CHAPTER V

Conclusions & Policy Recommendations

The concluding chapter summarizes the main arguments and findings of this paper. It also contains several policy recommendations for donors, external actors, states, security sector institutions, and civil society actors.

a. Main findings

This paper discussed the various roles played by civil society and its multiple organizational forms in the pursuit of SSG/R and SDG-16. It argued that civil society has played various roles in promoting SSG/R around the world. While they are often accorded limited and secondary status to states and external actors, CSOs serve important roles in realizing the aims of SSG/R. Civil society's propensity to focus on human security issues and democratic governance issues could serve as a useful intermediary in linking the SSG/R and SDG-16 discourses because of civil society's emphasis on good governance principles such as accountability, transparency, and participation. As both discourses seek to decenter the focus on state and sovereign power, civil society is equipped and willing, and has the legitimacy to pursue the reform of the security sector as well as contribute to the fulfillment of SDGs.

SSG/R and SDG-16 are change-oriented paradigms that are linked by the centrality of human security in development planning by focusing on individual needs in economic, health, environmental, personal, community, and political spheres. Consequently, they expand the focus of security assistance in development and aid policy thinking by drawing attention to non-traditional concerns relating to structural rather than merely direct violence which threatens the survival, livelihood, and dignity of people. Relating SSG/R and SDG-16 reinforces the idea that security and development are intertwined and mutually reinforcing.

This paper argued that civil society's capacity to contribute to SSG/R depends on the interplay between endogenous and exogenous factors. The former refers to civil society's structural composition and value orientation, while the latter concerns the country's particular regime type, its state capacity, and the relationship between civil society and security providers. There is no single factor that determines the success of civil society in promoting SSG/R, but these factors form the environment in which civil society could play an active role in influencing SSG/R initiatives. This paper found that a bigger, diverse, more pluralistic, and democratic civil society has the potential to contribute to SSR. Moreover, a more democratic regime, a well-capacitated state, and cordial relations between civil society and security providers are elements of an external environment conducive to civil society involvement in SSG/R. Each country has a unique combination of factors that are exogenous and endogenous to civil society, and that will impact its SSG/R process and by extension the implementation of SDG-16 targets. This paper argued that successful SSR pursued by civil society could meet a few of the objectives of SDG-16 such as accountability, transparency, and participation. In this case, there is almost a complete overlap between SSG/R and SDG-16. Given that this paper is the first attempt to link civil society's role in SSG/R and SDG-16, there are still unexplored areas between the two that could be done by future research. Such studies could systematically examine the causal relationship between civil society efforts in meeting the objectives of these two discourses of change.

The first role as an agent of oversight and accountability was seen in the case of the Philippines from 2010 to 2016 where CSOs became an agent of democratic accountability and oversight to the country's security providers, particularly the military. The *BB* initiative enabled civil society to become a 'watchdog' by monitoring the implementation of the AFP's main internal security strategy. This was due to civil society's enduring advocacy of good governance and accountability that was consistent with the political leadership's orientation during that time. However, the Philippine case also showed that gains from civil society participation could also be quickly undermined by a new government which not only had disdain for civil society but was also bent on eroding democratic principles. Under Duterte's populist-authoritarian rule, there was a strained state-civil society relationship that not only put a stop to the SSR process but also weakened the ability of the government to meet SDG targets, including those that were relevant to SDG-16.

This paper also examined two other roles played by civil society in SSG/R. Apart from overseeing security forces and institutions, emergent roles put CSOs as an important space for security discourse, especially in countries where SSG/R programming was heavily driven by state actors. This was another new role for civil society, found in fragile states and countries where the security had effectively broken down.

Civil society in Tunisia became an important space for security and development discourses. Its strong CSOs—local activists, unions, non-governmental organizations, media, and the broader public—undoubtedly shifted security discourse to responsible SSG and peacebuilding approaches. To their credit, CSOs kept the democratization process going despite initial roadblocks, not least of which was the infighting between political parties who disagreed over the content of the constitution. CSOs in Tunisia actively brokered the conclusion of the drafting of the new constitution in 2014, but an important aspect to this occurrence was the a priori existence of such networks in the country, as well as the generally manageable security situation in the country. This, in effect, set a baseline and approximate direction from which more security and development reforms would take place, and crowded out other ideas also present in civil society at the time, such as a restoration of status quo. In other words, Tunisian civil society shaped the security-development discourse that would influence more reform initiatives in the country. This, perhaps, was the reason why Tunisia was strides in fulfilling its SDG-16 targets despite still being in a process of political transition. But Tunisia also illustrated the highly contested dynamics within civil society that pointed to the non-automaticity of the linkage between civil society activity and SSR and SDG-16 success. The Tunisian revolution opened space for more radical groups to advocate for public policies that shrank rather than defended democratic space, while many former state employees formed civic associations that blocked SSR.

