FROM IDENTITY-CONFLICT TO CIVIL SOCIETY.
The role of civil society in building peace, through the protection of human dignity and pluralism

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Riassunto tesi di dottorato:

Teoria Politica Ciclo XX

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Sociali

A.A. 2007-2008

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Summary

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

Recently, much scholarly work has been done on civil society and ethno-religious conflicts. Increasingly, social scientists, political theorists, and anthropologists have emphasized the key-role played by civil society actors in democratic transition, in particular with reference to contexts of deeply divided societies. However, only in a few cases, systematic attempts to connect the two have been made, in general related to empirical researches[1]. This work is aimed at offering a multidisciplinary perspective of civil society and identity-conflicts based on a deeper understanding of the idea of individual identity. With respect to previous works, here the emphasis is placed on the theoretical analysis of those concepts, rather than on empirical investigations. Furthermore, unlike other attempts, this is aimed at integrating different perspectives and disciplines in the framework of a philosophical investigation.

As matter of fact, in the last two decades, two relevant phenomena have emerged and increasingly captured the interest of scholars. (1) On one hand, the years after the Cold War have seen a shift in number and typology of armed conflicts.[2] Bosnia, Kosovo, Sri Lanka, and East Timor, in all these dramatic cases, the traditional understanding of conflict as *international/ interstate* cannot grasp the complexity and explain the dynamics of such ethno-religious intrastate wars (Duffield, 2001; Hartzell, 2001; Varshney, 2001). A first relevant element regards their proportion, according to the traditional approach new conflicts would be classified as *minor* or *mediate armed conflict* (P. Wallensteen, & Axell, K., 1993; P. Wallensteen, & Sollenberg, M., 1999)[3]. The second feature concerns their cultural matrix: fighting groups make use of identitarian arguments, whether constructed or givens, to mobilize people. Finally, a further aspect concerns the typology of the warring parties. Very often, they are irregular combatant or, as someone defines them, 'rebels',(Collier 2004, 2006). Their emergence is mostly due to the weakness or absence of a legitimate state-authority. Such contexts are characterized by widespread criminality, frequent violent and predatory actions directed against civilians and systematic violations of fundamental human rights.

(2) On the other hand, in the last years, huge varieties of different non-state actors have emerged. Religious and ethnical movements, local and international non-governmental organizations, and national and trans-national social movements represent the renewed expression of civil society (Anheier, 2001; Cohen, 1994). The impact of these actors seems

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[1] I am referring to scholars like Varshney and Orjuela who respectively have worked on India and Sri Lanka. See ORJUELA C. 2003. Building Peace in Sri Lanka: A Role for Civil Society? *Journal of Peace Research* **40**: 195-212, VARSHNEY A. 2003a. *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.

[2] LEDERACH J.P. 1997. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. United State Institute for Peace Press, Washington, DC:, RAMSBOTHAM O., & WOODHOUSE, T., & MIALL, H. 2006. *Contemporary Conflict Resolution. The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts [Second Edition]*. Polity, Cambridge.

[3] According to data, from 1989 to 2000, there were 111 armed conflicts in the world, of which 104 were intrastate conflicts; it means that civil wars accounted for 94% of all armed conflicts.

to be more relevant in contexts where the *vacuum* deriving from the failure of the nation state model is more evident. (M. Kaldor, 1999) With reference to this, the context of identity-conflicts seems to be particularly significant. Actually, while the effectiveness of the traditional nation-state intervention in those conflicts decreases, an intimate link between civil society and those wars emerges. Most of the recent peace operations have seen the involvement of local and international civil society actors. Increasingly, both scholars and practitioners have shown to be confident in the positive role of civil society engagement in post- conflict transition of deeply divided societies.[4]

The present research is aimed at understanding the complex dynamics related to civil society engagement in deeply divided societies. In particular, it explores the interrelations between civil society and conflicts, with particular attention to the impact of civil society on human rights protection and democratization. The work is based on three premises.

