Implementing Sustainable Development Goal 16: Promoting Peace and Ending Violence

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Introduction

One of the most revolutionary steps the Member States of the UN took when drafting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 was adding to the normal, economic agenda of global development, the related problems that affect when and how development happens. These include education, gender equality and problems of conflict and violence. SDG 16, *Promoting Peace and Ending Violence*, represents agreement by the 193 Member States of the UN that development is not possible when dragged down by insecurity, crime, violence and war. Without peace in the home and on the streets, within and between Member States, investment is difficult or impossible. Prosperity needs peace, between Member States, among peoples, within communities and families.

Violence continues to play a significant role in the human experience on an individual, state, and interstate level. Humans employ violence as a way to achieve their goals, and their capability to inflict it grows exponentially with technological innovations. Yet in many ways, while capacities increased, the propensity and intensity of conflicts decreased over time. Some researchers, such as Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker, note violence has declined greatly since the Middle Ages, and argue that a confluence of individual, technological, structural, and institutional factors will continue to reduce violent death.[1]

Deaths from crime and war have declined greatly since the mid-Twentieth Century. Other researchers disagree, on a variety of grounds, and argue it is unlikely that violence will continue to recede, much less eliminated in the near future. However, there is hope of using international cooperation to move towards the elimination of violence.

Forged from the fires of two world wars, the United Nations is dedicated to reducing the problems of war and conflict between states. It is based on the idea of international peace and human rights. As a precondition for the creation of long-term sustainable growth, it is necessary to create peaceful societies at all levels, while securing the rights of individual life.

While Member States agree on the vital importance of suppressing conflict and violence, there is great disagreement on the role of the UN. The international community has made important progress establishing the goals of peace promotion and linking it to development, but there is less agreement on how greater peace and security is to be achieved. Ensuring conflict is suppressed, contained and extinguished is a precondition for global development, but it also is a major headache for the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Background: UN Goals

UN Charter: The preamble of the UN Charter outlines critical goal that include "tolerance to live together in peace and security" and also "to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security".[2] Nearly every page of the

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[1] Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Viking, 2011).

[2] United Nations, "Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice" (1945),

charter includes some reference to maintaining peace or human rights. The UN's earliest perspectives focused on constraining state behavior – specifically the offensive uses of war.

Over time, the UN focus expanded to other forms of conflict, merging the prevention of violence with securing individual human rights.

Battle-related deaths in state-based conflicts since 1946, by world region, 1946 to 2016

The region refers not to the location of the battle but to the location of the primary state or states involved in the conflict (see 'Sources' tab). Only conflicts in which at least one party was the government of a state and which generated more than 25 battle-related deaths are included. The data refer to direct violent deaths (i.e. excluding outbreaks of disease or famine).

☐ Relative
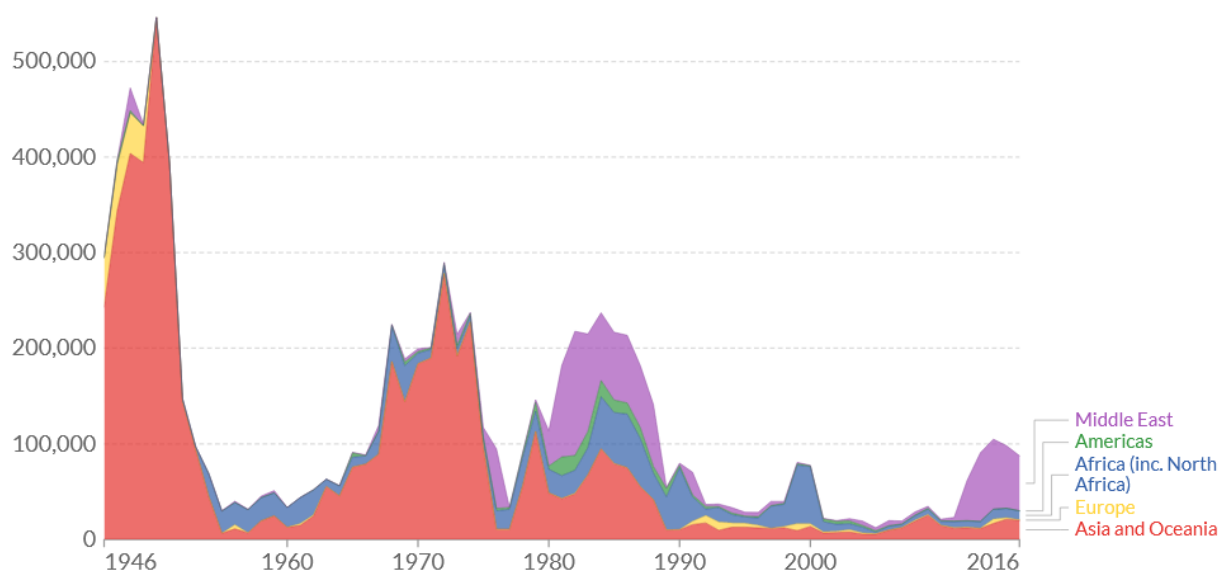
Source: UCDP/PRIO

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Sustainment Development Goals. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development "is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity" which contains a total of 17 goals. [3] Known as Agenda 2030 or the SDGs, these guide all international action on global development for fifteen years, 2015-30.

