Transforming Uganda's Security Sector: The Need for a Gender Sensitive Approach

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Abstract

The recognition that gender matters in security has shaken the Westphalian security model that prioritized state over human security. Indeed, concerns related to the security of individuals and communities have diluted earlier assumptions that a secure state automatically translates into a safe population. Gender has moved hand-in-hand with human security but consistently struggled to gain its own space in security discussions in the post-Cold War period where dependability between security and development is loudly pronounced. This paper argues that although state-centric security practices are non-dismissible, in transforming Uganda's security sector, a gender-sensitive approach is critical for ensuring effective security service delivery and responsiveness to unique women, men, girls' and boys' security needs. The paper relied on secondary sources of data such as the National Gender Policy, Security Sector Development Plan; Ministerial reports; Development Community's reports such as UNDP and OECD and literature related to gender and security by different authors. Throughout the review of the literature, the task was three-fold; a) to explain why gender has been negated in security; b) to appreciate the need to shift from security sector reform to security sector transformation and c) to advance the need for transforming Uganda's security sector through a gendered lens.

Keywords: Gender, Security sector, Security sector transformation, Uganda

Introduction

In 2014, during a workshop on *Gender and Peacebuilding* in Kampala, female security officers challenged the security sector composition in Uganda and called for deliberate measures and policies to increase the number of women and promote gender equality in the country's security sector (UNW, 2014). The calls came one year after the African Union's Framework on security sector reform indicated a commitment to the principle of gender equality as expressed in the various Conventions and Charters such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Banjul Charter; the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) as well as the United Nations Security Council Resolutions on gender equality (1325 of 2000, 1820 of 2008; 1888 and 1889 of 2009) (AU, 2013). These global strategies aim at legitimizing the role of women as equal members in development and deepening their role in peace and security activities in their communities and nations.

At the workshop, Uganda Police Force (UPF)'s, Beata Chelimo, then acting as Police Commissioner for Women's Affairs expressed concerns over the quality of security work in a gender insensitive institution and argued that; *…if you go for community policing and you are only men, the work will be compromised….even during interrogations and searching, you need women to handle fellow women. Work is delayed when women are few* (UNW, 2014, para, 4)*.* The United Nations Women (UNW) recorded further that Colonel Rebecca Mpagi, then Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF) director of Women's Affairs voiced that women in the UPDF only comprised four percent of the total number of the Force. The expressions of the senior female officers came about six years after women officers had complained about sexual harassment from their male counterparts before deployments and promotions (UNW, 2014; Ssejjoba, 2009).

Three years after the workshop, Uganda got its first female general (in the army) (The East African, 2017) but the concerns raised during the meeting indicate the gendered nature of security – a field that is largely attributed to men as protectors and women as recipients of security. Different views have been offered in interpreting how gender relates to security. For instance, using an example of economic security, Moylan (2013) argued that women are disproportionately located at the bottom of the socio-economic scale due to gendered division of labour which in turn exposes them to economic vulnerability. Uganda's security sector remains largely male-centred that for institutions such as the UPF, birth of the Gender Strategy and Action Plan has not ameliorated the situation. The patriarchal security approach is further evidenced by more than half of the representatives of the UPDF in Parliament being men (Rubimbwa & Komurembe 2011). Unfortunately, as Rubimbwa and Komurembe noted, there is scanty literature revealing in comparative terms the ratio of women to men security providers due to national security concerns.

The above notwithstanding, in 2021, the African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF) Report indicated that the UPF boasted 43,717 staff with 7,777 (18.3%) as women (APCOF 2021). According to the APCOF report, the small sized statistics of women in police were attributed to historical policing traditions, social norms and gender roles. Earlier in 2011, records indicated that the Uganda Prisons Service (UPS), had 6,160 officers of whom 1,579 (26%) were women (Rubimbwa & Komurembe 2011). The authors noted that in the UPDF ranks, women did not make more than 10%. Such dismal figures curtail women's meaningful participation in contributing to security provision and debates and build a sector that is insensitive to unique gender security needs. In turn, this translates into policy gaps and affects the delivery of security as a public good. Indeed, existing literature such as Albrecht & Barnes (2008) indicates that gender inequality affects local ownership and broad-based participation resultantly ignoring the unique security needs and interests. This paper seeks to expose the relevance of transforming Uganda's security sector from a gendered dimension for purposes of building a balanced, inclusive and responsive security sector. In doing so, it is sectioned into five major parts; the introduction gives the contextual image of the problem at hand and pays respect to the concepts of security, gender and security sector; section two explains the shift from security sector reform (SSR) to security sector transformation (SST); section three elucidates Uganda's security sector while section four demonstrates the need for transforming Uganda's security sector from a gender perspective and section five offers a conclusion.