— The massive and systematic violation of human rights is a key-factor in the dynamics of the emerging ethno-religious conflicts.
— Civil society organizations and movements intervene in various ways in such conflicts. Some further clarifications follow from this second issue. One can conceive of, at least, two levels of civil society engagement in conflict, namely the local and international dimensions of civil society's intervention. (i) At the international level, there are organizations and movements, International Non-Governmental Organizations (hereafter INGOs), engaged in actions such as humanitarian intervention, human rights protection, peace-building and democratic transition. Many authors emphasize the constructive potential of these actors in creating sustainable and stable peace (Fetherston 1999; Kaldor 2003a). According to them, these organizations are crucially important in both building democratic institutions and promoting liberal peace "from-the-bottom."[5] Nevertheless, other scholars discuss the ambivalent role of such an 'external' intervention in local deeply divided contexts (Paffenholz, 2006; Pouligny, 2005). According to them, these actors very often lack of concrete long-term strategies for fostering local inter-group cooperation and dialogue (Belloni, 2001; Bieber, 2002; Fisher, 2006a). However, civil society's intervention appears controversial, also with regard to the local level, the local Civil Society Organizations (henceforth CSOs). (ii) A huge literature has been written on the alleged positive impact of communal and local CSOs on multi-ethnic or multi-communal communities. Many scholars highlight the inclusive attitude of them in contexts of cultural violence and exclusion (Varshney, 2003): their efforts would be necessary to guarantee a genuine reconciliation among fighting groups and preserve an endogenous democratic development, based on trust, solidarity, and

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[4]LEDERACH J.P. 1997. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies.* Op. cit. FETHERSTON B. 1999. The Transformative Potential of NGOs: The Centre for Peace Studies in Croatia. *NGOs in the Field of International Peace and Security: Problems and Perspectives* **12**: 10-12, LEDERACH J.P. 2001. Civil Society and Reconciliation. In: *Turbolent Peace. The Challenges of Managing international Conflict* (Ed. by C. CROCKER, A. , & HAMPSON, F. O., & AALL, P.). United States Institute for Peace Press, Washington, DC.

[5] See RICHMOND O., & CAREY, H. 2005. *Subcontracting Peace: the Challenges of NGO Peacebuilding.* Ashgate, Aldershot.

accountability[6]. Nevertheless, in spite of these positive premises, also with respect to the local side of civil society ambivalences and disintegrative potentials emerge. Some scholars refer to a kind of 'un-civil society', made up of criminal or extremists groups. According to them, especially when a state does not exist or it is failing, the boundaries between society's actors and groups (violent and non-violent) are more likely to vanish, and 'un-civil', xenophobic, or mafia-like groups may emerge.[7] These movements would take part to the conflict alternating different methods of actions, from mobilization by means of media to open violence, as in the cases of ethnical cleansings and terrorist attacks.

— Finally, the protection of values such as human dignity and pluralism is a necessary condition for peace. In this perspective, the protection of those values in the realm of civil society turns out to be the crucial factor for building human security and for fostering an autonomous democratic development.

In the present work, a theoretical framework for civil society engagement in post-conflict areas is formulated. Such an idea is rooted in two main assumptions. First, I offer an alternative understanding of identity- conflicts, which takes seriously into account the idea of individual identity as sum of plural affiliations. Second, starting from an idea of society where individuals are linked to each other by virtue of their plural affiliations, I emphasize the necessity to understand civil society as complex 'equilibrium among cultural, political, and economic domains', where individual interests and pursuits meet collective claims and shared experiences. In this perspective, civil society is neither the sphere of non-governmental sector, understood as an autonomous public sphere, nor a private sphere, as such. Following Hegel, it is possible to argue that civil society is the intermediate sphere existing between 'family' and 'state', where all those forms of economic linkages, associational modalities and cultural expressions come out. It represents the antistate, since there emerge all those forms that constitute a counterweight to the 'tyranny of the state'[8]; but it also corresponds to a kind of 'anticipation' of the more extensive experience of the state. In this second sense, civil society is supposed to be the sphere where a 'common culture of civility' emerges. I define 'common culture of civility' a specific kind of culture on which it is possible to build an autonomous democratic development of a society.

Finally, such an approach is tested to an actual case of post-conflict transition, the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina. With reference to Bosnian context, the idea of equilibrium is meant to reduce the emphasis on non-governmental sector, understood as NGOs, giving priority

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[6] BELLONI R. 2001. Civil Society and Peace-building in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Journal of Peace Research* **38**: 163- 180, POULIGNY B. 2005. Civil Society and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Ambiguities of International Programmes Aimed at Building 'New' Societies. *Security Dialogue* **36**: 495-510.

