

CHAPTER II

Civil Society at the Nexus of Security & Development: A Literature Review

This chapter reviews the relevant academic and policy-oriented literature on civil society, particularly its engagements in security and development discourses such as SSG/R and SDGs. It is divided into four sections. The first section summarizes the extant scholarship on major theories of civil society and its link with democratic governance, a critical assumption for successful civil society advocacy and participation in reform processes. The second section discusses the principles and evolution of the SSG/R paradigm. It focuses on how as a reform or change paradigm, SSG/R has made strides in fostering development, democratization, and peacebuilding through an approach that emphasizes local ownership. The third section reviews the literature on SDGs, while the concluding part of this chapter covers some of the recent literature that links civil society with SSG/R and SDG-16.

There is broad consensus around the statement that development and security are mutually reinforcing conditions for human progress. Countries that lack the rule of law and are mired in violence, and are predatory or weak states, also tend to be sites for violent political contestation that prevent or inhibit economic growth. Conversely, underdevelopment is a strong catalyst for the socioeconomic grievances that fuel armed conflict and insecurity (Zamfir 2020). The Institute for Economics and Peace argues that higher levels of violence drive down economic development by reducing investments and destabilizing the broader macroeconomic environment, which in turn also have downstream consequences for critical facets of human development such as life expectancy, poverty, and a whole gamut of quality-of-life indicators (Institute for Economic and Peace 2016).

The end of the Cold War left the development sector with pressing problems relating to fragile states—those experiencing systemic civil unrest and barely functional state institutions—and

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tyrannical ones, particularly in many ‘third-wave’ democracies that were concerned not only with immediate stabilization, but also post-authoritarian transition and democratic consolidation. On the one hand, there was global attention for security and its efficient provision. On the other hand, many development theorists and practitioners also looked at the first-order questions of justice and morals because state security forces also tend to be the source of insecurity when they routinely violate rights of citizens and are not accountable for such abuses (Detzner 2017).

The security sector—the military, police, courts, and other security apparatuses of the state—is an inescapable partner in development programming (Chanaa 2002). A legitimate monopoly of violence is a defining feature of the state; the security sector cannot be completely discarded unlike some authoritarian legacy institutions such as ruling political parties, nor can its governance be sidestepped given its fundamental importance as a precondition and structural enabler for development. The peace upon which development can be built thus needs to explicitly and immediately address crosscutting issues of public empowerment and inclusion, governmental transparency and accountability, and rights protection together with usual concerns for operational capability.

a. Civil society: theoretical perspectives

The concept of civil society has a long tradition in political theory. Discussions about the origins of civil society emanate from the works of various seminal political philosophers such as Locke, Adam Smith, Marx, Hegel, and Gramsci (Keane 1998). The concept received its widest recognition from the liberal tradition of democratic theory. Civil society as being based on the idea of bonds of trust and goodwill akin to social capital (Smith), the common will (Rousseau), and as a countervailing power that limits the state (Locke) became the dominant interpretation.

Modern theories emphasized the inexorable link between civil society and democracy. However, this did not come immediately as theories of democracy were fixated with elections as the *essence* of democracy. With the revival of social protest and political turbulence in the 1960s, there was a renewed interest in its democratic potential. According to Grugel, the study of the reemergence of social activism was placed in the perspective of civil society both intellectually and politically. It became a popular term to encompass the organizations and movements that directly or indirectly support, promote, or struggle for democracy and democratization (Grugel 2003). This led to the revival of interest in the ideas of French political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville. In his *Democracy in America*, he argued that in democratizing societies, associations might serve as the functional equivalents of estates in absolutist societies, insofar as they contain and moderate state tyranny. They do so in the following ways. First, associations might serve representative functions with respect to the state. Second, associations develop capacities that support democracy. Third, they may serve as alternative forms of governance, so much so that they carry out tasks that would otherwise fall to the state (de Tocqueville 1969; Gellner 1994). This paper underscores these philosophical ideas from de Tocqueville since they are the foundations for our contemporary expectations of civil society as sources of accountability, capacity-building, and even service delivery.

Another catalyst to the revival of civil society has been the wave of transition of some 30 or more countries away from authoritarian rule from 1979 until 1992. This ‘wave of democratization’, stemming from the crises which befell authoritarian states, was largely propelled by civil society (O’Donnell et al. 1986; Huntington 1993). These dramatic episodes of civil society mobilization evoked the romance, excitement, and heady possibilities of democracy’s third wave more than the image of civil societies mobilizing peacefully to resist, discredit, and ultimately overturn authoritarian rule. Similar waves of civil society-led political change were also seen in the post-communist revolutions in Europe, colored uprisings in central Asia, and the Arab Spring (McFaul 2002; Laverty 2008; Moghadam 2013).

The ability of civil societies to check state power, complement its governance functions, and evoke popular empowerment and participation made civil society an attractive idea to discourses focusing on democratization, good governance, and sustainable development. It eventually became the ‘darling of donors’ as well as an imperative to include in decision-making at the domestic and international arena (Carothers and Ottaway 2000; Kaldor 2003). The consensus seemed to be that putting civil society into most political processes is generally a good idea.

Civil society’s contributions to democratic accountability also transcended state borders with the rise of global civil society. Global institutions such as the UN and the World Bank, and regional organizations such as the European Union, were quick to accept that civil society inputs can in some instances increase global governance accountability to disadvantaged and marginalized circles, including countries of the global south, impoverished people, women, and other social groups that experience silencing and exclusion (Scholte 2011). But at the same time, many scholars admit that there are limitations to the extent to which civil society can contribute to democratic goals such as accountability and representation. For example, access to these global actors is difficult, CSOs might not be equipped to engage these actors in terms of highly technical language and knowledge requirements, and civil society might not even be unified to mount a coherent collective strategy, that could result in unintended consequences detrimental to democratic accountability (Lang 2012).

Aside from the liberal tradition, theorizing on civil society also received significant attention from critical theory that espouses a more radical perspective. Basically, it criticizes the assumption that civil society is automatically inclusive, given the unequal distribution of resources that shape the contours of civil society itself. Moreover, while liberal theories view civil society basically as a facilitator to reduce the burden of governance, a mechanism to release tension between competing interests, and as a check on state power, this critical approach takes the view that civil society could transform the state and could be an instrument that could correct the imbalances of the state. For example, Cohen and Arato suggested that civil society has the dual function of offering a vision of a more participatory system and engaging in the public sphere to promote change (Baker 2003).

This plural and dynamic diversity of civil society that represents different orientations, ideologies, and even visions conform to an alternative theoretical view of civil society inspired by neo-Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci. He believed that civil society is more an arena of contending social groups where a hegemonic bloc emerges, often carrying out the dominant ideology at a certain juncture. This ‘healthy’ contestation within the disparate social groups within civil society allows differences to challenge existing orthodoxies (Edwards 2009).

