Research Article

Public Trust in National Security Institutions as a Key to Sustainable Security

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Abstract: Public trust is essential for credible and consistent state security policy, defense operations, and communications. In the twenty-first century, the social context of security has expanded significantly, necessitating that society acquire credible and up-to-date security knowledge. This article examines the relationship between the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and national security actors within the rule-of-law framework, focusing on how the trust factor influences goal fulfilment. The study uses a normative analysis of sustainable development goals, emphasizing the social pillar and its connections to national security institutions. It highlights the importance of continuous, trust-based communication between the public and social partners, reflecting transparency and accountability. The integration of sustainability into national security strategies—particularly concerning climate change and energy security—is explored through the strategies of NATO member states. The article also discusses the mutual reinforcement between social stability, economic stability, and national security, emphasizing that achieving the SDGs enhances national security, and vice versa. This comprehensive approach fosters effective, long-term solutions by integrating the SDGs into the national security framework, ultimately promoting social trust and stability.

Keywords: SDG, national security, rule of law, public trust, institution building.

Introduction

Public trust is a prerequisite for a credible and consistent state security policy, defense operations, and communications. To this end, it is essential to define the broad core area of security and defense issues that political culture itself de-politicizes in the public interest. This core area should only be subject to political competition when deficiencies and the need for change must be debated in the interest of society's security.

Additionally, the twenty-first century—especially, though not exclusively, due to developments in the information space—has seen an unprecedented increase in the social context of security. Governments, individual administrative bodies, and intelligence services should ensure that society acquires credible, current, and in-depth knowledge on security matters through consistent and reliable communication. This necessarily involves identifying relevant social needs and the communication platforms through which inclusion and engagement can be achieved.

Moreover, it is also necessary to reconsider how security and safety issues are addressed in general education, academic contexts, and public discourse. Each of these areas should provide messages of varying levels and complexity to underpin a twenty-first-century understanding of security. Fear-mongering should be avoided, but critical topics must not be sidestepped simply because they may induce fear.

Trust can be achieved by generating interest of the parties and continuous exchange. The state must take various steps both in the social and public-institutional spheres, from implementing awareness-raising programs to providing members of society with the opportunity to acquire knowledge independently. Another priority area for renewed attitudes and actions is continuous, trust-based communication between public and social partners. This relates to the broader issue of transparency and accountability, which stems from the rule of law and civil society, and requires consistent action by the state.

This article will examine the relationship between the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the national security actors operating within the framework of the rule of law, with a focus on how developing the trust factor influences the fulfillment of these goals.

Sustainability and National Security: Integrating the Social Pillar into Strategic Frameworks

The methodology of this study is a normative analysis of the SDGs, with a particular focus on the social pillar and its links to national security institutions. It is crucial to examine how actors in individual states perceive the relationship between sustainability and national security. National security strategies, which have normative content, serve as a mirror reflecting these perceptions. These strategies highlight the key elements at the intersection of sustainability and national security. This analysis will demonstrate the mutual influence of the SDGs

and national security, identify the most relevant elements of national security in this context, and examine the internal regulations that can effectively support these elements.

In the national security strategies of NATO member states, certain goals of sustainable development are clearly identifiable. Of particular significance is the relationship between climate change and environmental security. Environmental changes—including natural disasters, sea-level rise, and climate migration—directly affect national security. This is why, for instance, the United States' National Security Strategy (2022) explicitly emphasizes the importance of combating climate change and its effects on global stability.[1] Germany's National Security Strategy (2023) dedicates sections to the security impacts of climate change [2] and the necessity of sustainable energy sources.[3] The French Strategic Review (2022) also highlights the complex effects of climate change and integrated issues of biodiversity and food security, placing sustainability within a new interpretive framework for application to the defence system.[4]

Energy security and energy independence are also important elements of sustainability and are prioritized in national security strategies. The diversification of energy sources and the use of renewable energy contribute to both stability and sustainability. Therefore, many national security strategies emphasize energy independence and the importance of renewable energy sources.

