownership" mean if the locals' foreign and economic policies are heavily dominated by powers beyond their control? We should not make the mistake of thinking that locals do not think in broader terms, or understand

⁶⁰ van der Linden, "Just War Theory and U.S. Military Hegemony", 54-55; the point is certainly not that the US has a right to do whatever it pleases — rather, the likely success criterion is there to recognize that war's bloodshed should not be accepted unless a just goal can be achieved, and the evil of the US achieving an unjust goal is less than the evil of it achieving that goal, plus many people dying in an unsuccessful attempt to stop it.

how the world works.

SSR programs and practitioners have a limited ability to address such large issues, but as a philosopher it is my luxury and obligation to bring them up. True reform would mean addressing the imbalances at the global scale by equalizing power more or giving smaller countries some say in the economic and military policies of the powerful — essentially creating a respect-supporting joint social project on the global level. But, failing the ability to do that, respect from SSR practitioners should involve at least acknowledging and taking seriously these sorts of concerns. Even implausible conspiracy theories about AFRICOM's sinister goals likely spring — to follow Kant's duty to seek the truth in all views — from authentic and not unreasonable feelings of fear and disrespect in the face of the US' overwhelming and not always benign military and economic might.

Conclusion

SSR, even by practitioners who are sensitive to its moral aspects, such as legitimacy and human rights, is often conceived of as a technical, institution-building project. To some extent, this is necessary. And to some extent, it represents a particular model of human rights and civil-military relations. Especially in post-conflict situations, where security has broken down and security forces become abusive, it seems natural to conceive of the relationship between security forces and the population as inherently antagonistic. If war has made the security forces into a Kantian “race of devils,” then the task of an intervention is to forge new institutions that can constrain them and give civilians back their rightful supremacy.

My argument, in a nutshell, is that this antagonistic image is problematic if we want to improve the moral character of security forces. Respect is fundamentally about building reciprocal relationships. Institutions with symmetrical abilities to oversee and punish either are at best simulacra of truly reciprocal relationships.

Of course, this sets a much more difficult project for SSR than teaching soldiers how to shoot straight and what the laws of war are. The cynical response is that no one should have expected the reorganization of violence in societies damaged by war and misrule to be easy. The hopeful response is that, at the very least, if my reflections on the role of respect here are correct, they point the way forward and save us from fruitlessly exhorting security

forces to obey human rights without understanding why they continue to abuse.

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