Paying Respect: The Concepts of Security and Gender

In this work, security is equated to protection of the referent object (that which must be safeguarded – can be state, people, environment or community) from real and imaginable threats. Herein, gender security connotes alleviation of perceived and real threats to boys, girls, men and women's interests, needs and priorities. Certainly, security matters to all men and women, boys and girls because bad policing, weak justice systems and corrupt militaries mean disproportionate effects from crime, insecurity and fear (OECD, 2007).

As a concept, security has evolved from the state-centric perception of protection of the state from external threats (Buzan & Hansen, 2009) to freedom from fear and freedom from want (UNDP, 1994). The 1994 UNDP definition stretches to alleviation of threats resulting from civil strife and those due to poverty, diseases, illiteracy and social exclusion. In Uganda, the concept of security is widely understood as *freedom to live, act and make whatever choices. Security encompasses freedom from threats, intimidation and other pressures from whatever source that might undermine the basic rights, welfare and property of Ugandans and the proper functioning of the systems of governance* (GoU, 2016, p.12). Despite the wide definition, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) and the Ministry of Labour, Gender and Social Development (MLGSD) indicated that gender inequalities as referenced in the introduction remain widespread, limiting the ability of women and girls

to fully participate and benefit from development programs (UBOS & MGLSD, 2019). It was further noted that key among the accounting factors for gender inequalities are; patriarchy, religion, family as well as social cultural practices.

As indicated by Cohn, gender imbalance in the security sector results from *many of our assumptions and beliefs about which security policies will be effective arising from a series of gendered ideas about how to most effectively exercise power, what it means to be strong and what works to keep us secure* (Cohn, 2019, para.1)*.* Gender goes beyond biological differences and includes cultures and values inherent in the world that influence femininity and masculinity as well as the interpretations of what it means to be a man or a woman. Extant literature such as Henry (2007); GoU(2007) and (Persaud, 2012) confirm that gender relates to social construction of roles, responsibilities, opportunities, privileges and access to control over resources.

In 2008, Kristin's definition rhymed with GoU (2007)'s submission that gender is basically the socially constructed roles and relationships between men and women. Citing the example of Europe where women in many cultures are traditionally responsible for food preparation, Kristin explained that men and women are taught certain roles and appropriate behaviours according to their sex. These roles vary according to culture and change over time (DCAF, n.d). Like DCAF, the GoU (2007); (Persaud, 2012) adnd (Cohn, 2019) emphasized that beyond men and women, gender also refers to the relationships between them. Whether influenced by power or social constructions, the contest between gender and security is obvious that strikingly, masculine ideas and features such as strength, risk-taking and force, resonate with security while vulnerability, cowardness and weakness are related to femaleness. Although there are various explanations of the concept of gender, this paper borrows the definition by Abaho (2021) and considers it as, the socially constructed roles that influence the manifestation of behaviours, expressions and identities of boys, girls, women and men. This paper observes that the social allocation of roles influences the participation and representation of men, women, boys and girls in decision making and in turn heightens exclusion.

Socially, men and women, boys and girls are trained on how to act, feel or even think and these social constructions influence men and women's education, jobs, political and power access and control all of which affect security (Hendricks & Valasek, 2010). The power dimension, infused in masculinity and femininity treats men as security providers and therefore defenders of their communities and nations and women as security consumers. Such deeply held views have attracted a long history of interrogation by feminists such as Tickner (1992); Sjoberg (2010) and Tripp (2013) who challenge the simplicity with which men are associated with violence while women are identified with peace. Indeed, feminists have questioned the patriarchal nature of the state arguing that civilian men are equally targeted in violence while women are used as unpaid laborers to care for the wounded (Tripp, 2013).