At the same time, a civil society that is ontologically an arena for competing discourses, rather than an actor, means there is no automatic relationship between civil society and reformism. This view holds that constituent concepts such as respect for rule of law, civility, and inclusivity are not inherent in civil society, and greatly varies depending on the groups struggling for dominance. What is important in this view is the voluntary pursuit of collective interests by organizations distinct from the state (White 2004). This conceptualization focuses less on the actual goals and behavioral dispositions of civil society, which are treated as variables rather than givens.

There was increasing attraction to alternative perspectives given the hegemonic view of civil society derived from the liberal tradition. One critique is the instrumentalist view accorded by liberals to civil society as a legitimizing agent of the state. According to democratic theorists, civil society’s legitimization is only valid if the state itself is viewed as a legitimate power by society. This might be assumed in Western societies but is highly problematic in the Global South. Thus, the statist bias in the liberal tradition obfuscates the power of civil society. This critique was further extended with the rise of global civil society, as the international arena is not necessarily just a state writ large, given the absence of a world government (Cohen and Arato 1992).

A second critique of the radical perspective is the delimiting nature of the liberal tradition to identify acceptable forms of civil society to ones that are acceptable to the democratic state. The rise of the ‘uncivil society’ literature points to this bias, especially for more militant CSOs such as social movements, as they are supposed to undergo a process of demobilization after ‘transition’ and for the routinization of politics in the state (Rumford 2001). Putting qualifications of appropriateness onto civil society not only diminishes its plurality and diversity, but also calls into question the democratic credentials of a state that is supposed to be committed to democracy (Bernhard and Branco 2017).

This paper benefits from both liberal and radical or critical perspectives on civil society, as it expands the repertoire of understanding beyond the typical notion that civil society is a political actor that plays secondary roles to states and international institutions. As this paper also envisions civil society as a space for discourses, it is necessary to recognize the power of civil society for reflexivity.

When it comes to critical competence in discursive contests in the world system, civil society actors have one important advantage over states and corporations, which is their greater freedom to act on a reflexive basis. Reflexivity here means the ability to contemplate the constellation of discourses operative on a particular issue and to figure out how any action will affect that constellation. States are heavily constrained by their imperatives to ensure their own security, maintain legitimacy in the eyes of their own populations, and maximize economic growth (Dryzek 2012: 115).

This section provided a brief historical overview of civil society from the political science literature, particularly tapping into research in democratization and global governance. To recap, it observed the dominance of liberal theories that see civil society as an actor that limits the power of states and intergovernmental organizations as well as providing legitimacy to decision-making processes. However, mainly relying on such an approach prevents the recognition of the power asymmetry between states and civil societies, the neglect of the diversity of civil society and the struggles within this sphere of social action, and the reflexive ability of civil society to reimagine democracy, accountability, and representation as espoused by critical or radical theories. Thus, this paper utilizes the mainstream liberal approach as well as the alternative radical view of civil society in its analysis of how CSOs could influence SSG/R processes and in turn, meet the targets of SDG-16.

b. Principles and goals of SSG/R

SSG pertains to the application of good governance in the management, provision, and oversight of a state’s security sector with the view of imbibing principles of accountability, transparency, gender equality, rule of law, public participation, and responsiveness as well as conventional requirements for effectiveness and efficiency. This stems from an understanding that in illiberal or non-democratic contexts, the security and justice sectors—due to issues such as impunity, lack of professionalism, and politicization—may themselves be the sources of conflict, violence, and everyday insecurity for citizens. Meanwhile, SSR is the way by which good SSG could be achieved by targeting parts of or the entirety of the security sector (e.g., the justice system, police, military, intelligence) through a process of political and technical reforms, whereby actors and institutions are made to operate in a manner consistent with democratic norms and good governance principles, to reduce the overall risk of conflict, improve human security, and lead to a secure environment that fosters sustainable development (OECD 2005; Ansorg and Gordon 2019). SSR is a multi-sectoral endeavor that involves state and non-state actors and covers a wide range of activities including legislation, policymaking, information and education campaigns, capacity-building, and training to ensure that a country’s security sector is managed within a framework of democratic civilian control, human rights adherence, and rule of law.

According to Sedra (2010), the innovation of SSR over conventional security assistance is its theoretical fidelity to good governance or standards by which the security sector is held to account. This

means that there is a shift away from the mere provision of material resources and other capability requirements of security forces, and a concerted effort toward reforms related to the management, monitoring, and mechanisms of accountability by security actors. Burt adds that this ideal set SSR apart from conventional security assistance during the Cold War (Burt 2016). The implementation of SSR has traditionally been strongest in the context of democratization where the conceptual focus is not merely on *creating* institutions that can provide security for citizens—as even many authoritarian regimes already have the basic capabilities—but to ensure that these state institutions *operate* according to liberal-democratic standards. In effect, SSR is closely wedded to the broader state-building agenda because it stitches together state power with the need for legitimacy and endorses norms of what forms of state behavior are acceptable and not acceptable.

At a programmatic level, SSR can be summed up in terms of objectives, areas of concerns, and dimensions of reform listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Objectives, Areas of Concern, Dimensions, and Approaches to SSR.

Objective	Area of Concern	Dimension	Approach
1. Establishment of effective governance, accountability, and oversight structures in the security system 2. Improved delivery of security and justice services 3. Development of local leadership and ownership of the reform process 4. Sustainability of justice and security service delivery	<p>Control: civilian and democratic control over instruments of lethal force, adherence to rule of law, transparency, and financial management, building capacity to scrutinize defense policy and building an epistemic community for defense, training forces with requirements of democratic society in mind.</p> <p>Capacity: development of professional security forces and institutions able to carry out functions in an effective, efficient, and legitimate manner.</p> <p>Cooperation: reorienting organizations and promoting confidence and collaboration vertically (checks and balance) and horizontally within the state, and in collaboration with civil society, international development partners, and other stakeholders.</p>	<p>Political: promotion of civilian oversight (state and civil society) over the security sector and a healthy state of civil-military relations whereby security policies, priorities, and actions are made in accordance with legitimate and legal authority.</p> <p>Economic: efficient allocation of appropriate human, financial, and material resources.</p> <p>Social: achievement of outcomes in terms of security in life and property of citizens.</p> <p>Institutional: organizational elements of reform relating to the structure of security forces, functional differentiation, and definition of tasks, among others.</p>	<p>Orthodox: comprehensive reform across the entire security sector involving majority of areas of concern and dimensions of reform around all orthodox SSR objectives, with the medium- to long-term goal of building a liberal-democratic security sector.</p> <p>Stabilization: provision of a strategic breathing room in a country. Involves basic security, suppression of spoilers, and engagement of locals to undertake SSR. Mostly revolves around establishment of civilian oversight, transitional security forces, and dialogue and sensitization programs.</p> <p>Train and Build: focus on provision of capability-oriented security assistance without emphasis or urgency on accountability and governance aspects of the SSR package. Some degree of norm-institutionalization is embedded in training programs, but not as part of the overall strategic effort. Most associated with individual SSR projects.</p>

Source: Author's framework, with elements adopted from Wulf (2011) and Detzner (2017).