Along with Member State support, the agenda's capacity-building come from the Division for Sustainable Development Goals, within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The agenda builds off the earlier Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 2000-15), which were more narrowly conceived to promote economic development only among developing countries, not the entire world, and id not

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https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/CTC/uncharter.pdf.
[3] United Nations, "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development |

Department of Economic and Social Affairs," 2021, https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda.

embrace related problems like peace and security as preconditions.

The SDGs work along three broad axis – economic, social, and environmental. In leveraging these three areas and addressing 17 specific areas, the 2030 Agenda takes a holistic approach to sustainable development, acknowledging the interconnected nature of life and society. Additional areas of organization revolve around people, the planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership. These areas address the critical actors, the environment they act in, and the conditions under which the United Nations desire them to act.

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for al and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions all levels

As stated in the Preamble to the agenda, the UN is "determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are *free from fear and violence*. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development."[4]

The focus on freedom and safety sets the stage for Sustainment Development Goal 16: *Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.*

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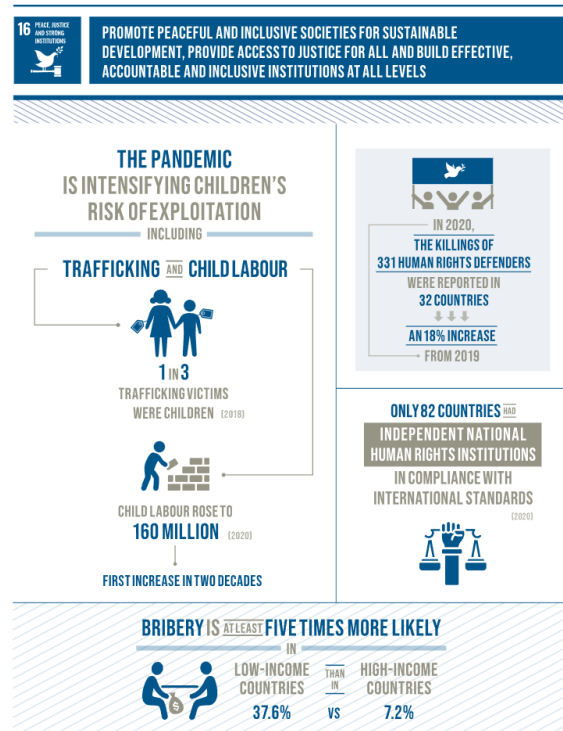
[4] United Nations.

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Sustainment Development Goal 16. SDG 16's expansive reach can be understood by decomposing its title and cross-referencing its 12 component targets. The title of goal 16 is 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". The final phrase "build effective, accountable, and

Likewise, **Target 16.6** seeks to build effective, accountable and transparent institutions at *all* levels.

Some targets, such as **Target 16.8** focus on macro level (building institutions of global governance), while others focus on the impact to individuals **16.9** (providing legal identity for all individuals).

Current Status

To fully understand the current status on SDG 16 in relation to each of its targets, diplomats and researchers are well served to refer to *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021: Extended Report – Goal 16,* where up-to-date data is provided for key indicators.[6]

Some highlights from the report include a 5.7% drop in the global homicide rate (16.1.1), a 61% decrease over five years in armed conflict

inclusive institutions at all levels" highlights a micro- to macro- organizational focus.

The general goals of SDG 16 are reinforced by several specific targets. These include **Target 16.a**, which seeks to "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."[5]

deaths, and a slow feminization of representative decision-making bodies (16.7).

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic on global violence are still unclear. While crime declined in most of the world, armed conflict did not. And in a few unfortunate countries—notable the United States—violence and killing increased. COVID-19 may have contributed to higher levels of domestic violence and human trafficking. These trends are particularly pronounced among children.