By questioning the state-centric approach to security, feminist bring to the fore the consequences of doing security as though gender does not matter. For instance, they argue that continuously, security has been practiced from the classical realist view that equates security to a country's military power. Indeed, writers such as Noott (2019) and Moylan (2013) have warned that realist notions of statehood synonymous with rationality and objectivity (features linked to masculinity) have only helped deepen the biases against women and girls in security participation and provision. Noot, in making reference to Pettman agreed that often, state agents such as the police and the military have been at the forefront of posing serious threats to women through dehumanizing acts such as mass rape as a war tactic in countries like Rwanda and Bosnia. According to Tripp (2013), feminists' voices indicate concerns over *whose security* policy makers were/are seeking; whether for the state, the people, or women. And thus, with a growing feminist movement that has consistently challenged the realist thinking and the entry of human security into security discussions especially after the 1994 United Nations Development Report (UNDP), the discipline has had a '*begrudging acknowledgement that gender issues are relevant to security'* (Hendricks & Valasek, 2010, p.69).

Despite the critical voices from the feminists, the concept of security, largely rooted in the Westphalian model of statehood remained focused on the state as the referent object ((Moylan, 2013; Asiimwe 2017; and Noott, 2019), limiting the understanding of security to masculine-realist views that power is the route to security (Asiimwe, 2022). It was not until the end of the Cold War that non-traditional threats such as domestic violence, crime, hunger and environmetal collapse began to reveal that a territorialy secured state does not automatically translate into a safe nation. As such, the focus on security widened to include the human security notions including but not limited to food, healthcare, social relations and personal security (Liotta &Owen, 2006).

Away from ending the East-West tension, the winding-up of the Cold War altered the ancient focus on the state as referent object and caused a flip from citizens supporting the sovereignty of the state to the state and state sovereignty serving the citizens (Tripp, 2013). Authors such as Hendricks and Valasek (2010) observed that in Africa, men and women have overtime voiced their security and justice needs including the right to live without violence or oppression and the desire to participate in decision making. In doing so, Africans have struggled to place key threats to gender security including; impact of small arms violence upon African men; violence against women and human rights abuses especially by the security sector personnel on the national security agenda.

Increasingly, while security uncomfortably accepts to deal with gender, Salahub and Nerland (2010) believe that the notion that gender is separable from security is dated and only undermines the effectiveness of the security sector in meeting the populace's security needs. The authors advised that gender equality and the promotion of an environment that allows men and women's participation in creating and maintaining secure

environments should be at the heart of security for development. Having paid homage to gender and security, it is important to explain the term security sector

Understanding the Security Sector

According to the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), the security sector is inclusive of the structures, institutions and personnel that are in charge of security provision, management and oversight at national and local levels (DCAF, n.d). As such, both state and non-state actors are key players in the security sectors as users of force and controllers of the users of force respectively. The state-centric security sector includes security providers such as the army, police, intelligence services, prisons, border and customs services and national guards among others (Asiimwe, 2022; DCAF, n.d). Meantime, the non-state security actors include; unofficial armed groups such as militias; commercial security providers including private security companies; neighbourhood watch groups, women's groups, customary justice providers; prisoner/victim assistance groups and legal associations (DCAF, n.d).

Although DCAF's elucidation is line with the African view of the security sector, it equally confirms how debatable the components of the security sector are. According to the African Union, the security sector varies in different national contexts but general features can be considered as; *groups and institutions that are responsible for the provision, management and oversight of security for the people and the state* (AU, 2013, p.4). Categorized into six, the security sector in Africa comprises of; primary security players (armed forces; presidential guards; anti-terror units, border management units) specialized intelligence institutions (counter espionage and terrorism groups); public oversight and management bodies (executive, justice ministries, legislative committees; anti-corruption bodies and regional parliamentary bodies); justice and rule of law institutions (prisons and correctional facilities, traditional and transitional justice systems; human rights committees, tribunals and courts); civil emergency units (rescue services, riot control, natural disaster management and natural resource protection units) and (non-state security bodies such as private security companies, informal traditional and customary authorities) (AU, 2013).

While DCAF and the AU provide an extended view of the security sector, Uganda's 2015/16-2020/21 Security Sector Development Plan narrows it to three major players; Ministry of Defence and Veteran Affairs (MoDVA); Internal Security Organization (ISO) and External Security Organization (ESO) (GoU, 2016). Notably though, when listing the national security actors, the SSDP Report stretches to Ministries such as; Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Economic Development; Local Government; Justice and Constitutional Affairs and Parliament as well as Office of Prime Minister (GoU 2016). The broadening of the security sector actors is an unconscious recognition that security is no

longer a preserve of the armed forces but rather a multifaceted good that needs the participation of all for effectiveness and efficiency.