SSG/R aims for both efficiency and procedural compliance to democratic oversight, as well as local ownership of the reform process to ensure it is sustained and delivered. As a derivative of this, SSR's goals can be divided into four categories. Firstly, civilian control over state institutions and actors to ensure democratic accountability is the defining normative standard of SSR, and thus the strategic goal of relevant programs. Secondly, SSR programs seek to improve the delivery of security and justice services, and introduce ancillary principles such as inclusiveness, access, and responsiveness in the performance of these functions. Thirdly, SSR also fosters local champions within the state and within civil society and maximizes local ownership of the reform process. Finally, in doing the above-mentioned goals, SSR also makes justice and security reform sustainable.

These four goals are typically achieved in three programmatic areas or lines of effort, which focus on the democratic *control* and oversight of security institutions, *capacitation*—or the development of professional security forces that carry out functions in an efficient, effective, and legitimate manner—, and institutionalizing platforms and policies for *collaboration* and inclusive governance. The 'theory of change' inherent in SSR is to build an effective and accountable security sector revolving around capacity development of security forces, the inclusion of and engagement of stakeholders in dialogues and decision-making, and the reform of security sector attitudes, behavior, and systems (Chikwanha 2021).

These goals are wide-ranging and tackle a broad range of politically sensitive issues such as a country's intelligence services, parliamentary oversight over security actors, judicial and penal reform, and even doctrinal matters relating to operating procedures of security forces. Consequently, these reforms are undertaken across multiple dimensions, including in the political, economic, social, and institutional domains. For instance, the restructuring of organizational elements within the security sector in the context of democratization also historically coincided with economic structural adjustment, where economic liberalization brought forth serious discussions about maintaining fiscal balance between 'guns and butter'—money spent on security is one tax dollar less for other development initiatives.

First, the conventional approach refers to the extent and way by which a country undertakes the mix of objectives, areas of concerns, and diversity in policy tools to cover various reform dimensions. Orthodox SSR, which some have noted to be the 'first generation SSR,' refers to conventional SSR that focuses on the normative agenda of good governance, rule of law, human rights protection, and civilian control, as reflected in key documents such as the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1713 in 2005, the OECD DAC Guidelines, and the 2008 UN Secretary-General's report on the role of the UN in SSR.

The second approach is a stabilization approach—often in fragile environments—where external actors come to directly provide security themselves to provide the local authorities with strategic breathing room. In this approach, SSR is more attuned to long-term local capacitation and engagement to provide basic security, suppress spoilers, and sustain stakeholder interest. Aspects such as democratization and oversight come much later since unlike orthodox SSR, stabilization requires much more than reorienting security forces to conform to constitutional and internal standards of legality, transparency, and accountability, but creating them in places where they do not exist or are not functional.

A third approach is what is described as the 'train and build approach' which focuses on capability-oriented security assistance, which has been criticized for subordinating the democratic and rights-promoting aspects of SSR and instead underscoring only those related to technical exercises, training, and acquisitions of equipment. This third approach arguably does not meet SSR as a concept, although many studies have observed that there has been a tendency to put together uncoordinated and otherwise traditional security programs as part of an otherwise non-existent SSR agenda at the country level (Sedra 2010). Other studies have pointed to the fact that

states that insist on national sovereignty ‘pick and choose’ only the technical components of SSR because these capacity-oriented reforms are relatively uncontroversial and do not necessarily disturb local power relations, unlike normative commitments to human rights, for example. As such, there is a tendency to go back to a train and build approach because democratic norms and state-society relations are harder to configure than the training and capacity-building of security and justice institutions.

The literature on how SSR is *practiced* generally observes that SSR has ‘rarely been implemented in its comprehensive form’ (Jackson 2018: 2). Consequently, this means that there is a need to analyze the broader approach taken by authorities in a country, based on how they implement their respective SSR program with respect to what dimensions, goals, and areas of concern are prioritized. Some have pointed out that SSG/R programming tended to privilege the technical nature of capacity-building of state security and justice agencies—which tended to dilute SSG/R as a form of traditional security assistance, bereft of the normative aspects that made it significant to begin with (Jackson 2018). This was due to a host of factors such as the short time-frame of donors that needed quick fixes, the huge financial cost of implementing comprehensive SSR, the unpalatability of SSR to entrenched elite interests in countries where democratization or liberalization were at the early stages, or even the very difficult task of implementing SSR goals in countries transitioning from authoritarian to democratic rule, wherein success would depend not just on SSR as a framework but on how local actors finessed its execution even against possible spoilers (Detzner 2017).

There have been calls for a second generation of SSG/R to be ‘context-appropriate, locally rooted, flexible and long-term approaches that could transform the governance of security institutions and change state-society relations’ (Baranyi 2019: 2). Sedra wrote that ‘contemporary reform contexts are just too messy and volatile to neatly apply normative frameworks. The problem is that attempting to do so in a clumsy and overbearing fashion can provoke a backlash among local actors, and not only set back reform processes, but do harm, something we have seen time and time again’ (Sedra 2010). At the policy level, this has split practitioners between those who call for boldness and more rigorous implementation of SSR’s transformative liberal-democratic elements, while others who support a post-liberal approach present the case for caution and pragmatism as to the implementation of mainstream principles (Jackson 2018).

Several reports under DCAF have attempted to unpack how to bridge the gap between theory and practice, by looking at different approaches under hybrid second-generation SSR which still retains many of the features of first-generation approaches but have expanded to also include non-state actors, traditional judicial and security mechanisms, and the long-term process of change (Piché 2017; Bangura 2017). Others observe, however, that by and large, second-generation SSR remains state-centric, capacity-oriented, and non-transformative (Sedra 2010).

b.1. SSG/R and development

The conceptual shift from traditional security assistance to SSG/R and from economic development to sustainable and human development is undergirded by the problematization of what and for whom the nature of security and development is. In development studies and practice, there was a marked transition away from growth, economism, and output measurements toward the appreciation of the need for quality of life and richness of human experience. In contemporary development literature, the concept of human development was eventually replaced by ‘sustainable development’ given the understanding that environmental and temporal factors are also at play, aside from human and economic factors, in trying to meet needs of present and future generations. Sustainable development essentially broadened the understanding of development from economic and state-centric concepts such as Gross Domestic Product or Per Capita

Income toward multidimensional individual and systemic levels of well-being. This reorientation also occurred in the security and justice sectors, which had seen a paradigm shift; where there had been a prioritization of territorial integrity, political stability, and security forces' efficacy in state-centered constructs of security, human security put the concerns of ordinary people in the limelight and the tangible effects of security on their daily lives. This brought attention to security issues that emanate from the state and its shortcomings, such as underdevelopment, unlawful detention, lack of civilian protection, and so on (Wulf 2011).