The main pillars for promoting sustainable development and reducing social inequalities are central to the strategies of many NATO member states, with a focus on national specificities. These elements contribute to social stability and help manage national security challenges. Social stability and community values determine the effectiveness of responses to external national security risks and threats, as well as various internal challenges.

The Netherlands' strategy (2023) emphasizes sustainable development and international development cooperation as key elements of global stability and security.[5] The German strategy (2023) includes the promotion of peace and stability, democracy, the rule of law, social development, and public involvement in promoting sustainable security. From a defence and security perspective, these

1   *National Security Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, October 2022), https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf.

2   Erica M. Dingman, "Arctic Sustainability: The Predicament of Energy and Environmental Security," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 11, no. 1 (2011): 1-10, https://doi.org/10.11610/Connections.11.1.01.

3   "The Secretary General's Report: NATO Climate Change and Security Impact Assessment," Second Edition 2023, NATO, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2023/7/pdf/230711-climate-security-impact.pdf.

4   "National Strategic Review, 2022," Republic of France, accessed December 12, 2024, https://www.sgdsn.gouv.fr/files/files/rns-uk-20221202.pdf.

5   "The Security Strategy for the Kingdom of the Netherlands, 2023," Government of the Netherlands, https://www.government.nl/topics/security-strategy-for-the-kingdom-of-the-netherlands.

goals converge at the NATO level and increasingly appear in national regulations of more member states through the concepts of resilience and consequent security awareness.

However, it is important to recognize that, with the exception of the United States, the broad approach to national security among NATO member states—and the consequent systematic development of national resilience through regulation, infrastructure development, training, economic security, etc.—has remained more of a concept than the implementation of a comprehensive development program until recent years. Effective and well-structured national security, in turn, impacts the social pillar by strengthening trust in state institutions, as illustrated by the example of total defense in Singapore.[6] Hungary's National Security Strategy (2020) also emphasizes that the local conditions necessary for sustainable development must be ensured during military missions.[7] Furthermore, the document states that supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a tool for preventing terrorism, since the lack of sustainable economic and social development fuels instability.[8]

NATO's role in this area is also tangible, as the Alliance itself recognizes the significance of sustainability and integrates it into its collective security strategies. Several member states cooperate closely in achieving the SDGs and addressing climate challenges. According to the NATO Strategic Concept (2022), predicting and preventing crises and conflicts in a sustainable manner contributes to overall stability and Alliance security. Therefore, cooperation and partner support must be enhanced, as these are key to preventing destabilization and aggression.[9]

Sustainability is gaining increasing emphasis in the national security strategies of NATO member states, reflecting changes in global security challenges and the need for an integrated approach. Combating climate change, ensuring energy security, and promoting sustainable development are key elements of these strategies.[10] Additionally, regional and international cooperation play an important role in strengthening the link between sustainability and security.

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[6] Ron Matthews and Fitriani Bintang Timur, "Singapore's 'Total Defence' Strategy," *Defence and Peace Economics* 35, no. 5 (2023): 638-658, https://doi.org/10.1080/10242694.2023.2187924.

[7] "National Security Strategy of Hungary," 1163/2020 (IV.21) Government Resolution, accessed December 12, 2024, https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=A20H1163.KOR&txtreferer=00000001.txt. – in Hungarian

[8] "National Security Strategy of Hungary," sections 6, 83, 121, 131, 138, 148.

[9] "NATO 2022 Strategic Concept," adopted by Heads of State and Government at the NATO Summit in Madrid, June 29, 2022, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf.

[10] Amar Causevic and Ibrahim Al-Marashi, "NATO and Anthropogenic Strategic Security," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 22, no. 1 (2023): 67-78, https://doi.org/10.11610/Connections.22.1.16.

Nonetheless, a central factor concerns both external and internal security: stability. Internally, this means the stable functioning of state institutions, including those responsible for national security. A crucial component of internal security stability is public trust in state institutions and, integrally, public trust in national security institutions within the framework of the rule of law. This includes both trust in national security as an institution and in the democratic control mechanisms that oversee it.