The case studies for the third role of CSOs which is as an alternative security provider focused on fragile and conflict-affected states such as Somalia. SDG-16 and SSR were particularly difficult to implement in such contexts, primarily because the issue was about the security and power vacuum rather than reorienting security and justice mechanisms that in practice did not frequently reach large segments of the population. Within this environment, civil society's role became heightened—from providing social services to becoming actors that brokered between the state and threat elements. It must be noted that this security provision role was considered as a 'gray zone' for civil society: Firstly, they attempted to normalize relations with armed groups if government presence was too weak to reduce harm and violence to civilians. In some cases, they ceased to become civil society if non-state actors took it upon themselves to provide for the defense of their communities. These exigencies were arguably not sufficiently accounted for in SSR and SDG-16 frameworks which primarily operate on the assumption that civil society takes a more secondary role to the state, such as by joining mechanisms, providing research, or being a watchdog of the government.

Second, they positioned themselves as neutral (e.g., reducing collaboration with government) to avoid retaliatory attacks by armed groups. Third, they crafted agreements in secret for armed groups to not operate in their areas to prevent counterattacks. CSOs became duty-bearers to functions traditionally performed by the state, especially in the administration of justice and provision of security services. In so doing, the expanded role for civil society and other private actors delayed or hampered the emergence of normal Weberian state-society relations. In establishing parallel defense groups, which themselves became heavily armed over time and could become a source violence against civilians, these became 'magnets for violence' and were seen more as a necessary evil rather than an unconditional guarantor of peace. The dilemmas inherent in this role of civil society as an alternative security provider were discussed in this paper, and how they were informed by and affected SDG-16 and SSR. More research is needed in how this role is implemented, given their implications for the integrity of social organizations as civil actors distinct from the state. If CSOs are successful in providing this role, how can this be reconciled with the duty of the state as the main security provider within society? How is this different with the privatization of security carried out by for-profit entities? All these questions limit the paper's ability to effectively evaluate this emergent role. Thus, these sets of findings must not be construed as an approval of this role.

The findings of the case studies must be understood given the paper's limitations of being unable to wholistically analyze the entire set of factors that could explain the ability of CSOs to contribute to SSG/R and by extension, some targets of SDG-16. As the logic of comparison was purposive, it did not control for the comparability of the three case countries. Future research could systematically conduct comparison of case countries that have more similar contexts, and perhaps more comparisons within regions could be done, given their possible similarity in contexts and other explanatory conditions. As this paper is the first of its kind to engage this topic, part of the research agenda in the future would be to investigate more systematically how CSOs perform these three roles and possibly other roles that could contribute to SSG/R and SDG-16.

b. Policy recommendations

This paper provides several policy recommendations for the effective and inclusive engagement of civil society in both SSG/R and SDG-16.

1. For external actors (international institutions and foreign donors)
   a. *Treat civil society as a serious actor in SSG/R and SDG16*. International institutions and foreign donors should view civil society as a serious partner in both change-oriented paradigms. It should not be an afterthought or be invited to provide legitimacy to

existing state or institutional initiatives. This entails continuous involvement, iterative consultations, and meaningful integration of its inputs and contributions to SSG/R and SDG-16. While it may cost more time, resources, and energy, this paper showed that in general, there is always merit in including civil society in the process.

b. *Recognize the diversity and dynamism of civil society.* As governments change, so does the make-up and composition of civil society. International institutions and foreign donors must view civil society not as a monolithic entity and must better account for this reality in the very inception of project frameworks. They could provide the venues to reconcile oftentimes conflicting voices within civil society by establishing consultative mechanisms that are inclusive in nature. There is a perception among security practitioners that expanding the number of actors involved satisfies inclusivity but also potentially makes programs vulnerable to spoilers. This fear, however, must not compromise the principles of inclusive participation that are inherent in both SSG/R and SDG-16.

c. *Integrate SDGs in SSG/R programming.* Given that both SSG/R and the SDGs are frameworks created and/or embraced by the United Nations, there is a need to integrate them in the frameworks of international organizations and the donor community. This paper showed that at the present, there could be more efforts to have clearer and direct linkages between the two discourses of change. The security sector comprises a considerable part of the state apparatus and society. Thus, SDG implementation could truly benefit from successful SSR. International organizations could ask countries to report SSR efforts in SDG implementation. On the other hand, donors supporting SSR could also integrate SDG implementation, especially if they provide support to governments, security forces, and equally important, to CSOs.

d. *Understand the politicized environment of civil society advocacy.* Oftentimes, external actors avoid directly dealing with civil society actors deemed as more political than others, given that some CSOs are engaged in larger political struggles against the state. This 'impartial' stance makes SSG/R and SDG interventions seemingly apolitical and technical. However, it is already established that SSR processes are political in nature. In this regard, being impartial does not mean that external actors are not able to intervene when civil society is being repressed, threatened, and undermined by their governments in the conduct of their SSR activities. This is a sensitive topic that could be further discussed among relevant external actors dealing with SSG/R and SDG interventions in another country. Thus, having a unified, coherent, and common strategy in dealing with civil society is important.