Some attribute the emergence of SSR as a brainchild of the development donors that realized it was difficult to implement development assistance efficiently and effectively in conflict-torn societies or worse, fragile states, because vertical and horizontal forms of violence seriously derail human development. Between the 1960s and 1980s, designers of development policy realized that it was faulty to assume that economic development would lead to peace in the Global South, which was then beset primarily by the twin problems of underdevelopment and political instability that led to civil strife and violent political changes. The security sector, if 'factionalized, wrong-sized, dictatorial, [and] non-professional' may itself be the source of insecurity and the tool of national elites to plunder, control, and coerce society to serve vested interests; at the same time, the security sector is the inescapable partner that must be reformed to establish peace (Chanaa 2002). As a concept, SSR has its roots in efforts by developed Western countries in the 1990s to consolidate the link between security and transitional and post-conflict development, through program-based interventions specifically targeting the management, oversight, and operation of security and justice institutions. The overall role of SSR is to provide an enabling and mutually constitutive environment within which sustainable development can take place (OECD 2005).

As a program, SSR can rightfully be characterized as 'donor-driven' in that the many European countries provided the impetus and resources for its adoption worldwide. The United Kingdom, for example, has helped shape the development of strategic thought and donor frameworks through the Global Conflict Prevention Tool and its programs for conflict-affected countries, shaping much of SSR thinking (Ball in Sedra 2010). In addition to this, SSR is not merely a value-neutral technical assistance or development program, but one that is laden with a decidedly liberal disposition and interest as to how security and justice sectors ought to be managed; undoubtedly, the normative requirements of SSR as a framework are tied to the development experience of the West, hence the emphasis on parliamentary oversight, human rights, and inclusivity, among others. Some scholars and practitioners have cautioned against this imposing tendency of donor agencies of developed countries and international organizations (Wulf 2011). At a more conceptual level, Ejodus (2018) argues that liberal-leaning interventionist development policies at the end of the Cold War reflected the civilizing mission ethos of the West to engineer liberal transformation elsewhere in the world, believing that structural adjustments designed to mimic its institutions would lead to the same outcomes. At the same time, it has been pointed out that the willingness of state and non-state actors in the Global South to partner with international donors for SSR indicates strong local interest in concepts of transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness as part of the broader goal to meld security with justice (Ball in Sedra 2010).

It must also be stressed that it is the poor and other marginalized groups (e.g., women and children) that are often the victims of an ineffective, unaccountable, and abusive security sector. If not by the security apparatus of government, these 'vulnerable' groups are susceptible to violence and insecurity perpetrated by non-statutory forces such as gangs, criminal syndicates, and private militias. The unbroken cycle of violence precludes individuals from benefitting from broader development processes and predisposes them to resort to violence to pursue their interests.

SSR also is associated with development as it ensures that the resources given to the security sector are in proportion to the security conditions of the country. Through 'right-sizing'

the security sector, any excess in the resources could be transferred in implementing the other tasks of government such as the provision of socioeconomic services and poverty reduction programs.

b.2. SSG/R and democratization

Traditionally, security and democracy do not go together. As reflected in the debates found in political philosophy, freedoms or rights associated with democracy are often sacrificed at the altar of the state's defense of civil peace. To a great extent, the hallmark of security institutions such as the military has been its lack of transparency and openness to input from other actors. Though a public good, security has always been a policy area where there has been limited participation from other actors.

The then United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan highlighted the linkage between SSR and democratic governance when he noted that the security sector 'should be subject to the same standards of efficiency, equity, and accountability as any other service' (Hänggi 2004: 9). It is also acknowledged that a democratically run and accountable, effective, and efficient security sector is vital in promoting political stability. It has been recognized that the armed forces by nature are the ultimate expression of the important role of coercion in governance (Alagappa 2001). The absence or lack of democratic civilian control and professionalism constitutes a serious challenge for most consolidating democracies. In the end, the successful implementation of SSR could quell any threats to the democratic order and help ensure that democracy will be 'the only game in town.'

As mentioned in the previous sections, SSR's conceptual anchor is democratization and good governance; SSR is not merely about post-conflict stabilization but is a large component of the broader political transition of a country away from authoritarian rule. An unaccountable security sector is itself a risk to democratic reform, which is why SSR forms part of the reconfiguration of civil-military and state-society relations (Ginifer 2006). SSR has been a framework to engage and coordinate defense and democratic reforms in post-communist Europe (Hänggi 2004). The most illustrative case of how SSR is linked with democratization has been the conditions demanded by regional organizations such as the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), National Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU), and the Council of Europe of countries that are seeking membership. As part of their 'new defense diplomacy,' they have made programs and initiatives associated with SSR as strict criteria for post-communist countries to qualify for membership. These requirements consist of imposing democratic civilian control to include the judiciary, police, and parliament.

From the experience of democratizing societies, it is no guarantee that security will improve in the post-authoritarian period. On the contrary, it has been observed that authoritarianism's propensity to use repression has swept all unresolved issues 'under the rug' such that most democratic transitions have always featured episodes of armed conflict. Furthermore, Luckham also argued that the rude awakenings from the failure to meet expectations and demands in the post-transition period also could stoke political violence (Luckham 2003).

From the perspective of good governance, the security sector comprises a substantial portion of any government which often has tremendous resource endowments. Thus, the potential for any misallocation could be a great source of poor governance or malgovernance (Fitz-Gerald 2003). Even if one assumes that a country's security sector is democratically governed and lacks the propensity to seize state power, SSR also is important in socializing civilian politicians not to make any attempts to draw the armed forces, for example, to partisan politics and disrupt democratic processes (Edmunds 2004).

b.3. SSG/R and peacebuilding

Perhaps the more relevant and immediate context of SSR in conflict-torn societies is its contribution to peacebuilding and human security. The lack of recognition or low regard of the impact of SSR on peace processes has been one of the major causes of the resilience of armed internal conflict and 'unpeace.' Many have blamed the security sector as responsible for being the source of conflict and key obstacle to peacebuilding. First, it is an established fact that it is precisely the security forces which are at the forefront of dealing with armed insurrection and secessionist movements. They assume the 'face' of government in these conflict-ridden areas. Thus, an unprofessional security sector not subject to democratic oversight could not only increase their tendency to commit violations of human rights and international humanitarian law but could also be ineffective in the performance of their responsibilities. Misbehaving members of the armed forces could negatively affect the level of confidence or trust of the people in the government and may have dire implications for its political legitimacy.

Second, the implementation of any final settlement or resolution between the involved parties in the conflict would require the involvement and cooperation of the security sector (Greene 2003). In this regard, SSR can have a great impact on peace negotiations, as well as the final resolution and settlement of internal conflicts. A report by the UN Secretary-General notes that the 'failure to address the requirements of effective and accountable security [during peace process] can sow the seeds for future conflict' and further calls to establish a coherent approach to security reform by developing an international consensus on principles and practice for such (UNSG: 2013: 9). A study by DCAF found that between 2000 and 2015, most conflicts featured peace agreements that addressed components of SSR such as police, defense, and justice reform, albeit only a few comprehensively tackling all four SSR components, which include intelligence reform (Linke 2020).

Third, SSR not only concerns itself with the improvement of the security forces but includes the development of strong, coherent, and responsive civilian institutions. They do not merely perform democratic oversight functions but are the ones that will be responsible for most of the tasks in post-conflict peacebuilding. For example, activities related to poverty reduction, infrastructure development, and conflict resolution are often in the hands of government and possibly CSOs. This forms a significant part of addressing some of 'the roots of conflict' in which the government plays a very crucial role. SSR could also pave the way in the institutionalization of effective conflict resolution mechanisms to prevent any future conflict from erupting into violence. Thus, the strengthening of civilian agencies with functions related to SSR will be crucial in avoiding the return to conflict in the pacified areas of the country.

