

## CHAPTER I

# Introduction

From its roots in political theory, the concept of civil society has become part of the mainstream discourses of democratization, good governance, sustainable development, and security. Civil society often refers to social organizations and other collective groups pursuing private means for public ends. Given the importance accorded by different political actors at the domestic and international levels to participation, multi-sectoral consultation, and popular empowerment, civil society has been recognized as a catalyst, partner, critic, and even challenger of various security and development paradigms. Civil society organizations (CSO) have been seen as critical partners of states in governance, alternative provider of services and public goods, and important intermediaries between states and societies at large (Carroll and Jarvis 2015).

Over the years, the governance-oriented roles accorded to civil society expanded beyond domestic borders, given an emergent transnational civil society. Networks of CSOs engaged with other actors in global politics such as international organizations, multilateral funding agencies, and non-governmental entities to jointly pursue mutually shared goals such as democratic governance, sustainable development, and human security. The rise of global civil society linked a mélange of social organizations of varying backgrounds and ideologies but sharing a similar vision, principles, and goals. Rather than easily identifiable actors, transnational civil society is a complex network of different entities that rapidly expands and evolves in the world of security and development advocacy, such as those collective entities in global climate change and human rights regimes (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Tarrow 2005).

Civil society engagement with other transnational actors in international politics has resulted in new thinking on how security could be better provided, as well as ways to ensure that development is inclusive, sustainable, and people-oriented (Krause & Jutersonke 2014). For example, civil society actors have made significant efforts to promote Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R) and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 on ‘peace, justice, and strong institutions’.

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two important global projects that directly deal with the interface between security and development. This paper examines the agency of and roles played by civil society within these two reform and change paradigms.

### **a. A roadmap**

This paper has five main sections. After the introductory section, the second chapter provides a literature review covering topics such as civil society, SSG/R, and SDG-16, and recent scholarship that links all three themes. The third chapter presents the analytical framework that comprises the exogenous and endogenous factors that determine the extent to which civil society could influence SSG/R and SDG-16, as well as the three roles performed by CSOs. This is followed by the fourth chapter which is the empirical backbone of this paper. It discusses the three case studies where civil society has performed the roles of being an agent of civilian oversight (Philippines), a site for security discourse (Tunisia), and an alternative provider of security (several fragile and conflict-affected states). This paper concludes by examining the implications of civil society's participation in the future sustainability of SSG/R as a framework and the progress toward the realization of SDG-16 and providing viable policy recommendations for actors at the international, state, and societal levels.

### **b. Security sector governance and reform**

SSG/R is a relatively new addition to existing discourses on democracy, security, peace, and development. The increasing worldwide attention on the importance of institutions belonging to the security sector is due to the vital role that this sector plays in the provision of security for the state and its people, its capacity to support or thwart democratization processes, and its contribution in the pursuit of a lasting peace. Traditionally conceived as including only the armed forces, the concept of the security sector has expanded to include all those (whether statutory or not) that have an impact in the provision of (in) security in each country, such as the police, the intelligence services, paramilitary organizations, militias, and private armed groups, as well as civilian oversight institutions, judicial and penal agencies, and civil society (Hänggi, 2003). SSG/R departs from the traditional preoccupation of defending the state, as the new focus of security is now every human being in society (i.e., human security). As a part of the larger security sector, CSOs are primarily seen as actors who 'engage in research, debate, and advocacy among other activities, and may be critical or supportive of the security services and the government's security policy. Their interest in ensuring high standards of public and state security provision makes them an integral part of the security sector' (DCAF 2015: 5).<sup>1</sup>

Scholars have also observed that with the traditional understanding of security, it is often the state whose dysfunctionality or overt persecution of its own citizens is the cause of insecurity and violence (Ball and Brzoska 2002). In the broadest sense, SSR may pertain to a 'plethora of issues and activities related to the reform of the elements of the public sector charged with the provision of external and internal security' (Hänggi, 2004: 4). SSR seeks a comprehensive and simultaneous transformation of key institutions and groups for them to guarantee the physical security of the people, but in doing so to also respect democratic principles and human rights. One of the most authoritative definitions of SSR came from the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the

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<sup>1</sup> For a brief discussion on civil society and SSR, see also DCAF, "Civil Society: Roles and Responsibilities in Good Security Sector Governance," *SSR Background*, 1 May 2019, <https://www.dcaf.ch/civil-society-roles-and-responsibilities-good-security-sector-governance>.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) which defined it as increasing the country's 'ability to meet the range of security needs within their societies in a manner consistent with democratic norms and sound principles of governance, transparency and the rule of law' (OECD, 2005: 3). The UN Security Council (UNSC) through its President in 2007 stressed that 'reforming the security sector in post-conflict environments is critical to the consolidation of peace and stability, promoting poverty reduction, the rule of law and good governance' (p. 1) leading to Resolution 2151 in 2014, the first time SSR was included in a binding UNSC decision.