2. For states and security providers

a. *Include civil society in SSG/R assessment and planning.* It is assumed that CSOs are often willing to engage the state in undertaking reforms. However, they should be included not only in the middle of the process or as an afterthought. Civil society participation starts at the beginning of the SSR process, which is the assessment or evaluation phase that is followed by planning the reform process. States should adopt more inclusionary ways to foster civil society participation, including making sure that stakeholders are well represented. An example would be to include civil society in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of meeting the goals of security or defense white papers or plans.

b. *Adopt a consistent reform orientation to maintain trust.* Governments must ensure that SSG/R is not seen as an isolated reform effort detached from other governance reforms. Given that there are very few civil society actors that focus solely on SSG/R, they are also aware if the government is not being consistent in pursuing other reforms

that accomplish similar good governance and SDGs. This unavoidably exposes governments to policy hypocrisy and can erode the trust between the government and civil society. Specifically, the government must be able to impose this reform orientation on security providers such as the military and police. While this could be a challenge given potential imbalances between civilian politicians and armed forces, this is where the government could be aided by civil society in providing legitimacy to reform efforts, despite possible resistance from security providers.

    c. *Engage in continuous and meaningful dialogue with civil society*. This paper emphasized the importance of the relationship between civil society and security providers. The case of *BB* in the Philippines showed that institutionalized mechanisms of consultation and dialogue generate trust and confidence between them. Developing mutual trust and respect is often a gradual process, but cases around the world have shown that this can be done with consistent effort and patience and adopting open minds. Communicative channels should be maintained despite possible strain in the relationship and changes in leadership.

3. For civil society

    a. *Acquire more knowledge and be updated on SSG/R*. Civil society's power is often derived from its ability to engage in advocacy that is premised on possessing the necessary knowledge and information. To this end, it must continue to equip itself with the means by which it can deal with the larger security sector. It must avoid falling into stereotypes, outdated impressions, and unbacked assumptions about the government and security institutions. It must seek opportunities to improve its stock knowledge on SSG/R, given that it is a highly evolving global discourse. To this end, it must invest in its research capabilities but also engage in projects that continuously monitor the state of SSG in the country or countries in which they operate.

    b. *Seek to clarify and institutionalize partnerships with the security sector*. Before embarking on partnerships with the security sector, civil society groups must clarify the terms of engagement as well as clarify the roles that they play in SSR processes. Collaboration on initiatives such as oversight, research and analysis, and even service delivery needs to be carefully deliberated and crafted to ensure their substantive implementation. The case of the Philippines showed that sustainability of good practices that link SSG/R with SDG-16 can be undermined by changes in political leadership. Specifically, the rise of populist-authoritarian leadership diminished the space for civil society participation in SSG, particularly its role as an informal source of civilian oversight and accountability of the security sector. Given this experience, CSOs need to develop more sustainable mechanisms of cooperation and partnership in different levels of governance and decision-making. They could also strive to maintain relations with bureaucrats and other officials not subject to electoral cycles. Institutionalization also possibly entails transforming cooperative partnerships into policies that will be difficult to be arbitrarily undermined by a new set of leaders and officials.

    c. *Integrate SSG/R with SDG implementation and vice versa*. This paper showed the significant overlap between these two discourses. CSOs advocating sustainable development could benefit from learning about SSR and including them in their advocacies. The inexorable relationship between these two discourses should be mainstreamed in the programs of civil society. Conversely, CSOs engaged in SSR need to include how their advocacy efforts could have implications for meeting SDG targets, especially in building sustainable peace, justice, and strong institutions.

    d. *Practice good governance principles*. The final policy recommendation seems like a given, but civil society must not be exempt from the demands of transparency,

accountability, and participation that it seeks from other members of the security sector. Failure to do so will expose civil society with democratic deficits that could undermine its legitimacy and credibility. Therefore, it must resist the urge to be exempt from being subject to these principles. This requires much self-restraint but also consistent efforts to consult with their chosen constituencies.