Relationship between the SDGs and National Security Institutions: Mapping the Impact and the Feedback between the Two

In 2000, the United Nations adopted the nonbinding Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), identifying numerous shortcomings and efficiency issues during their 15-year implementation period. Consequently, in 2015, the United Nations established the Sustainable Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were unanimously adopted by all 193 member states through a General Assembly resolution. These documents outline 17 sustainable development goals, 169 specific targets, and 232 related indicators. These comprehensive goals and indicators are intended to serve as a nonbinding legal and policy framework through 2030, with strong commitments envisaged.[11] It is therefore worthwhile to briefly review the connections between individual SDGs and national security.

Economic stability is of paramount importance to both sustainable development and national security, as economic instability and poverty generate social and political tensions, thus posing security risks. The elimination of poverty (SDG 1), ensuring quality education (SDG 4), and promoting equitable economic growth (SDG 8) contribute to social stability and can enhance security awareness, thereby also strengthening national resilience. The role of national security institutions in economic stability is manifested on multiple levels. These priorities are emphasized in national security strategies, as protecting economic infrastructure from internal and external threats—such as terrorism or cyberattacks—is a crucial factor for every state. Additionally, national security institutions participate in the prevention and, if necessary, the management of crises, thereby directly impacting economic stability.[12]

Economic stability, however, also affects the efficiency of national security, as effective research and development and stable economic performance are prerequisites for the development and modernization of the national security

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[11] Gábor Kecskés, "The Legal Meaning of Environmental Sustainability – Do the Ecological SDGs Have Legal Status?" *Chemical Engineering Transactions* 107 (2023): 481-486, https://doi.org/10.3303/CET23107081.

[12] Svitlana V. Onyshchuk, Igor I. Onyshchuk, Olha Petroye, and Roman Chernysh, "Financial Stability and Its Impact on National Security State: Organizational and Legal Aspects," *International Journal of Economics and Business Administration* 8, no. 1 (2020): 353-365, https://doi.org/10.35808/ijeba/429.

system. This reciprocal relationship is particularly strong in the field of cyberse-curity,[13] where the most effective states in terms of defense systems closely col-laborate with economic actors.

As the strategies highlighted above show, environmental sustainability issues are increasingly becoming part of the security agenda. Climate change, the de-pletion of natural resources, and the continuing degradation of the environment all pose significant security threats. Several SDGs directly address these issues, such as ensuring clean water and basic sanitation (SDG 6), access to affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), and addressing climate change (SDG 13). As a result, national security institutions are increasingly focused on addressing environ-mental threats. The case of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico in 2017 illustrates the link between SDGs and national security.

In 2017, Maria, a Category 5 storm, destroyed all communications, leaving the island virtually isolated from the rest of the world. A mass power outage left Puerto Rico vulnerable to cyberattacks that could have been easily launched as people were reconnected to the grid. Indeed, the Multi-State Information Shar-ing and Analysis Center (MS-ISAC) issued a warning about an uptick in domain name purchases related to the hurricane's name, which could be used to commit fraud against desperate and unaware citizens.[14]

Military and civilian cooperation in preparing for or responding to climate-related disasters is of paramount importance, as these events can destabilize re-gions and increase migratory pressures.[15] In addition, various elements of the military's asset base can support crisis management, particularly in the immedi-ate prevention or management of environmental impacts and disasters. It is no coincidence that NATO is also taking several steps in this area and has made sig-nificant commitments, including the highly ambitious targets of reducing green-house gas emissions by at least 45 % by 2030 and achieving net zero by 2050 to mitigate climate change.[16]

Social cohesion and political stability are also crucial. Social inequalities, dis-crimination, and marginalization can contribute to social tensions and lead to violent conflicts. Socio-economic disparities among culturally defined groups—

[13] Roland Kelemen, "The Impact of the Russian-Ukrainian Hybrid War on the European Union's Cybersecurity Policies and Regulations," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 22, no. 2 (2023): 75-90, https://doi.org/10.11610/Connections.22.2.55.