The current discourses on human security continue to put a premium on the role of the security sector. What has been challenged by the concept of human security is the replacement of the focus of security from the state to the individual. SSR is not at all contradictory to human security as it reorients the role of the armed forces, police, and intelligence bodies to protect the individual from threats of violence, although the concept of human security more broadly tackles chronic threats such as hunger, disease, and disruptions to daily life such as climate change (Dursun-Özkanca 2021).

Moreover, one of the most important goals of reforming security is that it may provide security for the people in an efficient and effective manner while being consistent with democracy and human rights. As already mentioned, this change was influenced by two trends felt mostly in the Global South. One is the failure of the state to guarantee the security of the people due to incompetence, inadequate resources, and poor capacity. Outbreaks of violence and order are often caused by the inability of the security sector to adequately perform their functions (Huntington 1968). Another is the fact that the security sector itself becomes the perpetrator of violence, criminality, conflict, and violations of human rights. This is common especially in countries where

the armed forces and the police become instruments of the survival of authoritarian regimes (Greitens 2016). The extreme case is that the state and the security sector become indistinguishable, with force becoming the ultimate means to secure regime legitimacy and stability.

Given this, SSR focuses on contributing to the strategy of ‘protection’ more than ‘empowerment.’ It may also be dangerous that SSR completely adheres to the concept of human security, as it may have implications on the role and mandate of the security sector in the performance of functions related to the other aspects of an individual’s security. An expanded definition of security containing aspects that go beyond physical security may mean that the core security forces ‘dip their toes into’ nontraditional areas beyond their original or intended mission and far from their training and expertise.

While SSR is inextricably linked to these tasks, it departs from the orthodox distinctions made between security, democracy, and development by integrating defense reform, police reform, intelligence reform, justice reform, legislative reform, etc. Seen as separate efforts in the past, SSR is the framework that could coordinate all these initiatives and programs into a cohesive whole. Its integrative approach and ability to group all these tasks under one roof is the source of its appeal (Forman 2006). Thus, SSR is a comprehensive process to be implemented by a multitude of institutions within the state and civil society through a series of coordinated actions and programs.

b.4. SSG/R, civil society, and local ownership

Civil society looms large in SSG. SSR ontologically looks at civil society as a positive element in ensuring accountability and responsiveness by state security forces. SSR projects are usually undertaken in post-authoritarian, weak state settings where the primary challenge of aligning security governance with broader attempts to democratize a society stems from the structural exclusion of citizens and stakeholders in formal decision-making processes. Communities are inevitable stakeholders in SSR because the endeavor revolves around reconfiguring state-society relations, as post-conflict states move away from histories that often involve systemic abuse, human rights violations, and political dominance of security forces over civilians (see Ginifer 2006 for case studies).

Corollary to this is the key objective in SSR to ensure local ownership of the reform process, consistent with the general acknowledgment that peacebuilding and reform can only be successful if it is inclusive. However, reviews of SSR in the past two decades indicate a significant gap between theory and practice. In the cases of Kosovo, Timor-Leste, Iraq, and Somalia, ‘often local ownership is reduced to consultation, engagement after key decisions have been made, and involvement of only a few like-minded, state-level members of the security and political elite who accept the decisions reached previously by external actors’ (Gordon 2014: 129). Mainstream evaluations of SSR see the main problem as an implementation deficit, with lack of ownership caused by the lack of bottom-up approaches, meaningful partnerships with CSOs, and sidelining of other informal security providers who are often substitutes to government service-providers in weak-state contexts (Homel & Masson 2016). This partnership is only possible if there is a values alignment between members of the security forces, political leaders, and civil society. This means that they all share the principles of good SSG. This does not mean that civil society is totally a singular actor in SSR efforts as their diversity is also important. However, groups within civil society must engage SSR with an agreement on its end goals aligned with good governance, democracy, human rights, and other principles. The next chapter discusses this important endogenous factor within civil society.

With the crisis of confidence in international development policy by the end of the 1990s due to social upheaval caused by economic structural adjustment on the one hand, and a general inability to externally catalyze state-building in the Global South on the other, the principle of ‘local

ownership' was endorsed in development policy more broadly and in SSR more specifically. Thus, it has already been considered that local will or commitment to SSR is deemed necessary before external intervention or assistance can be provided (Lottholz 2020). Under the Paris Declaration, local ownership by recipient states is one of the five main pillars of development aid effectiveness and is understood as beginning from the design phase of SSR interventions (Eickhoff 2021).

Donais (2018) summarizes that in SSR, the concept of local ownership is not just at the national level—between the recipient government and the donor—but also between the national government and people, a logic which is constant throughout the broader development and peace-building fields. This thinking has prompted the design and implementation of SSR projects to focus on inclusion, representation, and dialogues at the vertical (state-society) and horizontal (inter-society, intra-governmental) levels to maximize buy-in, and to allow societies undergoing SSR to strategize for themselves how to implement the international principles inherent in SSR in a manner consistent with local laws and public demand. In other words, if SSR is to be effective, it must be inclusive. Nathan argues that local ownership in SSR donor frameworks has evolved toward preliminary assessments on whether there is local interest in SSR and how development aid may support them, rather than thinking directly of how to execute SSR in each country (Nathan 2007).

Outside of SSR literature, however, praxis-oriented studies point to more fundamental questions about civil society and other local actors in relation to security aid policy, and consequently, more guarded perceptions of its role in political transitions. Detzner observed that there is no consensus in SSR on how to engage local actors, as many can be corrupt or use traditional practices as shields against reform (Detzner 2017). On the one hand, there is a valid point that local ownership may be reduced to token consultation or the gathering of like-minded groups and representatives if strategic frameworks and the defining principles of SSR itself are fixed by external actors and donors (Baker 2010; Krogstad 2013). To what extent can the negotiation of SSR's defining principles accommodate local views, especially those that differ from its liberal paradigm? Indeed, there has been a discussion within second-generation SSR literature about whether SSR can become truly 'post-liberal,' and whether such an approach would sacrifice the transformative vision at the expense of expediency (Sedra 2010).

In addition to this, the involvement of civil society actors presents additional complexities which, if not considered, may damage the efficacy of SSR processes and related outcomes. At a conceptual level, SSR already includes first-order norms on what it is supposed to be, namely civilian control over the military, human rights protection, and security capacity-building. Development partners from CSOs operating largely in line with international SSG principles may either not be present or may be politically marginalized in such conflict-affected contexts. Consequently, engagement of a genuinely representative cross-section of civil society opens doors for contestation of first-order principles of SSR as well as the potential for more civil conflict. In this sense, civil society is not merely an oversight actor that implements SSR. Its very involvement provides for its role as a space for new discourses that differ from or may even conflict with traditional SSR. Thus, the variation in SSR outcomes is often the function of civil society's relationship with security providers. For civil society, existing studies point to the importance of maintaining cordial relations with security actors in generating success in reform efforts (Henderson 2011).