[7] ANHEIER H.E., & KALDOR, M., & GLASIUS, M. . 2006. *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2006-7*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, BELLONI R. 2006. Civil Society in War-to-Democracy Transitions. In: *War-To-Democracy Transitions: Dilemmas of Democratization and Peace-Building in War Societies* (Ed. by A. JARSTARD, & SISK, T.). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, PAFFENHOLZ T., & SPURK, C. 2006. Civil Society, Civic Engagement, and Peacebuilding. In: *Social Development Papers: Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction, n. 36*, Washington, DC: The World Bank.

[8] TAYLOR C. 1995. Invoking Civil Society. In: *Philosophical Arguments* (Ed. by C. TAYLOR). Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA.

to that set of associational modalities and market actors and structures that represent the specificity of Bosnian society. Furthermore, such an approach is likely to emphasize those aspects of 'civility' already present in Bosnian society. In this sense, it is meant to deny any idea of 'un-civil' society, as some scholars have argued in recent works: if it is true that civil society is the domain of conflicting interests and values, nonetheless it is the sphere where those conflicts are handled not violently and pluralistically. Such an approach is therefore aimed at stressing those features of 'civility', such as pluralism, non-violence, and sense of justice, which actually constitute the 'Bosnian common culture of civility'.

The work is divided into four chapters. This first chapter is meant to offer a general introduction to the theoretical issues discussed in the following chapters, which entail the concepts of identity conflicts, democratic values such as human dignity and pluralism, and civil society. Following contemporary scholarly debate, the second chapter is devoted to the understanding of contemporary ethno-religious conflicts. The idea of individual identity as the sum of plural affiliations represents the key feature for analyzing those conflicts. The third chapter is therefore devoted to deepen the content of the notion of civil society and the idea of equilibrium. Finally, in the fourth chapter, the theoretical premises are applied to the empirical case study of Bosnia-Herzegovina[9].

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[9] This section is based on a qualitative research carried out during a field-trip in Bosnia-Herzegovina from November, 30th 2007 to December, 6th 2007. The interviews were based in Sarajevo. Due to my poor knowledge of Bosnian, most of those were carried out with the support of the interpreter. For this case study, some associations of victims and relatives and some local and international institutions cooperating with them have been selected. The exact name of the associations and institutions I am referring to are: Association of Citizens *Srebrenica Mothers*- based in Srebrenica; Association of Families of Missing Persons of Sarajevo- Romanija regio- based in Eastern Sarajevo; Board of Families of Captured Soldiers and Missing Civilians, Istocno Sarajevo- based in Eastern Sarajevo; Association of Citizens *Women of Podrinje* –based in Ilidža ; Association of families of missing persons *Visegrad 92*–based in Sarajevo; Association for tracing captured and missing from Hadzici –based in Hadzici; Association *Mothers of Srebrenica and Zepa Enclaves* –based in Sarajevo; Association of families of missing persons of Municipality Vogosca- based in Vogosca; Association of Citizens *Women of Srebrenica*- based in Tuzla; ICMP; FCMP.

2. SUMMARY CHAPTERS 1-3:

Chapter 1: Understanding Ethno-religious conflicts

The first chapter offers an analysis of ethno–religious conflicts. It is split into three sections. The first section offers an introduction to the ethno-religious conflicts and their impact on international community. I discuss the difficulty to look at such conflicts through the lenses of the classic Clausewitzean theory, and the recent approaches emerged in international relations, security studies, and political economy. In the last two decades, two opposite ways to describe and understand violence have been developed. I call these two views: culturalist and rational choice perspectives. Although those approaches offer two different explanations for identity conflicts rooted in two different understandings of cultural identity, both approaches are led to consider those conflicts as the product of globalization. However, even if it is true that the globalization processes emphasize the extent and the impact of such conflicts, it would be a mistake to believe that there is a link between increased levels of ethnic or religious violence and globalization. Thus, I suggest the significance to pay more attention to the peculiar factor of these conflicts that concerns the nexus identity-violence.