As with many other areas in the SDG, "the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and intensified inequality and discrimination" as it challenges weak and strong government institutions.[7] As states struggle with their internal domestic challenges, it may be difficult to extend resources toward other nations. Alternatively, some states may see the pandemic as an opportunity to conduct "vaccine diplomacy" as a way to increase their "soft power".[8] While this approach may have

[5] United Nations, "Goal 16 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs," 2021, https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16.
[6] UN Statisitics Division, "The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021: Extended Report - Goal 16," accessed October 8, 2021,

https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2021/extended-report/Goal%20(16)_final.pdf.
[7] United Nations, "The Sustainable Develpment Goals Report: 2021," accessed October 8, 2021, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2021/
[8] Seow Ting Lee, "Vaccine Diplomacy: Nation Branding and China's COVID-19 Soft Power Play,"

immediate benefits for some countries, in an age of emerging great power competition, this could ultimately to a proliferation of counter-responses that might ultimately lead to less stable conditions. [9] Balancing the relative rise and fall of individual state's power could be a complicating factor along with COVID-19.[10]

Comparative regional differences between 2015 and 2019 for Personal Integrity and Security
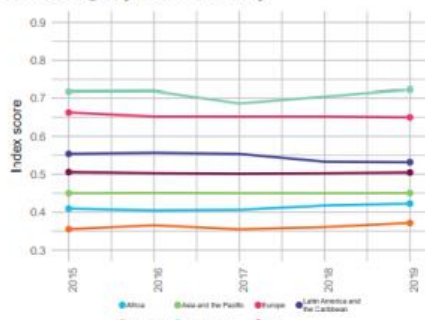
Note: All scoring runs from 0 to 1, with 1 representing the highest achievement.

Source: International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices, 1975–2019, <http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>, accessed 12 August 2020.

Country and Bloc Positions

The broad remit of SDG16 makes it extremely flexible, but also difficult to pin down in some ways. A major concern of SDG is not just its breadth, but its ambiguity making it difficult to measure. Policy makers will find many resources speaking to SDG alignment and

measurement for this reason and less on concrete actions. The breadth of SDG 16 also allows nations to highlight improvements in some areas that may benefit them, while ignoring other areas. Researchers should pay special attention to not only what is being said, but what is intentionally dismissed in reporting. Verifying national reports with independent reporting is another advisable method to employ.

Africa and African Union. Sub-Saharan Africa remains the third most violent region in the world, showing a slight decrease in peacefulness in the last year, with a full "40 percent of people in the region feel[ing] less safe today than five years ago."[11] In the justice arena, "Africa notes 14 statistically significant gains, including a number of democracies (Benin, the Gambia, Nigeria), but also hybrid and authoritarian regimes (Ethiopia, Sudan)."[12]

As Sahra El Fassi points out, "Good governance is a highly sensitive issue, and the concept is often defined and understood differently by AU members."[13] In fact, the African Union's long development guide, *Agenda 2063*, is linked to many of the SDGs. Three items in particular are paired with SDG 16: Democratic values, practices, universal principles of human rights, justice and the rule of law entrenched; Capable institutions and transformative leadership in

Place Branding and Public Diplomacy, July 6, 2021, 1–15, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-021-00224-4.
[9] "Great Power Competition | Wilson Center," accessed October 8, 2021, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/issue/great-power-competition.
[10] "Global Peace Index 2021 - World," ReliefWeb, accessed October 8, 2021, https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-peace-index-2021.
[11] "Global Peace Index 2021 - World," 59.

[12] *Monitoring Achievements on Sustainable Development Goal 16 2015-2019: A Global State of Democracy Indices Perspective* (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), 2020), https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2020.46.
[13] "Words into Deeds on SDG 16 in Africa," Africa Renewal, accessed November 13, 2021, https://www.un.org/africarenewal/ar-blog/words-deeds-sdg-16-africa.

place; Peace, security and stability is preserved.[14]

The South African Institute of International Affairs says that "African states were at the forefront of championing the development of SDG 16 and the shape it eventually assumed."[15] Much of the discussion on SDG 16 revolves around the measurement criteria and data generation, that links to goals. There is evidence that progress is being made in this effort.[16]

In an era of reemerging competition, the temptation to use Africa as a base for resources and proxy conflict will likely increase. A concrete action is to take collective action "to curb nefarious action is to identify and cut off its finance" to reduce terrorism, pollution, and other malign activities.[17] From yet another economic frame, an independent country review of Uganda recommended that land laws be reviewed and modified to prevent land deprivation especially amongst ethnic minorities.[18]

Americas. The United States and Canada score "among the top 25 per cent of countries in the world on 14 and 16 (respectively) of the 18 aspects related to SDG 16; however, stagnation is noted on more than half of the aspects (55 per

cent) and declines in 44 per cent of them while only one saw an advance." [19]

This region saw the largest regional deterioration, especially in the United States, "where growing civil unrest led to increasing perceptions of criminality and political instability, and more violent demonstrations."[20] Additionally, North America has seen a reduction in civil society participation.[21] Additionally, "over half of the population in Latin America and the Caribbean live in countries that have seen declines in aspects related to SDG 16.10" (protections of fundamental freedoms).[22]

Even in the United States, the events of January 6, 2021 call into question social cohesion. While the Biden administration has not created any direct ties to the SDG's, he has pledge a greater level of multinationalism and nominated former UN Ambassador Samantha Power to head USAID, who quoted from the SDG at her confirmation hearing.[23]

The United States is organizing a summit of major democracies, and some have called for the SDG 16 governance accountability as the "price of entry".[24] Other recommendations from Cordel and Li include greater transparency and

[14] "Linking Agenda 2063 and the SDGs | African Union," accessed November 13, 2021, https://au.int/en/agenda2063/sdgs.