[14] Elizabeth L. Petrun Sayers et al., "'We Will Rise no Matter What': Community Perspec-tives of Disaster Resilience Following Hurricanes Irma and Maria in Puerto Rico," *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 51, no. 2 (2023): 126-145, https://doi.org/10.1080/00909882.2022.2069473.

[15] NATO, "The Secretary General's Report: NATO Climate Change and Security Impact Assessment."

[16] "NATO Climate Change and Security Action Plan 2021," NATO, June 14, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_185174.htm.

known as horizontal inequalities—are of critical importance when promoting political stability and social cohesion.[17] Promoting social equality (SDG 10), peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16) are all measures that contribute to social cohesion and political stability. It is the responsibility of the national security system to safeguard these measures. Among the UN SDGs, Goal 16 is of increasing importance in today's security environment (e.g., the war between Russia and Ukraine or the events related to the Gaza Strip): promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, ensuring access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.

This set of goals essentially describes sustainable security, namely, security guaranteed by institutions of the rule of law, such as the administrative and regulatory dimensions of security guarantees. The achievement of the stated objectives of SDG 16—such as reducing violence, establishing and developing the rule of law, reducing organised crime, eradicating corruption, strengthening developing countries, protecting fundamental freedoms, and continuing the effective fight against terrorism—is inconceivable without a functioning, efficient, and effective national security institution.[18] While other SDG targets also call for the rule of law, SDG 16 alone includes the existence of social trust in this institutional system, as only through such functioning can a peaceful and inclusive society be created.

Progress in these areas could also enhance internal security and, among other benefits, contribute to the development of currently security- and economically unstable regions (e.g., certain Central African states), thereby advancing multiple SDGs. Additionally, it would help mitigate significant societal tensions arising from large-scale migration, which has become one of the most pressing internal security challenges today, eroding social cohesion and institutional stability.

The presence of large groups of immigrants who struggle—or, in some cases, refuse—to integrate into society, while adhering to cultural norms significantly different from those of the host country, poses serious internal security risks.[19]

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[17] Frances Stewart, Arnim Langer, and Line Kuppens, "Who Wants to Share? Attitudes Towards Horizontal Redistribution Across the Globe," *Social Inclusion* 12, Article 8387 (2024): 1-7, https://doi.org/10.17645/si.8387; Roland Kelemen, Joseph Squillace, Richárd Németh, and Justice Cappella, "The Impact of Digital Inequality on IT Identity in the Light of Inequalities in Internet Access," *ELTE Law Journal* 12, no. 2 (2024): 173-186, https://doi.org/10.54148/ELTELJ.2024.2.173; Graham K. Brown and Arnim Langer, "Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: A Critical Review and Research Agenda," *Conflict, Security & Development* 10, no. 1 (2010): 27-55, https://doi.org/10.1080/14678800903553837.

[18] "Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions," United Nations and the Rule of Law, accessed December 12, 2024, https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/sdg-16/.

[19] Miranda Sabriu Bexheti, "The Impact of Migration on Global Politics and Security," *European Journal of Law and Political Sciences* 3, no. 2 (2024): 28-33, https://doi.org/10.24018/ejpolitics.2024.3.2.135; Ferenc Sántha and Róbert Bartkó, "Criminal Legal Steps to Stop the Irregular Migration in Hungary," *European Journal of Crime, Criminal*

In recent years, such issues have led to several tragic incidents, including a 2025 case in the Bavarian town of Aschaffenburg, where an Afghan asylum seeker fatally stabbed a two-year-old child and the 41-year-old man who rushed to assist.[20]

It can be concluded from the above that an integrated or comprehensive approach to national security institutions—one that also incorporates sustainable development objectives—can lead to more effective and long-term solutions.[21] Such an approach to security can support the achievement of the SDGs. For example, significant progress on climate change would reduce the number of climate refugees and the risk of climate-induced conflict.[22] Likewise, alleviating poverty and inequality would promote social stability and the stability of vulnerable regions, thereby reducing internal tensions.[23]

Moreover, achieving the SDG targets on social and economic development also directly impacts the national security system, since its personnel are recruited from and operate within society. These goals must therefore be integrated into the development strategy of the national security system, as exemplified by the French Strategic Review (2022), which emphasizes the objective of a sustainable defence system.