The second section is devoted to a brief analysis of the main authors who started exploring the complex interconnections between culture and violence. In this section, following Amartya Sen, I investigate on the meaning of identity seen as the sum of a variety of plural affiliations. Culturalist and rational choice supporters suggest two extreme ways to look at identity in conflict: a cultural reductionism derives from the primordialist perspective suggested by the first group of scholars, while an individualist reductionism emerges from the constructivist account proposed by both versions of rational choice theory. The idea of identity as the sum of plural affiliations shows the limits of both reductionisms offering a third way to look at the identity's issue in conflict. Nevertheless, if it is true that individual identity can be described as the sum of a plurality of affiliations, the preliminary issue to be solved concerns the evidence of several internal conflicts, which seems to suggest that, given specific conditions, some affiliations, namely ethnicity religion or ethno-language, tend to overcome the others. I explain such a phenomenon in the light of a deeper understanding of the idea of *nation*. I discuss the historical and theoretical reasons that produced an understanding of the ideas of nation and territory as culturally- rooted.

In the last section, I develop an approach to ethno- religious conflicts that takes seriously into account the idea of individual identity as sum of plural affiliations. This section is split into two different steps. A first *pars destruens,* where I criticize the two reductionisms in the light of the empirical test to a conflict-case (the Bosnian war 1992-1995), is followed by the *construens* section, where I articulate an analysis of identity-conflicts that, even accepting an individualistic-rooted understanding of violence, do not underrate the role played by identity-based claims. (1) On one hand, readapting Azar's theory of PSC to contemporary identity-conflicts it is possible to focus the attention on the basic-needs deprivation, as root of violence. Such a perspective suggests that the condition of capability-deprivation, understood as lack of basic political rights and freedoms, economic opportunities and cultural recognition and free expression, generates widespread *grievances* and frustrations within society, which represent the preconditions for violent identity-conflicts. (2) On the other hand, it is necessary to pay attention to those private forms of violence that emerge

in contexts of conflict. Very often, the master cleavages, based on ethno-religious arguments, represent tools that are employed by private – sometimes criminal - individuals or associations, which I call *cultural-war-entrepreneurs*, in order to create a certain level of support to their violent actions. The impact of such actors in conflict can be explained as an odd combination of two distinct ideas of war: a Hobbesian perspective of private war – *homo homini lupus-* and a Rousseauian conception of *public interest*. Accordingly, private interests overcome and manipulate collective claims. In the long-period, such actors create new local powers based on what Foucault would have called 'bio-power', based on race/ethno- or religious supremacy, able to protract the condition of war in situations of 'presumed peace'. This perspective reverses the Clausewitzean understanding of war, since it introduces Foucault's idea that in such deeply divided societies the so-called 'peace' is a 'continuation of war by other means'. The case of Bosnia is illustrative of how such a process of 'continuation of war by other means' works in a transitional society.

Chapter 2: From conflict to civil society a normative perspective

In the second chapter, instead, the content of civil society is deepened. The chapter is split into two parts. The first part, from section 2.2 to 2.4, is devoted to a deeper understanding of the notion of civil society in the light of both an account of its traditional understanding in Western political thought and an analysis of three contemporary approaches in the different fields of political science, post-colonial studies, and international relations theories. This literary review is necessary in order to introduce the idea of equilibrium. Thus, in the next section, the analysis of Western liberal tradition referred to the notion of civil society is meant to emphasize the central role played by 'freedom', understood as the major feature of the notion of civil society. In this context, I distinguish three different streams. The FS-stream, which recovers what I call the counter-absolutist tradition, places civil society in the private sphere. Thus, the PS-stream emphasizes the eminently political role of civil society. Finally, the G-stream relates civil society to the cultural domain. Accordingly, those streams are adapted to the present revival of civil society. I analyze three contemporary approaches emerging from different fields and, finally, following Hegel's scheme, I introduce the notion of equilibrium.

The second part, the sections 2.5 and 2.6, is therefore focused on the analysis of the idea of equilibrium in contexts of deeply divided societies. In this part, the emphasis is placed on the idea of individual identity as sum of plural affiliations and its impact on the idea of civil society in identity-conflicts. I first offer a literary review of contemporary approaches to civil society's engagement in deeply divided societies. In literature, two kinds of reductionism are applied to the concept of identity. These different understandings of identity suggest two distinct ways to look at civil society. Again, cultural reductionism emphasizes the role of groups/communities as main unit of analysis of those conflicts; and, for this reason, civil society is seen as that sphere where those conflicts can be handled through the mutual recognition of such groups/communities. In this perspective, civil society is understood as a kind of 'anticipation' of the more extensive experience of the state. On the contrary, individualist reductionism suggests that individual's interests and actions are at the roots of violence. In this context, civil society has to be seen as a kind of *antistate*: that space, independent from the state, where individual autonomy is realized and universal values are fostered. The ideas of individual identity due to the overlapping of plural affiliations and civil society as 'equilibrium' are meant to replace both versions of reductionism. In this perspective, civil society is both a kind of 'anticipation' of the more extensive experience of the state and a counterweight to state power. The idea of