While still supportive of general CSO involvement, Gordon (2014) nuances the argument by holding that community-based structures and mechanisms are not necessarily more legitimate, accountable, or inclusive just because they are bodies at the community level. Power asymmetries are present in many post-conflict societies, and the distribution of CSOs represents existing power relations, e.g., reflecting adversarial identity-based or political groupings, or the marginalization of groups without dense networks, thought leaders, or key champions. This is where regime type and state capacity seem to matter as intermediary factors in determining whether civil society can successfully engage SSR processes. As significant parts of the contextual environment of civil

society in pursuing SSR, these two exogenous factors underscore that different types of regimes and ‘stateness’ of certain countries can affect whether civil society can push for SSR. For example, strong state institutions in transitioning democratic regimes can be conducive factors for civil society involvement in SSR (Scarpello 2014). Conversely, fragile states with weak or almost debilitated institutions can make civil society’s work more difficult (Baker and Scheye 2007). These exogenous factors will be further discussed in the conceptual framework of this paper, as it is vital in unpacking context-specific relationships of civil society with SSR.

Some have argued that the disregard for case-to-case basis nuanced analysis of the actual state of civil society runs the risk of romanticizing civil society, without thinking of the downstream consequences of how exactly civil society shapes security governance (Uddin 2009). Caparini (in Sedra 2010) argued that even while CSOs are valued for voice, accountability, and participation, there is an unspoken assumption of the types of CSOs often engaged by state agencies and international donors, such as those that speak the development work language of logical frameworks and monitoring and evaluation. Wardak, Zama, and Nawabi (2007) point out for example that local religious and tribal leaders are not usually involved in SSR programs in the Middle East. At a conceptual level, Chanaa (2002) highlighted that there may be no single civil society to deal with, as was learned from UN engagement in the Balkans, and that much of actual reform planning deals with ‘shadow networks’ in civil society, such as communal associations and kinship groups. Some civil society groups have crisscrossing relations with armed actors or can themselves be eventually mobilized for violent claims-making, contentious politics, and even political change. Country case studies of SSR often point out the distrust between state security forces and civil society groups, indicating that police and military concerns against certain threat groups cannot be altogether discounted, nor is it entirely inconsistent with human rights governance (Loden 2007). This discussion emphasizes the effect of the structural composition of civil society within a given country, that while civil society is a diverse social sphere with plural social formations, specific configurations of civil society could have an influence in SSR initiatives. For example, more liberal and democratically oriented civil societies could push for SSR, compared to those whose composition is more diverse (Loada and Moderan 2015).

It is not the case that civil society should always be held suspect as a destabilizing element—as many of the problems that permeate non-state groups are also present in state forces that are unconditionally the object of security reforms. What the above discussion points out, however, is the need to better theorize about civil society in security reform contexts in a way that speaks to ground-level issues, such as fears by security agencies over a potentially destabilizing interface with civil society groups. Central to this debate is the idea of exactly how much participation can and should be allowed, and what type of actors to engage, to ensure that reforms are manageable and eventually successful. Ghimire underscores that while SSR has clear principles, it is severely lacking clear policy-relevant, context-specific pointers about *how* to implement associated programs and projects (Ghimire 2019). In this sense, SSR suffers at one level from the lack of genuine civil society involvement, and at a second level from the very thinness of conceptual thinking about civil society at the policy, programming, and implementation levels. There is a need to go beyond the rather trivial statement that ‘civil society matters.’

c. Civil society and the principles and aims of SDG-16

SDG 16 aims to ‘promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.’ Much like SSG/R, scholars and practitioners have highlighted the advancement of development policy through a holistic approach, understanding that progress in other SDGs cannot be achieved without peace, inclusive justice, and strong institutions (United Nations 2013).

Rather than rally around the concept of democracy which may repel rather than secure buy-in from countries that do not meet criteria for liberal democracy, SDG-16 is framed as a bundle of good governance targets centered around critical concepts of rule of law, anti-corruption, accountability, transparency, and responsiveness. Despite the compromises in its formulation that arguably watered down its ambition, SDG-16 remains a contentious issue especially when applied to non-democratic countries and the Global South. Non-democratic regimes would find little to oppose in targets relating to reduction of violence, terrorism, and crime (Targets 16.1, 16.2, and 16.a as seen in Table 3). However, SDG-16 also involves norm cascade relating to equal access to justice (16.3), reduction of corruption and bribery (16.5), accountable and transparent institutions (16.6), inclusive and representative decision-making (16.7), and public access to information (16.10) that are deeply political processes, especially in political systems where the serious implementation of these principles goes against elite or regime interests, i.e., in contexts where bureaucracies are patrimonial, state organs are predisposed to secrecy, and where corruption is extensive. Like SSG/R, SDG-16—even if limited in its implementation—is an imposition of a standard of appropriate behavior about peace and security aspirations globally which pertain not only to efficiency, but also to procedural correctness (Ivanovic et al., 2018).

For this reason, Kempe (2019) holds that SDG-16 is one of the more innovative aspects of the SDGs because of the focus on building trust, governmental accountability, and peace sustainment—which are mostly declarations of a commitment to the *modus vivendi* rather than the ends of development per se, and these were not in the scope of the antecedent Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is no surprise that SDG-16's formulation was noted to be one of the more contentious aspects of the SDG process. States closely guard security and justice policy, since far-reaching reforms have extensive consequences among political elites, which makes SDG-16 prone to selective implementation, particularly its law-and-order components over its judicial and participatory targets (Nygard 2017).

Table 3: SDG-16 Targets.

16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against and torture of children
16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all
16.4 By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organised crime
16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms
16.6 Develop effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels
16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision making at all levels
16.8 Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance
16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration
16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements
16.a Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime
16.b Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development

Source: UNGA (2015: 25–26).

The specific targets in SDG 16 are unequivocally facilitative of the creation, development, and protection of civil society, specifically in access to justice and information, the demand for accountable institutions, and goals which embed in them fundamental freedoms against violence and torture. At the most fundamental level, SDGs in general begin with a people-centered, results-oriented outlook, which is why civil society looms large in its implementation process. SDG-16 therefore adopts a conventional view of civil society as a form of communicative arena within which preferences can be marshaled, with its role of providing alternative views for the consideration of state actors. Dattler (2016: 20) writes on various roles that can be performed by civil society in the SDGs:

Civil society stakeholders can take on a variety of functions in the implementation process. They can spur government action through persistent advocacy and act as watchdogs holding governments accountable to their commitments. They can advise governments on concrete implementation measures to take, building on their experience on the ground, often working with marginalized communities. Civil society organizations can also directly support implementation through the role they often play in service delivery, including in the area of sexual and reproductive health, and can have an important role in supporting data collection efforts, including on marginalized groups.