The various branches of national security, including intelligence services, police, and military institutions, play a vital role in ensuring the security and stability of nations.[24] These institutions can only perform their tasks effectively if society has confidence in them. A lack of trust can be destabilizing and weaken both the legitimacy and effectiveness of these institutions.[25] Thus, not only can the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) be achieved by enhancing security, but the achievement of the SDGs also promotes social stability through trust in the national security system, which is a pillar of security.

Law and Criminal Justice 32, no. 3 (October 2024): 197-219, https://doi.org/10.1163/15718174-bja10056.

20 "Two Killed in German Park in Stabbing Attack; Afghan Suspect Arrested," *Reuters*, January 23, 2025, https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/suspect-arrested-after-two-killed-knife-attack-german-park-2025-01-22/.

21 Ádám Farkas, *The Age of Totality? The Totality of the Security Environment and Challenges of the 21st Century and a Thought Experiment on Total Defence* (Magyar Katonai Jogi és Hadijogi Társaság, 2018), https://real-eod.mtak.hu/11667/. – in Hungarian

22 Robert McLeman, "Thresholds in Climate Migration," *Population and Environment* 39 (2018): 319-338, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11111-017-0290-2.

23 Syed Manzar Abbas Zaidi, "The Poverty-Radicalisation Nexus in Pakistan," *Global Crime* 11, no. 4 (2010): 399-420, https://doi.org/10.1080/17440572.2010.519521.

24 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Belknap Press, 1981).

25 Péter Szigeti, *In the Attraction of Reality: Studies in Legal and Political Theory* (ELTE-SZIF ÁJK, 2001), https://mek.oszk.hu/04200/04241/04241.htm. – in Hungarian

Seen from this perspective, access to justice for all and the development of effective, accountable, and transparent institutions (SDG 16) also contribute directly to increasing trust in national security institutions. Indeed, strengthening transparency and accountability helps citizens trust that national security institutions operate lawfully and effectively.

Reducing social inequalities (SDG 10) contributes directly to increasing social stability. It helps lower social tensions that can often lead to security challenges. In a more equitable society, citizens are more likely to trust national security agencies, seeing them as protectors rather than oppressors.[26] One can hardly argue with the claim that reducing poverty (SDG 1) and eradicating hunger (SDG 2) contribute to social peace and stability, as meeting basic needs helps prevent feelings of exclusion, thereby lowering the risk of extremism and radicalisation.[27]

Quality education (SDG 4) is also key, as it equips society with citizens who are aware and active. Well-informed and educated individuals better understand the role and functioning of national security institutions and are more likely to trust them. In today's societies—awash with disinformation and deepfake content—quality education fosters critical thinking and the spread of democratic values, which, in turn, promote transparency and accountability in public institutions.[28]

The relationship between the SDGs and public trust in national security institutions is complex and multifaceted. Achieving the SDGs contributes directly to social stability and peace, which are essential for the effective functioning of and confidence in security institutions. Public trust and sustainable development are mutually reinforcing.

Domestic Legal Solutions to Strengthen Public Confidence in National Security for the SDGs

Trust can be treated as a social contract between the state and its citizens, ensuring cooperation, compliance, and public support for security measures and policies. Public trust in national security institutions is therefore critical to maintaining the stability and viability of modern societies, and thus to achieving the SDGs. It is no coincidence that, according to some studies, the performance of the executive branch in certain SDGs (such as SDG 6, SDG 7, and SDG 9) positively

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[26] Vladimir Menshikov, Olga Volkova, Nataliia Stukalo, and Anastasiia Simakhova, "Social Economy as a Tool to Ensure National Security," *Journal of Security and Sustainability Issues* 7, no. 2 (2017): 211-231, https://journals.lka.lt/journal/jssi/article/1375/info.