equilibrium introduces an understanding of civil society as bearer of those universal values and traditions, namely the 'common tradition of civility', which constitutes the basis of autonomous democratic development.

Chapter 3: *The role of civil society in post-conflict reconstruction: the case of the Associations of Mothers and Relatives of Missing Persons in Bosnia*

In the last chapter, I apply the theoretical framework discussed in the previous chapters to the actual case of Bosnian society. With reference to Bosnian context, the idea of equilibrium is meant to reduce the emphasis on non-governmental sector, understood as NGOs, giving priority to that set of associational modalities and market actors and structures that represent the specificity of Bosnian society. Such an approach is aimed at stressing those features of 'civility', such as pluralism, non-violence, and sense of justice, which actually constitute a 'Bosnian common culture of civility'.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section is meant to represent an introduction to the general case study of Bosnia-Herzegovina. After a brief historical account concerning the years of the war until the Dayton Agreement, I outline some of the major challenges to the democratic development of the emerging state: institutional hybridism, institutionalization of ethnicity, international dependency, and lack of justice in the process of reconciliation. In the second section, the theoretical framework is applied to Bosnian context. I show how such an approach is more likely to emphasize those features of 'civility' existing in Bosnian realm. Finally, in the third section the ideas of 'equilibrium' and plural affiliations are applied to an actual case of Bosnian civil society actors, the Associations of Victims and Relatives of Missing Persons.

In Bosnian context, individualist reductionism has been vastly supported by scholars and practitioners. Thus, I first test the effectiveness of the theses of both versions of individualist reductionism to the case of the associations of victims and relatives. I therefore illustrate the problems raised by the application of those approaches. Then, I show how an approach rooted in the ideas of equilibrium and plural affiliations is more likely to emphasize the constructive potential of those actors in Bosnian democratic transition. Even being relatively linked to nationalist parties and movements, those actors show to be aware of the relevance of their shared experiences and affiliations over their religious differences, in particular I refer to the experiences of "being victims" and "motherhood". Finally, I place emphasis on their struggle against impunity. Those actors are developing a common struggle for justice, understood as recognition of the human dignity of all human beings, which is becoming part of "Bosnian common culture of civility".

3. POST-CONFLICT TRANSITION AND CIVIL SOCIETY: LITERARY REVIEW

The way in which scholars look at civil society's intervention in such societies deeply varies with regard to their views about two relevant issues: their understanding of cultural identity in conflict, and their interpretation of civil society. Concerning the first problem, I have distinguished two main ways to interpret cultural identity in conflict[10]: the primordialist-essentialist perspective and the constructivist-instrumental perspective. I have called primordialists those accounts that emphasize the collectivist nature of such conflicts where the "groups" are supposed to be the main unit of analysis; while I have considered as constructivists those approaches that offer an individualistic perspective, which posits in individual's rationality the responsibility to construct or manipulate sectarian identities and to fuel violence. Therefore, the primordialist approach entails a kind of cultural reductionism, while constructivism introduces a sort of individualist reductionism.

Recently, a vast literature focused on identity-based conflicts has emerged. Nevertheless, between the extreme positions of those who support the idea of unavoidable "ancient ethnic hatreds"[11] and those who deny any significance of ethnic or cultural claims[12], one might consider at least three major approaches to ethno-religious conflicts, which are extremely influencing contemporary literature on civil society's role in supporting conflict transformation: the Protracted Social Conflicts theory, the economic approach to "greed versus grievances", and the political approach to "new nationalism".

