

NATIONAL PEACE ESSAY CONTEST 2013-2014

Security Sector Reform, Political Transition, and Sustainable Peace

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SHEET

United States Institute of Peace | essaycontest@usip.org | www.usip.org/npec

2013-2014

National Peace Essay Contest

Each year, more than 1,000 students submit entries to the National Peace Essay Contest, while thousands more participate in related writing and other classroom exercises in high schools around the country. The Academy for International Conflict Management and Peacebuilding—the education and training arm of the United States Institute of Peace—selects a current topic concerning international conflict management and peacebuilding for high school students to research. Based on the belief that questions about peace, justice, freedom, and security are vital to civic education, the National Peace Essay Contest aims to expand educational opportunities for young Americans in the fields of international affairs and conflict resolution.

Awards College Scholarships

3 National Awards

- 1st place, \$10,000
- 2nd place, \$5,000
- 3rd place, \$2,500

53 State Awards

- 1st place, \$1,000*

**National Awards include State Award amounts.*

First-place state winners receive college scholarships and are invited to Washington, DC, for an awards program. The Institute pays for expenses related to the program, including travel, lodging, meals, and entertainment. This unique, five-day program promotes an understanding of the nature and process of international peacemaking by focusing on a region and/or theme related to the current essay contest.

Contest Deadline
February 3, 2014

Enter the contest using our
online registration system
www.usip.org



2013–2014 Essay Contest Question

Security Sector Reform, Political Transition, and Sustainable Peace

Transitioning to peace and democratic governance raises challenging questions about how to handle security forces. What do you do with a police force that has been trained to serve a repressive government and protect the status quo? What do you do with an army that has been fighting in a civil war? What do you do with rebel forces that may know how to fight but know very little about civilian life?

One expert has characterized security sector reform (SSR) as changing a soldier or policeman from someone that a child would flee in fear to someone that the child would seek for protection. While it is important to consolidate the state's monopoly of force, so that armed groups do not menace the population, it is also critical to transform the security institutions that protect the state and its citizens into professional, effective, legitimate, apolitical, and accountable actors. Because many security agencies were used as instruments of repression or were active in armed conflicts, transformation of the security forces will also help societies in transition from war to peace and new democratic governments build credibility among their populations. But, training of operational security forces must also go hand-in-hand with institutional development.

Security sector reform can help fix dysfunctional security sectors in countries emerging from years of internal warfare or authoritarian rule by helping armed forces and police embrace a new mission of meeting the human security needs of their populations. This requires restraints on the use of power by security institutions such as the police and the military so that they no longer act with impunity. Principles of good governance—transparency, accountability, civilian oversight—must also apply to security forces. In addition to reform of the defense, justice and interior ministries, security reform should include the involvement of all non-state actors in society. It is also important to emphasize that reform of the security sector must be a process that is done with (rather than done to) local authorities and requires input from civil society. By implementing such reforms, new governments can demonstrate their commitment to providing security and protecting basic freedoms and citizens' rights. These are the goals of the ongoing efforts at security sector reform in North Africa and were important foundations for the democratic changes created in much of Latin America over the past two decades.

How does security sector reform contribute to sustainable peace?

In your analysis, discuss the following in 1,500 words:

- State your argument for how best to reform the security sector within societies in transition.
- Support your argument by briefly analyzing two cases from the past 30 years of countries in transition from war to peace or from authoritarian to democratic governance.
- Discuss the impact of successful reform of the security forces on sustained peace and/or the absence of such reform on the prospects for political change and sustainable peace.
- Discuss whether the successful transformation of the security forces in post-war societies will differ from achieving security reform in societies in political transition.
- Drawing upon your two case studies, identify challenges to security sector reform and conditions that allow it to take place successfully.
- Conclude your essay by putting forth your ideas on the key elements necessary for successful reform of the security sector.



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USIP provides the analysis, training, and tools that prevent and end conflicts, promotes stability, and professionalizes the field of peacebuilding.

For more about the essay contest, visit www.usip.org/npec.

For all other media inquiries, contact the office of Public Affairs and Communications, info@usip.org or 202.429.4725.