This paper appreciates a narrow view of the security sector which considers the state-centric players that are charged with protection of both the state and the communities. The paper observes that assignment of roles in the security sector are highly gendered and borrow the traditional male dominated, realist views of security with features of power, tough-mindedness, bravery, confidence and patriotism as key for security of a political entity. For instance, the UPDF is majorly assigned the function of protection and preservation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Uganda; the UPF is to protect life and property; preserve law and order; prevent and detect crime; the UPS is to ensure safety and secure custody of prisoners; the Intelligence Services collect, receive and process internal and external intelligence data for the security of Uganda (Asiimwe, 2022). Such distribution of tasks fits neatly with the perception that security is hard stuff and therefore a masculine thing to the extent that alternatives associated with femininity are easily dismissed as soft and unrealistic. In explaining the stiff competition between masculinity and femininity in security, Cohn (2019, para 10) indicated; *these masculine and feminine coded characteristics are seen as mutually exclusive opposites, with former more highly valued than the latter. The impact is visible in the premises of national security…..empathic imagining of the suffering of war's victims is seen as antithetical to the ability to think well about security policy rather than as being essential to it.*

While this paper acknowledges the gender imbalance in Uganda's security sector, it doesn't in anyway intend to undermine the significance of primary security providers after all, *safety is a central concern in all human endeavour…security is fundamental to people's livelihoods, to reducing poverty and to achieving development. This is because security relates to both personal and state safety, access to social services and political processes……security is supposed to guarantee people's political freedom and economic freedom which transforms into human development (*Asiimwe, 2022, pp:133-134). Rather the paper submits that gender exclusivity in the security sector especially among the primary security providers affects a reduces the understanding and provision of security to simple questions of masculinity and femininity. In turn, alternatives to security provision that fall short of masculine views seem weak, passive, inadequate and therefore dismissible.

Uganda's forces are not only critical for its protection against external invasion but also responsible for ensuring that the existing environment is conducive for other sectors to flourish (GoU, 2016). This function is in tandem with Ball et al's (n.d) argument that, the security sector is responsible for securing the state and its people from fear of violence. Fortunately, with Resolutions such as the United Nations Security Council's 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889, the essential role played by women in ensuring sustainable peace has attracted international attention. Gender inclusivity in the security sector permits

identification of vulnerabilities of both men and women, boys and girls and quashes the hold on the traditional views that inequality and vulnerability affect women alone (Persaud, 2012; Arostegui, 2015).

Gender inclusivity is a critical feature of security sector performance and just as the concept of security has undergone a revolution so too has *reform* with scholars and practitioners emphasising transformation as a point of departure for positive change in view of the security sector and its governance especially in Africa (Bryden & Olanisakin, 2010). The preceding sections have revealed how multi-dimensional views regarding gender and security are and expounded on the components of a security sector. Building on this, the next section explains the term security sector reform and demonstrates the need to migrate from reform to transformation of the security sector.

From Security Sector Reform (SSR) to Security Sector Transformation (SST)

The concept of security sector reform has dominated the debates regarding security provision and management especially since the 1990s, in recognition of the need for a broader approach to security. Authors such as (Ball, 2010) and (Holvikivi, 2015) confirm that the notion of security reform was considered fundamental to democratic governance particularly as the notion of security shifted from a state to a people-oriented one. Ball expounded that for the international community, there was need to deepen understanding of the role of security services in the provision of state and human security. Holvikivi noted further that with the rise of human security, increasing recognition of security and development linkages as well post-authoritarian transitions to democratic civil-military relations provided a soft landing for security reform. Indeed, when Clare Short, the UK's Secretary of State for International Development used the term in 1999, she observed that while development organizations had previously shied away from the issue of security sector reform, time had come to appreciate security sectors of appropriate size, properly tasked and managed as key for sustainable development (Ball, , 2010; Sedra, 2017).