The PSC theory, developed by Azar and Burton from the 1970s to the 1990s, still represents an important point of reference in the contemporary debate about identity in conflict[13]. Following the PSC theory, the emergence of identity-conflicts imposes to reconsider the levels of the analysis [14]– generally based on the state-level - focusing on the

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[10] It is relevant to note that this distinction primordialism/constructivism is often employed by scholars of conflict analysis. [HOROWITZ D.L. 1998. Structure and Strategy in Ethnic Conflict. Op. cit.] Sometimes other categories have been added to this antithesis; Varshney, for example, recognizes four categories *essentialism, instrumentalism, constructivism, and institutionalism*. In my interpretation, instead, both primordialism and constructivism are considered in their broadest versions. Actually, I recover the two terms from the scholarly debate in order to show how different understandings of cultural identity translate into two different kinds of reductionism: cultural reductionism and individualist reductionism. VARSHNEY A. 2003a. *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India.* Op. cit.:23-39.

[11] HUNTINGTON S.P. 1993. The Clash of Civilizations?. Op. cit.; HUNTINGTON S.P. 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order.* Op. cit.; IGNATIEFF M. 1993. *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism.* Op.cit.; IGNATIEFF M. 1997. *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience.* Op.cit.; KAPLAN R. 1993. *Balkan Ghosts*. Op.cit.

[12] FUKUYAMA F. 1992. *The End of History and the Last Man.* Free Press, New York.

[13] GURR T.R. 1994. Peoples against the State: Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Changing World System. *International Studies Quarterly* **38**: 347–377, GURR T.R. 2001. Minorities and Nationalists: Managing Ethnopolitical Conflict in the New Century. In: *Turbolent Peace. The Challenges of Managing International Conflict* (Ed. by C. CROCKER, A. , & HAMPSON, F. O., & AALL, P.). United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington, DC, RAMSBOTHAM O. 2005. The Analysis of Protracted Social Conflict: a Tribute to Edward Azar. *Review of International Studies* **31**: 109–126.

[14] In contrast to the well known levels of analysis framework proposed by Kenneth Waltz, in which he distinguished system, state and individual levels.

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communal level. Multi-communal societies, mostly postcolonial states, are characterized by the "prolonged and often violent struggles among different communal groups' for some 'basic needs', such as security, recognition, and acceptance, fair access to political institution and economic participation".[15] This approach entails a kind of collectivism since it looks at the identity groups – i.e. ethnic, religious, or racial groups - as the most useful unit of analysis in those contexts of protracted social conflicts. According to the PSC theory, any approach aimed at eradicating the conflict has to take into account these deep fractures within society.

Conversely, the two further approaches present two different versions of rational choice theory. In the first case - the economic approach to "greed versus grievance"-, the emphasis is placed on some economic factors, such as low per capita income, slow economic growth, and large exports of natural resources.[16] These features shape the basis of the conflict while rational actors use identity-based arguments in order to create a certain level of consent within society. According to this perspective, violent internal conflicts are due to the emergence of rebel organizations. In contrast to the PSC theory, such organizations are seen not as protest movements emerged in response to the needs-deprivations of their community, but as "the ultimate manifestation of organized crime."[17] Therefore, those organizations develop discourses on 'grievances' in order to be supported by people belonging to their community-group; 'in practice' the identitarian motivation for those organizations is unimportant, what matters is "whether the organization can sustain itself financially"[18]: thus, the motivation for those violent actions is rooted in greed rather than grievance. [19]

The second approach- "new nationalism"- sees the emergence of new ideologies based on religious or ethnic features as the real source of conflict. These manufactured sectarian ideologies are aimed at legitimizing authoritarian leaders, new aspirants to power in moment of transition, or common criminals in their criminal actions [20]. Even sharing the main idea of the economic approach, which assumes that greed rather than grievance motivates those actors, in this account, the role played by the "new nationalisms" becomes more relevant. According to this view, it would be misleading to believe that those new ideologies - recently appeared in Eastern Europe and in several African and Asian countries - can be dismissed as unimportant. Actually, the emergence of such new forms of identitarian violence reflect deep political shifts due to the phenomenon of globalization: societies have entered a new phase of insecurity that can be hardly framed within and

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[15] AZAR E.E. 1990. Protracted Social Conflict: An Analytical Framework. Op.cit.: 93.

[16] See also, FEARON J.D. 2005. Primary Commodity Exports and Civil War. Op. cit.

[17] COLLIER P. 2007. Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and Their Implications for Policy. Op. cit.:198.