While SSR is a process toward a normative goal of effective and accountable security provision, SSG is the result of a successful process of SSR, as security is provided in accordance with the principles of good governance (namely accountability, transparency, rule of law, participation, responsiveness, effectiveness, and efficiency). Good SSG is crucial for broader development processes, as without it, peace and security may be compromised, and with it, the conditions necessary for sustainable development.<sup>2</sup> This paper understands good security sector governance as encompassing three key principles: (1) *Accountability*, which exists when 'there are clear expectations for security provision, and independent authorities oversee whether these expectations are met and impose sanctions if they are not met'; (2) *Transparency*, which refers to a state where 'information is freely available and accessible to those who will be affected by decisions and their implementation'; and (3) *Participation*, which ensures that 'all men and women of all backgrounds have the opportunity to participate in decision-making and service provision on a free, equitable and inclusive basis, either directly or through legitimate representative institutions' (DCAF 2015: 3).

### c. Sustainable development and SDG-16

For the first part of the 21st century, the global development agenda was encapsulated under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)—eight globally agreed goals in critical areas of gender equality and empowerment of women, poverty alleviation, education, child and maternal health, environmental sustainability, reduction of communicable diseases, and cultivating a global development partnership. With the expiration of the MDGs, the UN defined the contours of the Post-2015 Development Agenda through participatory planning centered on consultations and expert panels across member-states and global civil society from 2012 to 2015. A total of seventeen SDGs were designed to build on the MDGs, adopting a more holistic approach to development by including its social, economic, and environmental components. The High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda recommended a specific line to 'build peace and effective, open, and accountable institutions for all,' recognizing that freedom from insecurity, conflict, and violence is a cross-cutting precursor to development (UN 2013: 1). Consequently, peace and good governance were put in the spotlight as an enabling and core element of the new development framework under the SDGs.

The implementation of the MDG framework was often hampered by insecurity, violence, and lack of the rule of law, mainly because of weak institutions (Dursun-Özkanca 2021). The SDGs seek to address this gap by highlighting the importance of 'key security, human rights and rule of law factors that form the basis for development' (UNSG 2013: 6).

SDG 16 on 'peace, justice, and strong institutions' covers peace, access to justice, and the creation of effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions for governance. Since 2015, the two implementation indicators for achieving these targets have revolved around strengthening national institutions to prevent violence and combat crime and terrorism, as well as the promotion and enforcement of non-discriminatory, inclusive laws and policies. Like SSG/R, SDG-16 emphasizes the need for effective *and* accountable institutions, with attention to the participation of civil

<sup>2</sup> The author is grateful to the reviewers for this insight.

society as the end-users and beneficiaries (Zamfir 2020). While there is no complete overlap between SSR principles and SDG-16 targets, this paper focuses on their convergence, namely: (1) Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels (16.6); (2) Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels (16.7); and (3) Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements (16.10) (UN 2013: 1).

#### d. Civil society

The paper adopts the following definition of civil society as:

*all the different kinds of groups that people form around a shared interest or vision of public interest: for example, charities, philanthropic or advocacy associations, clubs, guilds, trade unions, professional organizations, business associations, community or residency groups, indigenous or ethnic interest groups, faith-based organizations, think tanks, NGOs and independent foundations* (DCAF 2019: 2).

There are three important elements present in any member of civil society: public interest, voluntary organization, and nonprofit motives. This means that organizations that claim to be part of civil society pursue goals that directly benefit the society at large, are autonomous from the state, and do not seek to derive economic gain from their activities (DCAF 2019). These organizations represent sectors within society, engage in political activities, resort to collective action such as protests to express collective demands against the state or other governmental entities, and cooperate with other political actors to pursue shared goals. This paper used this broader definition to capture a larger set of societal actors that engage SSG/R and SDG-16 across varying social, political, and economic contexts.