Underpinned by the notion that human security is an essential condition for development, the concept has been used widely and interchangeably with terms such as security system reform, security modernization, security sector development, security sector review, security sector transformation (Kristin, 2008; Bryden & Olanisakin, 2010; AU, 2013), all confirming the lack of a common definition. This notwithstanding, several multilateral institutions such as the African Union, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Union (EU) have all promoted the concept of security sector reform in their policy frameworks. Commonly referred to is the OECD's 2005 definition that considers SSR as; *the transformation of the security system which includes all the actors, their roles, responsibilities and actions – working together to*

manage and operate the system in a manner that is more consistent with democratic norms and sound principles of good governance and thus contributes to the a well-functioning security framework (OECD, 2005, p. 20).

This paper however borrows the African Union's definition of security sector reform as the *process by which countries formulate or re-orient the policies, structures and capacities of institutions and groups engaged in the security sector in order to make them more effective, efficient and responsive to democratic control and to the security and justice needs of the people* (AU, 2013, p.5). At the heart of SSR is an urgent need for effective and efficient provision of state and human security in the boundaries of democratic governance (OECD, 2005; Bryden & Olanisakin, 2010). Certainly, as Ball (2010) explained, SSR emerged at a time when there was growing recognition that the protection of individuals is critical to both national and international security. In equal measure, SSR received supporting voices to the view that the security conditions for people's development are beyond traditional matters of national defence, law and order but inclusive of broader political, economic and social issues for freedom from risk and ill-being. SSR is based on the understanding that an ineffective and poorly governed security apparatus is a threat to peace, stability, poverty reduction and sustainable development – the underlying thinking is that responsible and accountable security forces contribute to stability and development (Wulf n.d.). SSR therefore extends beyond the narrow focus of traditional security on defence, intelligence or policing and recognizes that enduring security rests on fundamentals of human security, democracy, rule of law and gender equality (OECD, 2005).

Since its birth, SSR came to be seen as a central pillar for development and a response to security challenges in the post-Cold War period especially in attaining the wider agenda of democratization (Eckhard, 2016; Ball, Fayemi, Olanisakin, & William, n.d; Cooper & Pugh, 2002) and (OECD, 2007). Truly, Eckhard (2016) argued that a democratic controlled security sector represents the most reliable guarantee of security for the population. In Uganda, save for Asiimwe (2022), there is scanty literature regading the country's security sector development. However, between 2002 and 2004, Uganda's security sector received support for reform from the United Kingdom following concerns that security spending was not necessarily bringing home the desired effects (OECD, n.d). According to OECD, the funding for security sector reform followed a thorough defence review that was supported by the UK DFID in 2002/2003.

Despite the connection between SSR and the wider democratization process, Eckhard (2016) observed that the model has no universally agreed upon implementation procedures. As such, for countries especially in the developing world, implementing bodies are often government agencies or semi-public groups that rely on their own expertise. Worse, while development partners such as United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and OECD have increased support for security sector reform, they have nonetheless tended to exclude military and police prompting an increased number

of commercial actors that see SSR as a developing business (Eckhard, 2016). While security sector reform's core business is provision of efficient and effective state and human security within a wider framework of democratic governance, there have been calls for a shift from mere reform to transformation in security governance especially in Africa (Bryden & Olanisakin, 2010; Holvikivi, 2015; Wilen, 2019).

In regions like West Africa, the emergence of security sector transformation followed the need to overhaul the security system entirely due to its failure to achieve its principal mandate and often times constituting the principal cause of insecurity (Ikpe, 2010). This notwithstanding, SSR remains attached to SST so much that European Union's position on the former means *the process of transforming a country's security system so that it gradually provides individuals and the state with more effective and accountable security in a manner consistent with respect for human rights, democracy, rule of law and principles of good governance* (Leboeuf, 2017, p.6)*.* Despite the relationship, SST is considered to entail a more profound intent on behalf of elected governments for purposes of ensuring that the practices of the security organizations are consistent with the democracies they serve (Ball et al., n.d). Indeed, Ikpe (2010) indicted that SST is required to change systematically the relationship between civil authority, civil society and the security sector. Security sector transformation is thus more of a holistic change to the security sector with intentions of altering power relations in the direction of civil and constitutional control.