[15] South African Institute of International Affairs, "Is Africa Measuring Up to Its Goal 16 Commimments: The Road to HLPF and Beyond" (South African Institute of International Affairs, 2019), https://media.africaportal.org/documents/Special-Report_SDG16_FINAL.pdf.

[16] South African Institute of International Affairs.

[17] "Paper 3.2 The Challenge of Measuring SDG 16: What Role for African Regional Frameworks? – Friends of Governance for Sustainable Development," 2, accessed November 13, 2021, http://friendsofgovernance.org/index.php/paper-3-2-the-challenge-of-measuring-sdg-16-what-role-for-african-regional-frameworks/.

[18] "Paper 3.2 The Challenge of Measuring SDG 16."

[19] United Nations, "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development | Department of Economic and Social Affairs."

[20] "Global Peace Index 2021 - World."

[21] International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, *Tracking Progress on Sustainable Development Goal 16 with Global State of Democracy Indices* (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), 2019), https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2019.29.

[22] International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

[23] Kristen Cordell, "It's Time for the United States to Reengage with the SDGs, Starting with SDG 16," accessed November 13, 2021, https://www.csis.org/analysis/its-time-united-states-reengage-sdgs-starting-sdg-16.

[24] Cordell.

communication of issues surrounding misinformation and disinformation around goal 16.10; addressing issues of racial inequality in policing; increasing accountability in corrosive international transactions; reduction of corruption in authoritarian governments; developing new technical systems of financial tracking in conflict zones; and completing a voluntary national review (VNR). Overall, these recommendations leverage the SDG's for a common tool that can help recover from COVID-19 and strengthen democratic institutions.

China. China is no longer a regional power, but a truly global influencer. As a power on the rise, China is very active in multinational organization. Although China would disagree, some western powers, might claim that China's multinational activity is about tying the hands of the United States. Nevertheless, China's narrative is one that supports SDG 16 in some areas, and less in others.

Internally, China aligned its crackdown on corruption as a measure of improving institutions. Externally, China provides cooperation to train developing nations on methods for collecting taxes through Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Multilateral Tax Centers. Economic power is further extended through 'efforts to operationalize China's Assistance Fund for South-South Cooperation, implement the China-UN Fund for Peace and Development, promote the development of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank, and tap the full potential of the Silk Road Fund to attract international capital."[25] Noticeably absent is any mention of relations with China's Uigher

population or recent shifts that indicate possible forceful reintegration of Taiwan.

European Union. Eight of ten of the most peaceful states are found in Europe, including the world's most peaceful state, Iceland.[26] As the 2021 Global Peace Index reported, "In Europe the improvement in peacefulness was driven by improvements in internal safety and security, including improvements in terrorism impact, violent demonstrations and violent crime…[h]owever, political instability and military expenditure deteriorated."[27] From a policy perspective, "the EU has committed to contributing to the achievement of all the SDGs, and the specific targets of SDG 16 have been given special recognition."[28]

The European Parliament highlights that the a wide range of documents from EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, anti-discrimination directives, cohesion and social policy, and additional frameworks are all existing compatible frameworks to carry out the goals of SDG 16 internal to the EU.[29]

Additionally, the EU supports 16 missions and deployments through its common security and defense policy (CSDP), economic and financial cooperation, humanitarian aid, trade, enlargement and neighborhood policies. These foreign policies are carried out under human right, democracy, and role of law conditionality, that require certain social and political standards to the states they are dealing with.[30] More than any other actor, the European Commission of the EU establishes meaningful plans for "Social

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[25] IISD's SDG Knowledge Hub, "China Releases National Plan to Implement SDGs | News | SDG Knowledge Hub | IISD," accessed November 13, 2021, http://sdg.iisd.org/news/china-releases-national-plan-to-implement-sdgs/.

[26] "Global Peace Index 2021 - World."

[27] "Global Peace Index 2021 - World."

[28] European Parliament, "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions," n.d., 1.

[29] European Parliament, 7.

[30] European Parliament, 9.