[27] Hisham Abusaada and Abeer Elshater, "Developing a Guiding Framework Based on Sustainable Development to Alleviate Poverty, Hunger and Disease," *Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research* 18, no. 2 (June 2024): 432-452, https://doi.org/10.1108/ARCH-03-2023-0076.

[28] Oleksandr Yuriiovych Panfilov and Olga Oleksandrivna Savchenko, "Education as a Factor to Support the National Security of the State," *The Bulletin of Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University* (*Series Political Science*) 1, no. 48 (2021): 146-159, https://doi.org/10.21564/2075-7190.48.224807.

influences public trust.[29] Moreover, from the perspective of our research, it is particularly noteworthy that analyses indicate SDG 16 has the strongest statistically significant impact on public trust. Not all SDGs influence public trust equally, but SDG 16 shows a strong positive correlation. This supports the idea that initiatives promoting peace and justice can significantly enhance public trust and that strong institutions play a key role in building it. In light of this, the executive branch and its national security institutions must pay particular attention to policies and initiatives that promote peace, justice, and strong institutions, as these efforts contribute directly to strengthening trust in the entire state institutional system.[30]

Public trust can enhance the effectiveness of institutions, promote social cohesion, and reduce social conflict. According to data from the European Social Survey, Scandinavian countries exhibit the highest levels of trust in public institutions in Europe, while former communist, Iberian, and Mediterranean countries display significantly lower levels of institutional trust.[31] This disparity is evidently rooted in historical traditions, which also affect public trust in national security services.

In post-communist states, for example, the predecessors of today's national security institutions were state security agencies tasked with maintaining the status quo at all costs. For these countries, strengthening trust in public institutions is crucial for enhancing social capital, civic engagement, and law-abiding behavior, ultimately reinforcing governmental legitimacy. However, due to the weight of historical legacies, this goal cannot be achieved without improving public trust in national security institutions.[32]

Key pillars of national security—such as the army, the police, and intelligence services—are the organizations responsible for ensuring the security and stability of the state. These institutions play a vital role in preserving sovereignty, maintaining internal order, and protecting citizens. However, given the complex security challenges, cooperation and support from society are indispensable.

Public trust in these institutions depends on several key factors, including:

(1) transparency and accountability
(2) efficiency and professionalism

[29] Olivier Sempiga, Luc Van Liedekerke, and Bjorn Mestdagh, "Does Government Performance Influence Public Trust? The Case of Sustainable Development Goals Policies at Local Level," *Journal of Management Policy and Practice* 24, no. 4 (2023): 28-44, 40, https://doi.org/10.33423/jmpp.v24i4.6650; Amelia D. Berliani and Evony S. Violita, "The Role of Governance in SDG through Public Trust in Government: Study in Selected OIC Member States," *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 716 (2021): 012100, https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/716/1/012100.

[30] Sempiga, Liedekerke, and Mestdagh, "Does Government Performance Influence Public Trust?"

[31] Marco Marozzi, "Measuring Trust in European Public Institutions," *Social Indicators Research* 123 (2015): 879-895, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-014-0765-9.

[32] Marozzi, "Measuring Trust in European Public Institutions."

(3) legality and the rule of law; and

(4) civic relations and community involvement.

Transparency includes clear communication of policies, decisions, and actions, while accountability requires effective oversight and mechanisms for redress. The level of trust is directly influenced by institutional efficiency and professionalism: if institutions succeed in maintaining security and protecting citizens' rights, societal trust will increase. Institutions must abide by the law and respect human rights to ensure their legitimacy. Regulatory bodies must also provide a professional and modern legal framework to guarantee legitimate functioning and ensure the depoliticization of the national security sector. Interaction and cooperation between the public and national security institutions should be encouraged, ranging from collaboration on basic operational tasks to public information campaigns and security awareness initiatives. Such engagement can further strengthen confidence in these institutions.

In states that operate under the rule of law, a number of institutional and legislative solutions exist to achieve public trust. These include a short chain of legitimacy for national security leaders, judicial oversight, civilian control of the military, and the institutionalization of cooperation and knowledge-sharing between internal and external security services – an approach that is increasingly used in many states.