Therefore, SST alters the security status quo arrangements, which typically protect the interests of the more powerful and male dominated political systems at the expense of and/or to the detriment of the unique security needs and interests of the citizens. The ultimate goal of SST is to change the institutional culture, promote professionalism, improve resource utilization and operational effectiveness among both security forces and civil authorities in tandem with democratic principles of accountability, respect for human rights and inclusivity (Ball, et al. n.d).

Uganda's version of security transformation is more inclined to *professional staff that are well trained, well equipped and [with] an excellent relationship with the people in order to sustain conditions in the country which will enable economic growth, stability, democracy and national unity* (GoU, 2016:19)*.* While transforming the national forces into a professional one is a component of security sector transformation, so too is alteration of the traditional gender relations and inclusion of women in security considerations (Hendricks & Valasek, 2010; (Arostegui, 2015). Notably, gender inequality causes both human and state insecurity and therefore addressing the needs of women, men, girls and boys as either victims of insecurity or perpetrators of violence can improve the effectiveness of state security providers (DCAF 2015).

SST just like its sister; SSR sustains the twin concerns of security and development. However, Cooper and Pugh (2002) clarified that, SST aims at rebalancing economic

structures and the socio-political environment so as to reduce the incentives for militarization and encourage a better approach for the various security needs of societies. According to Ball, et al. (n.d), and (Ikpe, 2010), security sector reform is rather piecemeal and in the absence of a comprehensive governance framework, SSR policies tend to be dominated by programs dealing largely with aspects of security institution building. Further, Ball, et al. (n.d), believe that SSR is often limited to doctrinal changes, operational effectiveness and occurs as a by-product of other state reform initiatives without enough *buy-in* from critical stakeholders. In comparative terms, SST involves reform but also addresses a wider set of security issues and engages a broader set of actors (Cooper & Pugh, 2002). On this basis, scholars such as Hendricks and Valasek (2010; Ball et al., (n.d), find gender a critical component of security sector and its negation having disastrous effects on a community/nation's security provision.

While Uganda's SSR process was broad (involved civil society organizations; reviewed the threats to the security of persons and territory; analysis of potential policy responses), it left scepticism among the funders due to lack of transparency especially where defence budgets remained classified (OECD n.d).With SST, the reforms are embedded in a broader transformation process, whereas in SSR, the reforms are generally not part of a holistic process (Ball, et al. n.d).

Yet, SSR embodies the principles of security sector transformation. For instance, SSR rests on the principle of *people-centeredness, local ownership, democratic norms and human rights, rule of law seeking to provide freedom from fear and measurable reductions in armed violence and crime* (OECD, 2007)*.* Equally, having captured the attention of governments and international players in development, peace and security communities, SSR is seen to provide a window of possibility for the transformation of security policies, institutions and programmes and particularly, creating opportunities for integrating gender issues (Kristin, 2008). Kristin's submission is however challenged by Ikpe (2010) who, using the example of West Africa argued that national ownership of the SSR process has been haunted by external leadership and SSR responses having the most relevance in externally supported processes.

Security sector transformation in Uganda is important and urgent because as (Kirunda, 2008; MGLSD, 2021 and Asiimwe, 2022) have indicated, the Ugandan security organizations have for long been sources of insecurity – failing to abide by the rule of law and the elites attempting to safeguard their privileged positions at the expense of the people. Interestingly, Uganda is not unique as the mismanagement of the security sector and the consequences for the populace especially in most of Africa in the period after independence has been well addressed as;....*many of the new African states were no more than a caricature of the classical state and mirrored the colonial system from which they were born. There was no real security system. The security establishment was not created for the protection of the people but rather for the protection of the elite and its interests,*

in much the same way it was intended for population control and resource extraction in the colonial era. Africa's inheritance elites had failed to dismantle the colonial security structures and transform the existing security arrangement.' (Olanisakin & Bryden 2010:12).

As the case is in most of Africa, in Uganda, elite regimes that emerged after the colonial administration, did not take advantage of the moment to transform security delivery through a participatory process to craft national security agenda that would best take care of citizens' security needs. Indeed, Uganda's history is tainted with a record of insecurity and high criminality levels that in the regimes of Milton Obote and Idi Amin, *neither the security of the person nor property was guaranteed but was rather threatened by the state and its agencies. The most most notorious proponent of violations was the army* (Kirunda, 2008, para 4). According to Office of the Higher Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), insecure situations tend to exacerbate pre-existing patterns of discrimination against women and girls by exposing them to heightened risks of violations of their human rights (OHCHR, n.d). The Office also observed that in unstable environments, gender-based violence tends to heighten due to general breakdown of rule of law, the availability of small arms, breakdown of social and family structures. With the description of Uganda's security personnel offered above by different scholars, it is not too time consuming for this paper to offer a glimpse into Uganda's security sector/landscape.

