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For much of her career, she has worked on issues relating to security and development, with a specific focus on democratic security sector governance and financial management in the security sector.

Since 1998, Ball has consulted for a range of bilateral governments and multilateral organisations on security sector governance and financial management. She has also collaborated with African colleagues through the Africa Security Sector Network, based in Accra, and the Centre for Democracy and Development, based in Nigeria.

In 2007 – 08, Ball led a review of the UK's security sector reform programming supported by the Global Conflict Prevention Pool (now merged into the Conflict Prevention Pool), which focused on GCPP funded activities in Afghanistan, Lebanon, Nepal and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. See: Nicole Ball and Luc van de Goor, Promoting Conflict Prevention through Security Sector Reform: Review of Spending on Security Sector Reform through the Global Conflict Prevention Pool, Report to the Global Conflict Prevention Pool, London, June 2008.

In 2006 – 07 Ball led a similar review of security and justice sector programming in Africa supported by the Africa Conflict Prevention Pool (now merged into the Conflict Prevention Pool) and DFID programme funding, which focussed on the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. See: Nicole Ball, Piet Biesheuvel, Tom Hamilton-Baillie, and 'Funmi Olonisakin Security and Justice Sector Reform Programming in Africa, DFID Evaluation Working Paper no. 23, April 2007.

Ball was part of the 2005 – 06 World Bank team that conducted a study of public finance management in the security sector in Afghanistan as part of a Public Finance Management review. See: Afghanistan: Managing Public Finances for Development. Vol. V: Improving Public Financial Management in the Security Sector, Report no. 34582-AF, Washington, DC: Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Sector Unit, South Asia Division, World Bank, December 22, 2005.

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Ball is also the co-editor, with 'Kayode Fayemi, of the handbook, Security Sector Governance in Africa published by the Centre for Democracy and Development in Nigeria.

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