Cohesion" which addresses the inclusive directive of SDG 16.[31]

From the period of 2014-2020, over 72 Billion Euro were dedicated to the social cohesion program (See Figure Below).[32] Using economic means to improve infrastructure, education, health, and other public goods is seen as building a vision of shared welfare, improved cohesion, and leading to the reduction of violence.

However, "challenges are identified mainly across a number of countries in Central and Eastern Europe, where there have been recorded instances of intrusion in the work of the judiciary in a context of democratic backsliding" require addressing by the EU.

ESIF 2014-2020: Implementation by Fund for Social Inclusion, (Total Cost) % of Planned (excluding multi thematic allocations)
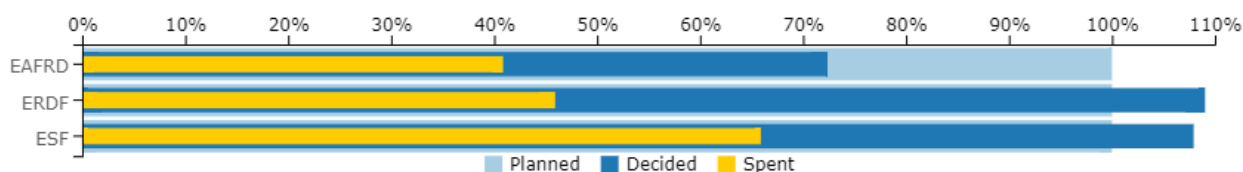
Period Covered: EAFRD: 31/12/2020, ESF, ERDF: 30/06/2021 — Refresh Date: 11/11/2021

Middle East. Similar to South Asia, the Middle East is rife with "deep-rooted long-lasting conflict countries - where good governance is lacking and the rule of law and essential elements of democracy are undermined - will continue to fail even in meeting the most basic needs of their peoples."[33] The IDEA notes, "that the Middle East records some overall progress on *Access to Justice and Judicial Independence*, although average levels remain lower than the rest of the world."[34] Although the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) demonstrated the largest reduction in violence, it remained the least peaceful in the world.[35] Syria remained a focal point for regional violence, with an economic loss equivalent to 82% of gross domestic product.[36] In some nations, like Iraq, the United Nations conduct hundreds of programs directly linked to SDG 16.[37]

Across MENA, non-democratic governments appear to repress information concerning negative aspects of their internal conditions.[38]

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[31] "Inforegio - EU Regional Policy," accessed November 13, 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index.cfm/en/.
[32] "Open Data Portal for the European Structural Investment Funds - European Commission | Data | European Structural and Investment Funds," Socrata, accessed November 13, 2021, https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/.
[33] Ziad Abdel Samad, "II.15.1 Implementation of SDG 16 Vital for the Middle East and North Africa," 2030 Spotlight, accessed November 13, 2021, https://www.2030spotlight.org/en/book/605/chapter/ii151-implementation-sdg-16-vital-middle-east-and-north-africa.

[34] *Monitoring Achievements on Sustainable Development Goal 16 2015-2019.*
[35] *Monitoring Achievements on Sustainable Development Goal 16 2015-2019.*
[36] "Global Peace Index 2021 - World."
[37] "Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions | United Nations in Iraq," accessed October 13, 2021, https://iraq.un.org/en/sdgs/16.
[38] Laila Baradei, "Politics of Evidence Based Policy Making: Reporting on SDG 16 in Egypt," *International Journal of Public Administration* 43 (October 7, 2019): 1–16, https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2019.1668414.

Both Africa and the Middle East compete for the highest levels of corruption in the world.[39] A major focus in the coming years is to see if the world shifts to electrification, how petro-funded states will fare. This phenomenon, when combined with great power competition may lead to major resource gaps, requiring regional powers to take on a larger security burden.

Non-Aligned Movement. As the Government of India's Ministry of External affairs states, "The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was created and founded during the collapse of the colonial system and the independence struggles of the peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America and other regions of the world and at the height of the Cold War."[40]

The block continues to remain relevant as a source of diverse viewpoints of 120 nations. In a statement given by the delegation of Azerbaijan, on behalf of the NAM welcomed the Preventing Violent Extremism effort by UNESCO that aligned "SDG 16 on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and in particular target 16.A on strengthening national institutions to prevent violence and combat crime and terrorism."[41]

The 2018 Baku Declaration of the NAM, reinforced that sustainable development goals were critical to preventing conflict. Also notable in this declaration, in a time of increasing Great Power competition, is the call for a reliance on a multilateral approach through instruments such as the United Nations General Assembly. This signals not only a method of achieving the

SDG's but the continued independence from Great Power decisions, which might be expressed through the UN Security Council.