A very important institution of the rule of law is the chain of legitimacy: the authority of all public actors to perform their tasks must be traceable back to the sovereign, the people. The shorter the chain, the stronger and more legitimate the mandate. In the case of national security leaders, the shortest possible chain of legitimacy should be sought. This could mean that individual leaders are elected by the legislature itself, as in Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, and Poland. It could also mean that the head of the executive has the power of appointment, but the legislature is involved in some way. In Hungary, the leadership of these bodies is appointed by the prime minister, but the national security committee of parliament hears and gives its opinion on the candidates.[33] The same can be observed in Italy.[34] In the case of the United States, national security heads are appointed by the president but must be approved by the Senate.

National security activities are subject to parliamentary oversight by a specialized or nonspecialized legislative committee in most EU member states. The exceptions are Ireland and Malta, which do not have parliamentary oversight of intelligence services. In three member states—Cyprus, Poland, and Sweden—this task is performed by specialized and/or nonspecialized committees. The Finnish parliament's specialized committee is responsible, among other tasks,

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[33] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), "Surveillance by Intelligence Services: Fundamental Rights Safeguards and Remedies in the EU – 2023 Update," May 24, 2023, https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2023/surveillance-update.

[34] Piotr Burczaniuk, *Legal Aspect of the European Intelligence Services Activities* (Warsaw, Poland: Publishing House of the Internal Security Agency, 2022).

for overseeing the proper implementation and adequacy of intelligence operations; monitoring and promoting the effective implementation of fundamental and human rights in intelligence operations; and examining and processing the Intelligence Ombudsman's reports before they are discussed in plenary.[35]

In addition to oversight, an important aspect of the institutional framework for national security is the framework for the authorization of measures and procedures – for example, the division of cases in which defense and security agencies act on their authority and for which actions they need to seek external decisions, either in the form of judicial approval or executive decisions.

An important part of the oversight over national security activities is the obligation for each body to report to the legislature. It is no coincidence that NATO member states have well-established systems of civilian oversight over national security actors by legislatures, with an inherent requirement for the head of a national security agency to report either to the legislature as a whole or to a specialized legislative committee. Such a statutory obligation exists in the following NATO member states: Bulgaria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

It is therefore evident that the constitutional arrangements of democratic states provide the framework for developing a multilateral control mechanism over national security institutions. This framework helps ensure institutional stability and fosters a high level of public confidence, which in turn supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Conclusion

At their core, the implementation of the SDGs and national security exhibit an implicit interdependence. Both can strengthen nation-state and international stability, which is also a core task of national security institutions. The ambition to mitigate or eliminate negative circumstances, as conveyed in the SDGs, can help reduce behaviors that violate or threaten social order, thereby enabling the national security system to function more effectively.

However, the relationship between social and economic stability, sustainability, and national security is not one-way. While national security structures are designed to ensure security as a foundation for development, the SDGs also affect those structures through their engagement with society. A similar impact is evident in the economic sphere, whose security the national security system is designed to support. In turn, a sustainable and growing economy determines the level of resources that can be allocated to national security, including the research and development it requires.

In addition, the SDGs supporting institutional and political stability are of paramount importance. Their inadequate implementation can drastically erode the

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[35] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), "Surveillance by Intelligence Services."

environment in which national security must prevail. The resulting low degree of institutional and political stability can become a breeding ground for extraordinary security challenges and threats. Furthermore, a well-regulated, transparent, and controlled institutional system increases confidence in the political system and individual public institutions. Public trust directly impacts the willingness to cooperate and provide support, which is a prerequisite for effective national security. Therefore, the requirements of institutional and political stability must be clearly applied in the national security domain, with due regard for the specific characteristics of the security environment.

Taking all this together, and considering the national security linkages of the SDG targets in the study, it is clear that national security has a vital role to play in sustainable development. Moreover, the development of national security in the twenty-first century also requires promoting a sustainable approach – that is, integrating the UN Sustainable Development Goal targets into the national security framework.

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