#### e. Roles of civil society in SSR/G and SDG-16

According to DCAF, civil society activities that promote SSG/R include the following: (1) awareness raising; (2) advocacy; (3) monitoring and public oversight; (4) fact-finding, research, and analysis; and (5) service provision (DCAF 2019). These functions help promote principles of good SSG by aiding existing SSR processes. These functions, in turn, could also help realize the targets of SDG-16.

This paper has several objectives. First, it provides a comprehensive review of the involvement and participation of civil society in global discourses on security and development through extant research on SSG/R and SDG-16. It examines recent and authoritative scholarly and policy literature to discuss the ways in which CSOs could help achieve the goals of these two reforms and change paradigms. The second objective is to identify the critical conditions and factors internal and external to civil society that shape their roles regarding SSG/R. This paper accomplishes this by using an analytical framework influenced by existing theories of civil society. Third, this paper seeks to empirically provide in-depth case studies of countries where civil society actors were able to promote SSG/R and by extension, SDG-16. Likewise, the analysis of case studies will also show the limitations of civil society's influence as well as the challenges it faces in contributing to the goals of these two discourses. Finally, this paper provides some policy recommendations for the enhancement of civil society participation in the pursuit of SSG/R and in turn, SDG-16 across several stakeholders such as international organizations, states, governments, and civil societies.

This paper examines the agency and influence of civil society within two paradigms that link security and development: SSG/R and SDG-16. It specifically asks:

- What are the factors that lead civil society to have a significant impact and influence on SSR processes?
- What are the roles played by civil society in promoting SSG/R?
- What are the consequences of civil society's promotion of SSG/R on the targets set by SDG-16?

This paper offers three main arguments. First, it argues that civil society's ability to make significant contributions to SSG/R and therefore SDG-16 rests on the interplay between its endogenous and exogenous factors. The former refers to the size, composition, and diversity of the civil society sphere. On the one hand, *endogenous* or internal factors conform to the structural and value-related aspects of civil society (Anheier 2013). If civil society is more robust, plural, and civil, it is expected to make stronger contributions to the pursuit of SSG/R goals leading to progress toward SDG-16. *Exogenous* factors on the other hand refer to variables that focus on the political context and relational spaces afforded to civil society to be able to carry out its work, such as the type of regime, state capacity, and civil society's relations with security providers. In states that are more democratized, well-capacitated, and open to societal participation, one could expect that CSOs are better able to further the goals of SSG/R and SDG-16. A more elaborate discussion that integrates the paper's other arguments will be discussed in the third chapter of this paper.

Second, the given internal makeup of a particular civil society as well as its external environment influences its ability to perform roles conducive to the objectives of SSG/R and SDG-16. Drawing from the perspective that viewed civil society as an actor, space, and site (Alagappa 2004), this paper proposes that it could potentially perform three major roles, being: (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. These three roles manifest the actorness of civil society in the mutual pursuit of the aims of the two discourses of SSG/R and SDG-16.

This more nuanced approach allows an analysis of civil society as a complex set of diverse actors that engages security providers, formal oversight institutions, and international institutions, among others. It also provides an opportunity to recognize specific types of civil society actors beyond the usual groups such as highly professionalized NGOs, think tanks, and transnational networks. This is in keeping with the debates on civil society drawn from critical theories of governance that now recognize contradictions and dynamic interactions within the public sphere. Rather than be limited to the complementary roles often accorded to civil society in realizing security and development goals, this understanding recognizes the less palpable roles of civil society as a promoter of novel discourses and an alternative provider of more human-centric and accountable security. Thus, the paper's approach to expose other less mainstream roles of civil society opens new avenues for debate, instigates possible policy reforms, and even opens new possibilities for producing solutions for human security, a goal also shared by SSG/R.

Third, the various roles played by civil society in promoting SSG/R could have important consequences for the realization of SDG-16. Specifically, civil society's emphasis on *accountability*, *transparency*, and *participation* in SSG/R have a direct impact on particular SDG-16 targets, namely: (1) Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels (16.6); (2) Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

(16.7); and (3) Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements (16.10).<sup>3</sup>

This paper will integrate these three main arguments into a coherent analytical framework in Chapter 3.