Some have noted the inherent limitation to this approach, which treats SDG-16 implementation as ultimately a state-based endeavor where civil society is enlisted insofar as it will help advance the agenda. For example, the Transparency, Accountability, and Participation Network—a global network of non-governmental organizations working on SDG-16 and the 2030 Agenda—has noted two vital points: the first is that governments tend to be the sole evaluators of their own performance since they ultimately control the access by CSOs to the review process, and second is that actual CSO participation in the implementation—the level of commitment needed, defined, and allowed with respect to national jurisdictions—is not properly defined. SOLIDAR (2021) added in its review of CSO and human rights protection under SDG-16 and 17 that there are few legal obligations on the part of the government to involve CSOs in policymaking; the extent of inclusion depends on the style of the executive or comfortability of the political system.

Three insights emerge from a review of observations about civil society participation in SDG-16 implementation. First, SDG-16 dealing with peace, justice, and ‘strong institutions’ is not necessarily a coherent vision, with the actions toward peace and security sometimes proving detrimental to inclusion and broad-based civil society participation. For example, SDG 16a specifically tackles the prevention of violence and combatting of terrorism and crime, which have existing arrangements that have been observed to conflict directly with civil society empowerment—another equally important component of SDG-16. For instance, numerous evaluations of Anti-Money Laundering/Countering Terrorist Financing (AML-CTF) frameworks have emphasized the downstream harms for civic space due to the added administrative burdens for extensive background checks and undemocratic state proscriptions of terrorist designations. While AML-CTF regulations are understandable, such regulations can also become barriers to entry for CSOs in places where building such networks is nascent and highly vulnerable (Ibezim-Ohaeri, n.d.). To be fair, there have been critical reforms by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to ensure an adequate balance between de-risking from potential conduits of terrorist financing and ensuring that such regulations are not weaponized by governments to curtail civil society—as is often the case in non-democratic countries that use CSO registration guidelines against foreign interference as a pretext to deter independent CSO activity (NYU Paris Public Interest Clinic 2021). There is a valid concern that SDG-16 as adopted at the national level is prone to securitization, especially with programs related to preventing and countering violent extremism (CT/PCVE) in

the aftermath of the Global War on Terror. A parallel development worth highlighting is the so-called ‘re-securitization’ of security assistance especially by the United States that poured funding into military arms transfers and capacity-building without a symmetrical focus on human rights obligations due to the need to work with non-democratic states in accosting terrorists. SDG-16 targets have been criticized for being poorly formulated, with the rule of law components eclipsing transparency and public participation in the implementation of SDG-16, which makes the agenda prone to securitization (Lazarus 2020; Ramcharan 2021).

Second, there is still relatively unsophisticated thinking about how to engage civil society in SDG-16 because of the lack of proper conceptualization, leading to poorly fleshed-out implementation strategies. For one thing, CIVICUS (2017a.) found that despite the extensive grassroots mobilizational capacity of political parties, there is little evidence of meaningful engagement with them under the SDGs. In many fragile and conflict-affected contexts, civil society, conventionally understood by Alagappa (2004) as a distinct space for organization by non-state, non-market groups that take civil collective action to influence the state, does not exist. Many community-based organizations that are the most politically influential may be excluded from engagement since they are not ‘civil society’ conventionally understood—and sometimes rightfully so—due to lack of genuine autonomy from political elites and state sponsorship. Sénit (2020) posited that larger, more established CSOs do not view formal processes in the SDG consultations as venues for influence, but rather as epiphenomenal to the influence they already have in prior engagements with government, since most meetings of SDGs took place beyond negotiating sessions.

Consequently, a third critical point is that the inclusiveness of ‘civil society’ itself needs to be thoroughly reviewed to ensure that consultations are value-adding and not tokenistic. Several components of SDG-16 on crime control (16a) and reduction of private violence (16.1 and 16.2) run the risk of easily being securitized by states for strategic-military purposes. While tasks in peacebuilding are still properly in the realm of development work, the background of development professionals working on technical issues such as penal reform or transnational crime are often drawn from military, police, criminal justice, intelligence, and government-insiders. Without careful attention to the balance in perspectives and the professional mix, SDG-16 runs the risk of being dominated by traditional security thinking (Dursun-Özkanca 2021).

Another angle to this is at the level of civil society organizations enveloped by the SDG-16 drive to include CSOs in the well-intentioned goal of inclusive security decision-making. In a review of counterterrorism policy in the Philippines, Arugay et al. (2021) observed that there seemed to be initial signs of harmful ‘instrumentalization’ of civil society not as co-providers but as another tool for program implementation. At the level of governments, National Action Plans tend to utilize state-centric approaches and exclusivist visions for how civil society could be integrated in the CT/PCVE paradigm. Especially in conflicts with substantial international participation, this reinforces the perception that foreign governments are using local peace activists to the detriment of the conflict-vulnerable society. At the level of society, CSOs working on peace and development have also been pressured to align programs with CT/PCVE goals and targets, which has narrowed down the focus of interventions to preventing recruitment and radicalization, rather than the broader gamut of structural issues (e.g., corruption, abuse by state forces) that drive violent extremism (Saferworld 2019).

To be sure, this problem lies not solely with SDG-16 but with the broader international environment for security assistance and development aid. The messy relationship of civil society, private actors, and state forces is part of country-specific development work. In some cases, the insistence of engagement toward certain types of think tank-like CSOs or rights-protection advocacy groups runs the risk of engaging actors that are not genuinely representative of grassroots constituencies (Sénit 2020). In its review of human rights protection in El Salvador, SOLIDAR (2021) found that the value of CSOs and human rights defenders needed to be explained first to the wider public for

these ideas to gain local traction, indicating the public belief that these values are not necessarily universally salient or widely held (SOLIDAR 2021).

Implicit in such treatment of CSOs is the understanding that they are oversight actors, often to the neglect of the fact that they become power brokers in their own right. A critical case is the observation by many international non-governmental organizations that civil society becomes a direct security provider in weak state contexts. For example, in several conflict-affected areas, clans—being cultural units—maintain private security networks that mediate social, economic, and legal disputes among the population (Saferworld 2016). In contexts where neither government nor the armed opposition effectively rule, civil society becomes the main conduit for alternative governance. In Afghanistan, civil society engaged in civilian protection by directly transacting with armed groups. The normalization of relations required establishing credibility, mainly with civil society distancing itself from the state and also taking it upon itself to provide for the defense of their communities.

d. SSG/R, SDG-16, and civil society

Both SSG/R and SDG-16 are results of the gradual reorientation of peace and security concepts in the last three decades toward ‘human security,’ as opposed to conventional regime or state security, and the understanding that the management of peace, justice, and security will require a value-laden transformative agenda rooted in liberal norm-institutionalization, rather than apolitical, capability-oriented technical assistance. Both concepts are linked by the centrality of human security in development planning which looks at human needs in economic, health, environmental, personal, community, and political spheres to privilege threats to average citizens, rather than just to the state (Dursun-Özkanca 2021). Consequently, it expands the focus of security assistance in development and aid policy thinking by drawing attention to non-traditional concerns relating to structural factors, rather than merely direct violence which threatens the survival, livelihood, and dignity of people.