South Asia. South Asia holds over 30% of the world's population, many in developing conditions. A recent report from the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific points out that "rapid progress in social development also requires changes in a wide range of areas, including social practices, gender equality, social protection, laws and regulations relating to health and education, private and non-state player participation."[42]

For example, "India has set up the National Green Tribunal, which has introduced some difficult and sometimes unpopular measures necessary for the country's sustainable development."[43] Asia has seen improvements in both personal security and justice, but mostly because they had some of the most room to gain.[44] While economic and social measures are critical, internal and interstate conflict due to ethnic and ethnological differences is a major concern. The relationship between India and Pakistan maintains its potential to be a major interstate conflict. The fall of the Afghanistan government to the Taliban is likely to lead to large increases in civil deaths and a decrease in inclusive governance. Already, famine is likely to hit the nation moving development ever further in a negative direction. Burma/Myanmar moves toward increasingly high levels of military rule and India is dealing with the rise of Hindu nationalism. Creating cohesion internally

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[39] *Monitoring Achievements on Sustainable Development Goal 16 2015-2019*.

[40] "History and Evolution of Non-Aligned Movement," accessed October 14, 2021, https://www.mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?20349/History+and+Evolution+of+NonAligned+Movement.

[41] Chair, Non-Aligned Movement, "211_nam_eng_0.Pdf," UNESCO, accessed October 14, 2021,

https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/211_nam_eng_0.pdf.

[42] Economic and Social Commission for Asia, *Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in South Asia: Key Policy Priorities and Implementation Challenges* (United Nations, 2017), https://doi.org/10.18356/46e2bbe5-en.

[43] Economic and Social Commission for Asia.

[44] *Monitoring Achievements on Sustainable Development Goal 16 2015-2019*.

and regionally will be a growing challenge for
the region that must be addressed

GSoD data trends related to SDG 16 targets on the number of countries with significant gains versus declines at global and regional levels between 2015 and 2019

SDG 16		GSoD aspect	Global		Africa		Middle East		Latin America and the Caribbean		North America		Asia-and the Pacific		Europe	
			Gains	Declines	Gains	Declines	Gains	Declines	Gains	Declines	Gains	Declines	Gains	Declines	Gains	Declines
SDG 16.1	Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere	Personal Integrity and Security	13	17	5	2	1	1	1	4	0	0	2	4	4	6
SDG 16.3	Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all	Access to Justice	16	20	7	9	2	0	1	3	0	1	4	1	2	6
		Judicial Independence	15	13	2	3	1	0	3	2	0	0	6	3	3	3
		Predictable Enforcement	8	11	3	2	0	1	1	3	0	2	2	1	2	2
SDG 16.5	Substantially reduce bribery and corruption in all their forms	Absence of Corruption	29	16	14	6	1	1	3	1	0	2	7	2	4	4
SDG 16.6	Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels	Judicial Independence	15	13	2	3	1	0	3	2	0	0	6	3	3	5
		Effective Parliament	25	21	9	8	0	2	4	1	0	2	8	4	4	4
		Free Political Parties	7	21	1	7	0	0	0	5	0	0	3	2	3	7
		Civil Society Participation	4	13	1	3	1	0	0	4	0	1	1	1	1	4
SDG 16.7	Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels	Elected Government	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
		Clean Elections	14	28	3	14	0	1	1	4	1	1	5	4	4	4
		Electoral Participation	15	19	6	7	0	2	2	3	0	0	2	3	5	4
		Effective Parliament	25	21	9	8	0	2	4	1	0	2	8	4	4	4
		Local Democracy	14	14	5	5	3	1	0	2	0	0	3	1	3	5
		Social Group Equality	8	14	6	2	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	6	1	3
SDG 16.10	Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements	Freedom of Expression	18	35	6	10	0	1	3	8	0	1	6	7	3	8
		Media Integrity	10	26	5	8	0	1	1	6	0	0	3	6	1	5
		Freedom of Movement	2	22	1	6	0	0	0	7	0	1	1	1	0	7
		Freedom of Religion	2	16	2	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
		Freedom of Association and Assembly	13	28	4	11	0	3	1	4	0	0	5	6	3	4

■ Red denotes overall regression (number of countries with declines is greater than the number of countries with gains)
■ Yellow denotes overall stagnation (number of countries with declines is equal to the number of countries with gains, or there are no declines or gains)
■ Green denotes overall progress (number of countries with gains is greater than the number of countries with declines).

Proposals for Action

Measurement and Analysis. Policy requires data. An easy way for the ECOSOC to facilitate progress on these issues to generate more data about violence and in security. Multiple sources recognize the difficulty in measuring the tasks outlined in SDG 16, because of the ambiguity of such terms as "good governance."[45]

Alternatively, the establishment of the SDG's, in general, provides a recognized framework for researchers to rally around. The Statistics page of the SDG is an impressive resource of data and analytics.