The Security Sector/Landscape in Uganda

Uganda's security landscape has been shaped by armed violence, responding not only to the decayed political administration but also to internal insurrections challenging incumbent governments. Illustratively, following the attainment of independence, the country was swallowed by political wrangles that resulted into coups and exposed the country to disarray (MGLSD, 2021; Asiimwe, 2022). Caught between the excesses of the regimes of Amin and Obote, Uganda's security sector was in shambles; there were also problems with a shattered economy, a broken political system; a destroyed social fabric and an uncertain future. In describing the security situation, one writer put it that; *their shambas are in shambles. The coffee is untended and the gardens are overgrown. The (Ugandan) Army are a drunken rabble Army abducting, looting and raping* (Winder, 1983). In 2021, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) noted that *women bore the brunt of much of these conflicts and violence. Many suffered gang rape, vaginal fistula, abductions and sexual slavery* (MGLSD, 2021, p:1)*.*

The worst test to the security sector was probably the Lord's Resistance Army conflict that started in 1985 following the rise to power of the National Resistance Army (NRA). According to (Finnegan & Flew, 2008), contributing factors to the conflict included; poverty; perceptions of political exclusion and social economic marginalization.

Interestingly, while social interpretations of masculinity and femininity assign fighting to males and softer functions (cooking, child rearing and home maintenance) to the girls, violence in Uganda has had a combination of both females and males as active participants. For instance, Nkabala (2014) noted that during the LRA conflict, 30% of the child soldiers were females. Nkabala explains further that in line with societal expectations, the girls recruited by the LRA were later assigned traditional roles of taking care of the sick, cooking and serving their husbands' sexual appetites while equally prepared through training to serve as soldiers as and when deemed necessary. The use of women both as soldiers and caretakers underscores the double burden that females endure when insecurity strikes and calls thus for a gender sensitive approach in security management.

This paper appreciates the submission by authors such as Persaud (2012); Arostegui (2015) and Cohn (2019) that due to the different experiences that men and women encounter during insecurity, their security needs are without doubt different. Moreover, physical differences such as strength and social attributes rooted in cultural norms in many contexts influence women's perceptions of security and insecurity. For instance, Salahub and Nerland (2010) argued that women's priorities in security sector reform and hence their conception of security may be so different from men. This, partly is because cultural values attach women to the private and men to the public that when women choose to forward their issues to the public to be addressed by institutions, often chaired by men, they risk severe social cultural consequences not limited to physical threats.

The authors' view is in line with the recovery dimension undertaken in Uganda's post-conflict recovery plan for Northern Uganda in which priority was given to stabilization of the government security agencies (OPM, 2007). While stabilization is important, gender-blind recovery measures can in the longer term ignore women's and men's differences in/security experiences and leave their needs deeply unaddressed. In light of this, gendering the transformation of the security sector in Uganda is not only urgent but conforms to the calls by many scholars and practitioners of the need for transformation rather than just reform as a point of departure for positive change in the security sector and its governance (Olanisakin & Bryden 2010; Leboeuf, 2017).

Why Gender Matters in Uganda's Security Sector Transformation

The inclusion of gender in security sector transformation reveals a departure from the norm (focus on high-level masculine politics rooted in power and militarism) and is the best marker of transformation (Hendricks & Valasek, 2010). Such transformation informs policy making and implementation - the inclusion of gender-based analysis is critical to the realization of a security environment that respects democratic values and respect for human dignity (Salahub & Nerland, 2010). As indicated, most focus for primary security providers is on protection of the state against external aggression but other non-traditional

insecurities such as domestic violence, rape, human trafficking rooted in gender differences remain wide spread. Thus, gendering security transformation is part of the wider human security agenda of placing people at the centre for the security (Arostegui, 2015).