### **f. Scope and methodology**

The scope of the paper is limited to scholarly and policy-relevant literature mainly on SSG/R. Though it will also discuss how civil society's efforts to pursue the aims of SSG/R could have an impact on SDG-16, this paper will not be able to cover all governance processes that are critical for sustainable development. Another limitation concerns the relationship between SSG/R and SDG-16. It could be theorized that there could be a reciprocal causal relationship between the two which means that SSG/R could affect SDG-16 and vice versa. However, given the limitations of the current body of literature so far, this paper will only focus on the impact of SSG/R on the realization of the targets set by SDG-16. Perhaps future research could further examine the extent to which fulfillment of all SDGs could facilitate SSG/R process around the world.

This paper will also utilize the empirical evidence and experiences of countries in the Global South who are normally the recipients of SSG/R-related international assistance. This is to emphasize the importance of unfavorable domestic contexts often faced by states where critical problems of security governance are present. This choice also adheres to the existing scholarly demand to further envisage SSG/R from the viewpoint and voices of societies where local ownership of SSG/R processes remains a challenge (Schroeder et al. 2014; Ansorg and Gordon 2019). Finally, it complements the existing body of literature that often takes the perspective of donors, international institutions, and powerful states (Ansorg 2017; Ebo 2007).

This paper's methodology has two interconnected components. The first is a documentary and literature review of important scholarly and policy-relevant scholarship on civil society, SSG/R, and SDGs in recent years. This review enabled the paper to produce an analytical framework that is appropriate to explain the variation in the roles played by civil society in promoting SSG/R. The second methodological component of this paper is the analysis of several case countries that highlight the various roles of civil society in SSG/R: as an agent of civilian oversight (Philippines), a site for security discourse (Tunisia), and an alternative provider of security (fragile and conflict-affected states such as Somalia). This paper uses different country case studies from the Global South to show the variation in the performance of these roles, the gains achieved by CSOs, and the limitations and challenges posed by their involvement. The logic of case selection is based on a purposive design as these countries illustrate how each role is performed by civil society. Apart from the purposive nature of case selection, there is also a useful variation in the countries' security and development context. The third case study focusing on the alternative security provision role of CSOs comprises not just one country but several conflict-torn countries in Africa. This is the most novel and unanticipated role observed by community organizations. By having means of violence, this might call into question the civil nature of these societal actors. As this is the first opportunity to analyze this emergent role, the paper is limited to discussing whether the provision of security could be a legitimate and acceptable role for CSOs.

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<sup>3</sup> It could be argued that SSG/R could also promote other SDG-16 targets but this paper limits its scope to those targets where civil society could make a significant contribution to their achievement.

**Table 1:** Case Studies.<sup>4</sup>

	<b>Philippines</b>	<b>Tunisia</b>	<b>Somalia</b>
Civil Society Freedom (2021)	Repressed	Obstructed	Repressed
Defense Sector Corruption Risk (2020)	Moderate	High	N/A
SDG Progress (2022)			
Score	66.64	70.69	45.57
Rank	(95/163)	(69/163)	(160/163)

As seen from Table 1, there are differences across the selected case studies concerning some empirical indicators of security and development. For example, the extent of civic space critical for civil society varies from ‘repressed’ in the Philippines and Somalia (as an example of fragile and conflict-affected states) in 2021 to ‘obstructed’ in Tunisia. On the other hand, Tunisia in 2020 had a higher risk of corruption in the defense sector compared to the Philippines. In measuring progress toward meeting SDG targets in 2022, there is also variation across the three countries with Tunisia ranking 69th, while the Philippines belonged to the bottom half of the countries (95/163), and Somalia almost at the bottom of the SDG rankings. These differences are important in comparative analysis since they refer to the endogenous and exogenous factors this paper identified earlier.

This paper extensively uses secondary data sources such as extant scholarly work, policy papers, and government documents that are publicly accessible. While the paper benefitted from the author’s own in-depth research on SSG/R in the Philippines, it mainly relied on secondary and online sources of information for the other sets of cases.

<sup>4</sup> Data collected by the author using various sources such as CIVICUS (<https://monitor.civicus.org/>), Transparency International’s Government Defense Integrity Index (<https://ti-defence.org/gdi/>), and the UN Sustainable Development Report (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/progress-report/>).