Encouraging Member States to produce and public more data about the violence problems seems an obvious way to start. Programs to leverage AI, big data, machine learning, and other advance techniques may help validate whether the current set of indicators are legitimate measures or not.[46]

Many countries are dedicated to transparency, including the Member States of the European Union, NATO and much of Latin America and Africa. But data is not without controversy.

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[45] Terra Lawson-Remer, "How Can We Implement Sustainable Development Goal 16 on Institutions?," *Brookings* (blog), November 30, 1AD, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-

development/2015/10/01/how-can-we-implement-sustainable-development-goal-16-on-institutions/.
[46] SDG Indicators Database, "UNSDG," accessed October 13, 2021, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/unsdg.

Member States know knowledge is power, so many will resist calls to produce more data. Some—including some in the Non-Aligned Movement, and others like Russia—will strive to keep data about their domestic violence and conflicts under official control, part of national security.

External Monitoring While some blocs maintain an excellent reputation for their pursuit of SDG outcomes, "no government is expected to be forthcoming and willing to share data about poor governance, violations of human rights, lack of transparency, corruption, and curbing of freedoms."[47] Non-Governmental Organizations, the United Nations, and other multinational groups can coordinate to keep each other accountable. Synchronization disparate group efforts may be possible through UN coordination. Additionally, new techniques using crowd- and open-sourced data can assist in collection of critical indicators of violence and repression.

The ECOSOC can authorize establishment of regional or international *Violence Observatories* to collect and distribute data about what is actually going on within Member States and in relations between them. Again, there are problems, like finding the money to run the observatories. And Not all Member States can be expected to contribute of cooperate equally.

Expanding the SDG 16 agenda to include non-physical violence. SDG 16 covers quite a bit of ground to bring holism across the idea of developing peace. But what if our idea of peace is bound to a historical perspective that is not appropriate for the future? Of course the prevention of physical harm will always remain a critical factor. But as positivist psychologist Abraham Maslow posited, as people are able to secure their basic needs, higher needs appear. As societies become progressively capable of supporting higher needs, it is naïve to believe that competition for resources to meet "top tier" needs will not also occur. If this is the case, the continuing propensity for violence may take on a new character, attacking people's needs for love, esteem, and self-actualization. These more abstract needs are not necessarily required to be met in physical spaces like lower needs previously were, meaning people are increasingly taking to the internet to form, join, or reinforce communities, both local and distributed.[48]

With the growth of the internet, proliferation of digital personal information, and expansion towards a "metaverse," traditional nation-state roles may be challenged. This provides some very useful impacts, but also provides a vector for harmful misinformation or disinformation. It can also lead to the radicalization of individuals and communities from afar. Moreover, cyber techniques can allow for disruption of key individual and societal functions such as banking and infrastructure. Additionally, malign actors gain new vectors to interrupt not just the physical, but the social and emotional welfare of others. Without attacking people's bodies, they undermine security, weaken the willingness of people to pursue their own interests.

Intimidation takes many forms. The advent of troll farms, deep-fakes, and other cyber-enabled psychological attacks could challenge reputation, esteem, and psychological safety. As societies continue to develop and technology evolves, individuals, groups, and states are likely to adapt their methodologies to their purposes. Study, deliberation, and recommendations on how to frame and approach solutions to non-physical conflict may become more critical in the coming years. Delegates may need to decide

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[47] Baradei, "Politics of Evidence Based Policy Making."

[48] John B. Horrigan, "Online Communities," *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech* (blog),

October 31, 2001, https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2001/10/31/online-communities/.

whether these considerations are suitable for SDG 16, another SDG, or entirely new category that the ECOSOC is free to create..

COVID-19 Recovery. Many might have believed that once prevention and treatment is in place, global norms will return to what they were before. However, COVID-19 disrupted supply chains around the world that continue to ripple despite improvements in health outcomes.[49] Additionally, "the COVID-19 global pandemic is likely to lead to further regression on target 16.1, as International IDEA's Global Monitor recorded at the end of July 2020 at least 30 countries with alleged or confirmed reports of use of excessive police force to enforce COVID-19 measures. And, in late August 2020, the Global Monitor reported that more than a quarter of countries (27 per cent) had concerning developments from a democracy and human rights perspective in Personal Integrity and Security as a result of measures to curb the pandemic."[50] A depiction of these factors can be seen in the figure below.

Ensuring that recovery means less conflict, less violence and more security is an dieal task for the ECOSOC. Without action by the internationational community, these factors could reinforce populist and nationalist narratives, or lead to greater authoritarism. Coordinated steps for recovery and rebuilding can help mitigate the early nationalistic scamble of the earliest days of the pandemic. Strengthening of the World Health Organization, as well as reevaluation of biological weapons agreements may be in order.