Conceptually, human security embeds the field of security with critical norms about economic, civil, political, and social rights which form the corpus of norms that guide SSG/R and SDG-16, such as inclusiveness, accountability, rule of law, responsiveness, and legitimacy. Some have argued that the expansion of focus in the security-development field toward justice and the subsequent ‘developmentalization’ of security away from traditional state-centric concerns has spurred an ambitious and transformative agenda of democratic state-building (Sedra 2010). As noted in the earlier subsection in SSG/R, material capability-building such as the purchase of equipment and financial support for personnel professionalization is the mainstream understanding of security assistance, prior to the infusion of key development concepts such as transitional justice and grievance mechanisms. Both SDG-16 and SSR—in touching the issue of good governance—follow the liberal peacebuilding approach which seeks partially or wholly to go beyond a ‘train and equip’ status quo by setting sights on the importance of altering power relations, opening policy circles, and formalizing civilian protection concepts in broader security doctrine (Donais 2018). Both SDG-16 and SSR comprise what could be referred to as a norm mainstreaming approach to peacebuilding, with civil society empowerment and inclusion being a common condition. Many studies have covered the extensive efforts of development workers and peace advocates toward increasing the voice of non-state actors in government consultations.

In this sense, SDG-16 and SSR concepts provide the conceptual basis for the inclusion of civil society as an integral component of any peace, justice, and security reform process. In the main, civil society takes on three principal roles in conceptualizing and implementing SDG-16 and SSR projects: (1) an agent of democratic accountability and civilian oversight; (2) a space for new discourses on security and development; and (3) an alternative provider of people-oriented security

(see Section 3B of this paper for a full discussion). Countries and communities substantially differ in their implementation of SDG-16 and SSR principles, which sometimes leads to asymmetries or different foci that affect the overall nature of the reform process.

SSR in general prescribes not only outcomes, but specific organizational forms and key reforms that must be undertaken. As outlined in this paper (see Table 1), at the conceptual level, SSR offers a clear set of areas of concern (civilian control, capacity-building, cooperation) that can each tackle specific ways and means in terms of political, economic, social, and institutional reforms. Strong criticisms levied against SSR involve not the goals or ‘bucket list’ of reforms, but rather the deficits in operational-level implementation. In contrast, while SDG-16 is an analogous set of goals, there is a lack of clear references to political processes and democratic reforms in how targets might be achieved, thereby limiting the set of specific commitments that civil society actors could claim from the state (Zamfir 2020). El Baradei (2020) points out that only 6 of the 23 indicators of SDG-16 targets are considered as Tier I, or those that are conceptually clear, have an established agreed methodology, and were created by many countries around the world. To be sure, some components of SDG-16 on access to information (16.10) and the participation of stakeholders from the Global South in relevant institutions for global governance (16.8) relate clearly to concrete reform programs.

At another level, there is an argument that because security and peace programs have well-defined goals, there is a minimal amount of actual local co-determination in the conceptualization and implementation, especially in strong state, weak society contexts and conflict-affected areas (Bendix and Stanley 2008). Second, both SSR and SDG-16 see civil society as partners in the implementation of its agenda, though there appears to be a lack of dedicated analysis to the concept and how it fits both agenda.

There are some key takeaways from academic and policy studies. First, there is a need to reconcile oftentimes conflicting voices within civil society, who have different security needs and interests. There is a perception among security practitioners that expanding the number of actors involved satisfies inclusivity but also potentially makes programs vulnerable to spoilers (Cubitt 2013). Additionally, as in the case of Indonesia, security forces may themselves enjoy high public trust, which makes efforts for greater transparency and sectoral reform more costly since upsetting power distributions is seen as unwelcoming interference (Heiduk 2014). Recent reviews of the state of civil society around the world note the shrinking democratic space for reasons that go beyond SSR and SDG-16, including the decreasing public belief in democracy, populist attacks against liberal-democratic principles, and sheer opportunism by authoritarian political figures (CIVICUS 2019). Relatedly, the ideological roots and donor concentration for SSR and SDG-16 programs in Western countries are often portrayed by autocrats as a form of foreign influence. Scholars have noted that funding for SSR and SDG-16 projects often comes from developed Western countries who often look quickly for like-minded local partners, and understandably so given the desirability of the rule of law, an accountable security sector, and effective public participation in policy formulation (Sedra 2010). These observations point to the existing dynamic where there is an appearance of foreign sponsorship of specific actors within civil society without the effort to gain broad-based acceptance first.

Another related issue is that CSOs are self-appointed rather than elected. If they are tapped into SSR and SDG-16 projects, this often creates a local perception of an accountability or legitimacy deficit. Compounding this is donor dynamics, since funding and resources are mostly provided to these organizations, where they can be seen as more accountable to advance foreign rather than local agendas, as has been the argument in India, Egypt, Macedonia, and Turkey, among others (Hayes 2017). Authoritarian regimes have been keen to restrict the registration of CSOs under the guise of counter-terrorist financing frameworks and to condition public opinion not only against foreign donors, but against local CSOs that champion democracy and human rights—agendas that often stand in opposition to political leaders.

Second, some have pointed out the danger of integrating the concept of ‘informal security and justice mechanisms’ into SSR and SDG-16, so as not to romanticize engagement with non-state actors, organizations, and even community justice mechanisms—which themselves are not necessarily more inclusive or compliant with human rights principles on the mere basis that they are local organization practices—whilst still calling for the concept of informal security and justice mechanisms to be integrated in mainstream SSR and SDG-16 (Ansorg and Gordon 2019). To compound this, there exists no consensus on how to incorporate local actors who use practices that contravene key SSR and SDG principles—or are themselves corrupt—into broader justice and reform processes. The relationship between non-state and civil society actors with peace and justice initiatives has been argued to be tricky in the absence of a consensus on how to incorporate them in contexts where local actors use traditional practices that contravene key SSR and SDG principles or can themselves be corrupt (Detzner 2017). Rather than a pretext to justify the exclusion of civil society, the more nuanced approach within development and peacebuilding was to identify how and when to engage civil society and groups therein. As Gordon (2014) argues, ‘locals’ do not constitute a homogeneous whole with shared security interests and concerns; conflict-affected areas are precisely marked by deep-seated differences. Critically, these debates about the terms of enlistment of civil society in peacebuilding are absent from mainstream SSG/R/SSR and SDG-16 literature, as well as major policy and donor documents.

Third, in practice civil society sometimes becomes a neutral or third party in conflict zones because it is their independence from the state which affords them some degree of leniency by warring parties, insurgents, or terrorists to negotiate projects such as Civilian Protection Councils that serve as a voice for the community in dealing with armed actors—a function that requires neutrality so as not to instigate reprisal by parties to the conflict or combatant groups (CIVIC 2019). However, this requires civil society to be able to transact with insurgents, risking that they be perceived as insurgent collaborators by the state, as was the case in Afghanistan and Iraq (CIVIC 2019). At the same time, the previously mentioned risk of being instrumentalized by the state as implementers of essentially pro-state security programs such as PCVE could undermine civil society’s credibility among local actors and lead to informant dynamics.