Uganda's human rights record is on a consistent decline so much so that the Human Rights Watch (HRW) documented a *marked deterioration in Uganda's human rights environment over the past years…..as security forces beat and at times arbitrarily detained journalists and opposition members* (HRW, 2022, para. 3)*.* It is worth memorizing that gender influences the experiences of men and women in Uganda either as perpetrators or victims of insecurity. As Bryden and Olanisakin (2010) explained, transformation in gender relations and inclusion of women in security considerations are key indicators of a stable and responsive security sector. Women have experienced insecurity related to sexual violence, cyber bullying and property denial (Ssenkaaba n.d) among others that can be corrected by gender-sensitive approaches in the security sector.

A transformative approach to security as opposed to mere reform as the most reliable way of breaking from a sexist institutional culture that deeply influences institutional doctrine, procedures, structures and operations in which gender reforms tend to be unproductive (Hendricks & Valasek, 2010). As noted by APCOF, *women's active participation in policing is not just important in the broadest sense of promoting gender equality in the public service but has a demonstrably positive impact on the way policing is undertaken. In countries where the number of women and men in the service is similar, there tends to be better and more rights-based policing responses, including lower incidents of use of force and higher reporting of crime by victims of rape and sexual assault* (APCOF, 2021, p.7).

Gender sensitivity in in SST allows local ownership of security decisions by all security recipients that in turn builds legitimacy and trust in security processes that respond to local security needs. The integration of gender issues, noted (DCAF n.d) is key to operational effectiveness, local ownership and strengthened oversight. For instance, *increasing the recruitment of female staff, preventing human rights violations and collaborating with women's organizations contribute to creating an efficient, accountable and participatory security sector that responds to the specific needs of men, women, girls and boys* (DCAF n.d:1)

Uganda needs to be more responsive to the specific security needs of her people – Ugandan men, women, boys and girls need to have their security interests and priorities represented in security-decision making and provision. Besides, being gender sensitive in SST is at the heart of social justice, growth of stable societies and a recipe for peace and democracy. Moreover, inclusion of gender in security sector transformation enhances the wider pursuit of democracy symptomized by good governance and inclusivity. Tadesse (2007) advised that while there is always a tendency to stick conservatively on traditional

security, a good governed security sector translates into adherence to principles of democracy and creates efficiency and effectiveness in performing the functions of the state. In 2015, the view was supported by Arostegui that a security sector that takes into consideration in the needs of men, women, boys and girls ensures full participation of all parties in addressing the security needs of the population and resultantly, ensures a more peaceful and secure society.

Many women perceive and experience male dominated military as threats rather than protectors (Salahub & Nerland, 2010). Indeed, Abaho (2021) documented how women were victims of severe beating from security operatives during the Covid-19 outbreak in a bid to enforce the presidential orders. Like Kristin (2008) had earlier expressed, equal participation in security by men and women doesn't only improve security service delivery but also enhances collaboration between men and women's organizations. Conversely, the benefits of this are seen in increased ability by security providers to gain trust from the intended security service recipients. Trust as a critical element in the security sector was highlighted by the (OECD, 2005) as an instrument for restoration of public debate on security and management of political crises in developing regions.

Noted already, men and women, boys and girls face insecurity in unique ways. Hendricks & Valasek, (2010) advance the argument that while women are more likely to become victims of domestic abuse, men are more likely to suffer from gun and gang related violence. For many women, predisposing factors including differential access to education, employment and access to political power influence the security threats they encounter and the ability to access security and justice. Importantly, Salahub and Nerland (2010) observe that women's rights are human rights and thus, those involved in the transformation of the security sector have a duty to uphold these rights. Hence, preventing and responding to rights abuses such as sexual harassment, domestic violence and human trafficking is an important aspect of SST (Tripp, 2013).

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the need to transform the security sector with a gender-inclusive approach that permits recognition of the unique security needs that men and women have and as a way of breaking from the state-centric realist approach to security. While the paper acknowledges the efforts that have been undertaken in Uganda such as promotion of women to higher ranks; development of Gender Policy, the fruits are still low because only a handful of women make it to higher ranking positions. Therefore, revisiting of security related legislation to ensure non-discrimination and consideration of specific security needs of males and females is worth considering. National efforts at gender mainstreaming in all levels of planning, resource allocation and implementation to address

gender imbalance are appreciate but these could make a better cocktail with gender training to all personnel in the security sector.

Conflict of Interest

I declare no conflict of interest and confirm that this work has not been submitted anywhere else for publication.

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