[18] COLLIER P. 2007. Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and Their Implications for Policy. Op. cit.: 199

[19] See COLLIER P. 2007. Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and Their Implications for Policy. Op. cit.; COLLIER P., & HOEFFLER A., & SÖDERBOM M. 2006. Op. cit.; COLLIER P., & HOEFFLER, A. 2004. Greed and grievance in civil war. Op. cit.

[20] BRUBAKER R., & LAITIN, D. D. 1998. Ethnic and Nationalist Violence. *Annual Review of Sociology* **24**: 423-452. BRUBAKER R..2004. *Ethnicity without Groups*. Op. cit.; KALDOR M., & KOSTOVIKOVA, D., & SAID, Y. 2007. War and Peace: The Role of Global Civil Society. Op. cit.

understood through classical political categories, such as nation or territory. This means that it is necessary to offer new political answers and categories able to face the current wave of identitarian violence[21].

With reference to the second issue, in spite of its centrality to Western political theory, there is no agreement on its actual content. As noted in the previous sections, it is possible to summarize at least three main positions. A first approach places civil society in the economic realm. A political account locates an independent civil society between both state and economy, in this context civil society is supposed to be a crucial means for performing shared political interests and for informing governments of citizens' fundamental needs. Finally, a third cultural-oriented account recognizes a kind of 'civility' in those sets of cultural traditions and historical heritage held by each society, it implies the possibility to have different versions of civil society with regard to different contexts[22].

The concept of civil society has been recovered only recently in the field of conflict transformation. All the above-mentioned approaches have in turn deeply influenced contemporary literature on conflict transformation; however, what seems to be relevant in such a context concerns the application of both reductionisms to the notion of civil society. On one hand, scholars who look at identity conflicts through the lenses of cultural reductionism tend to underline the "corporative" character of civil society. In such a perspective, civil society is understood as fundamental stage of development in which different groups can recognize each other and cooperate in only one system. According to this perspective, if it is true that the communal level is the source of the identity-conflict, it is therefore necessary to work at this level in order to overcome the condition of conflict among the different ethnic or religious communities. On the other hand, supporters of the individualistic account of conflicts see civil society as the space, where individual autonomy and shared political pursuits emerge. In this perspective, civil society represents such a 'middle ground'[23] between individuals and the state; and it functions both as constraint to state power and means of realization of individuals' capacities. According to the

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[21] In general, as I have shown in the first section of chapter 1, *Understanding ethno-religious conflicts,* such an answer is represented by cosmopolitanism. See STUBBS P. 1996. Nationalism, Globalization and Civil Society in Croatia and Slovenia. *Reseach in social Movements, Conflicts and Changes* **19**: 1-26. And KALDOR M. 2003a. *Global Civil Society.*Op.cit.; KALDOR M. 1999. *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era.* Op. cit.

[22] As I noted before, this kind of understanding of civil society is often argued by post-colonial scholars in their efforts to offer formulations of civil society alternative to Western tradition. Nevertheless, it is important to note that in its cultural interpretation civil society can be read in the light of two different traditions. Scholars who consider the counter hegemonic potential of civil society follow Gramsci's tradition, while those who conceive of civil society as the result of a specific historical and cultural development of a given civilization are more close to the Hegelian tradition. GRAMSCI A. 1910-1926. Lettere dal Carcere. In: *Selection from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (Ed. by Q. HOARE, & NOWELL-SMITH, G.). Lawrence & Wishart, London, BOBBIO N. 1988. Gramsci and the Concept of Civil Society. In: *Civil Society and the State. New European Perspectives* (Ed. by J. KEANE). Verso, London. The main difference between the two approaches is that while the first group of scholars seeks to offer alternative non-western versions of civil society –as in the case illustrated here-, the second group of scholars tends to reduce the universality of civil society, which is considered as a phenomenon deeply rooted in Western culture and history. See also KHILNANI S. 2001. The Development of Civil Society. In: *Civil Society, History and Possibilities* (Ed. by S.K. KAVIRAJ, S.). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

[23] BELLONI R. 2001. Civil Society and Peace-building in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Op. cit.: 168.

individualistic account, a strong civil society is supposed to be a '*conditio sine qua non*' for modern and viable democracies.