Conclusion

The ECOSOC is uniquely poised to address the factors with the potential to reduce inequality and reduce violence. These include corruption, autocracy, ethnic/culture divisions, and other discrimination. Working under the heading of SGD 16, the ECOSOC has the ability to address many of the most important issues and promote the most promising polices for global violence reduction.

The ECOSOC also can address rapidly emerging problems. There also are two additional global concerns especially worth closing with: the impact of COVID-19, and connected information technology, cyber methods to launch psychological campaigns. SDG 16 is broad enough to reinterpret it in some ways to include these concerns, but it might be made stronger with explicit, rather than implicit, acknowledgement of threats to higher needs.
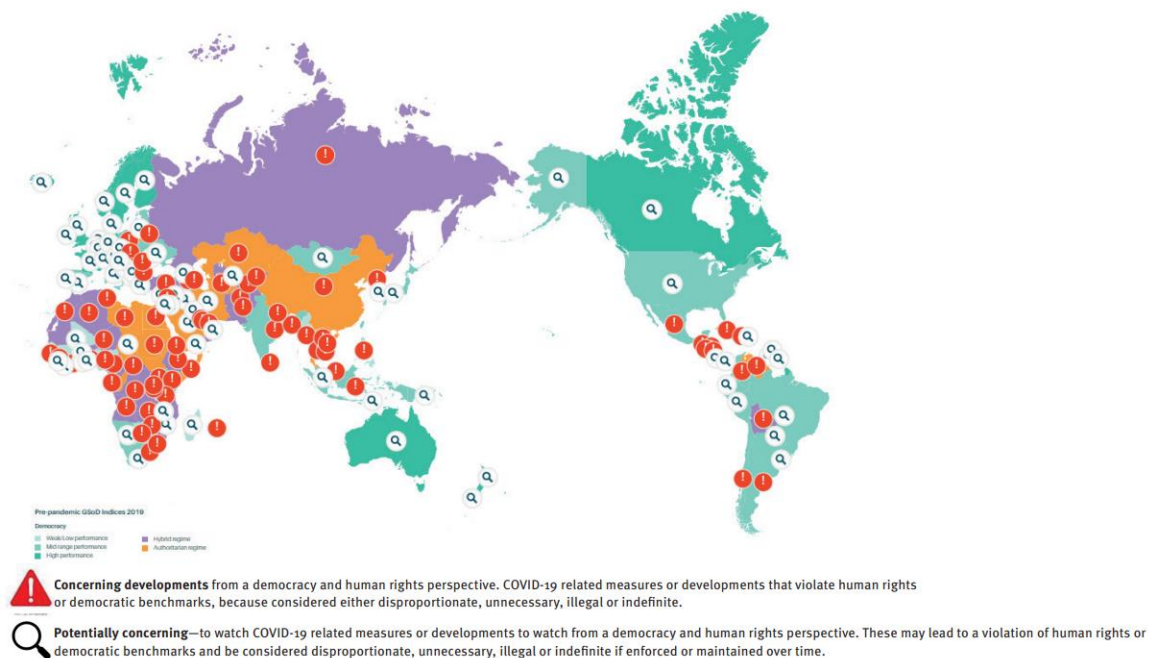
Both *globalization* and *glocalization* need to be acknowledged as natural phenomenon that need to be institutionalized so they can bring more good than harm. Along with traditional challenges, it will be incredibly difficult to get nations to agree to all measures of a broad plan. However, when teams construct win-wins at the individual, community, national, and international levels, they are more likely to find success.

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[49] Ghazi M. Magableh, "Supply Chains and the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Comprehensive Framework," *European Management Review*, February 8, 2021, 10.1111/emre.12449, https://doi.org/10.1111/emre.12449.

[50] *Monitoring Achievements on Sustainable Development Goal 16 2015-2019*.

Global map of COVID-19's impact on democracy and human rights

Pre-pandemic GSoD Indices 2019

Democracy
- Weak/Low performance
- Mid-range performance
- High performance
- Hybrid regime
- Authoritarian regime

⚠️ **Concerning developments** from a democracy and human rights perspective. COVID-19 related measures or developments that violate human rights or democratic benchmarks, because considered either disproportionate, unnecessary, illegal or indefinite.

🔍 **Potentially concerning**—to watch COVID-19 related measures or developments to watch from a democracy and human rights perspective. These may lead to a violation of human rights or democratic benchmarks and be considered disproportionate, unnecessary, illegal or indefinite if enforced or maintained over time.

Source: International IDEA, The Global Monitor of COVID-19's Impact on Democracy and Human Rights,
<https://www.idea.int/gsod-indices/about-covid19>, accessed 15 August 2020.

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