Cultural reductionism & Cultural Stream:

(1) Thus, following the culturalist perspective, civil society represents that intermediate ground where it is possible to mediate between a condition of pluralism, understood as different groups with their interests and goals, and the state. Rather than in antithesis to the governmental authority, civil society is therefore understood as a sort of 'anticipation' of the more extensive experience of the state. It is a crucial stage in the development of people belonging to different communities, who have to deal with diversity. Therefore, before that at the state-level, it is at the level of civil society that it is possible to mediate collective claims through the emergence of 'civic links[24]' across different communities.

The involvement of people belonging to different ethnic or religious groups in one cooperative system represents a way to create trust and a certain level of social solidarity and inclusiveness within society.[25] Accordingly, the emergence of new 'inter-communal civic links' are supposed to foster the reconciliation process among different ethno-religious groups, giving people the chance to recognize and include the "others" in activities and shared experiences.[26] Furthermore, the voluntary basis of the associational mechanisms of civil society improve people's living conditions reducing the economic marginalization and the inequalities within different groups, which constitute underlying causes of frustration and conflict[27]. In general, since its 'corporative' understanding of civil society, this first approach recognize as civil society all those formal and informal institutions and organizations aimed at 'educating people for citizenship'.

Individualist Reductionism & Economic and Political streams:

(2) Conversely, according to the second account, which considers civil society as the sphere of individuals' freedom in antithesis to that of the state, civil society is supposed to function as key feature in supporting democratic transition, balancing individuals' aspirations and state authority. In this context, civil society is alleged to be the realm of toleration where the pluralistic integration of individuals is due to its participative and communicative mechanisms. These mechanisms provide the balance between private

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[24] VARSHNEY A. 2003a. *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India.* Op. cit.: 47.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] See also LEDERACH J.P. 1997. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies.* Op. Cit. and LEDERACH J.P. 2001. Civil Society and Reconciliation. Op. Cit.

[27] CHARNEY C. 1999. Civil Society, Political Violence, and Democratic Transitions: Business and the Peace Process in South Africa, 1990 to 1994. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* **41**: 182-206, WOOLCOCK M. & NARAYAN D. 2000. Social Capital: Implications for Development Theory, Research, and Policy. *World Bank Res Obs* **15**: 225-249, FISHER M. 2006a. Civil Society in Conflict Transformation: Ambivalence, Potential, and Challenges. In: *Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management*, Berlin, PICKERING M.P. 2006 Generating social capital for bridging ethnic divisions in the Balkans: Case studies of two Bosniak cities *Ethnic and Racial Studies* **29**: 79-103.

interests and governmental power insuring people freedom and offering them a wide set of opportunities for participation in social life.

In this context, supporters of the economic approach to "greed versus grievance" tend to give priority to an understanding of civil society as 'counterweight to state authority', stressing its constructive potential in addressing accountability and transparency in both political and economic sectors. Conversely, supporters of the political version of individualist reductionism see civil society as the sphere of civility and liberal values. According to them, a strong civil society that promote non-sectarian identities – such as cosmopolitan groups, human rights groups or women groups – is needed for overcoming the nationalist ideologies emerged during the conflict. It allows the process to move toward a common political culture based on peace and human rights values (M. Kaldor, 2003a; M. Kaldor, & Kostovikova, D., & Said, Y., 2007). Therefore, with reference to individual reductionism, a first group of scholars invokes civil society intervention to control over state authority, while the second group tends to emphasize the independence of civil society from the state (see table 1, below).

CULTURAL IDENTITY/ CONFLICT THEORIES/ CS APPROACHES	PSC THEORY	GREED VS GRIEVANCES	NEW NATIONALISM
Cultural reductionism	Civil Society as 'anticipation' of the state: • facilitating the inter-ethnic dialogue, • endorsing reconciliation among different communities, • reducing economic inequalities among different groups		
Individualist Reductionism		Civil society as 'counterweight' to state authority • introducing a greater transparency in the resource sector (in particular in primary commodity) • promoting social and humanitarian services as alternative to the overbearing state	Civil society as 'private sphere' of individual autonomy and liberal values • promoting non-sectarian identities • developing civility within society • information politics • accountability politics

Table 1: *Different approaches to civil society in conflict transformation*

4. IDENTITY AS PLURAL AFFILIATION AND CIVIL SOCIETY AS EQUILIBRIUM AMONG CULTURE, POLITICS AND ECONOMY: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical premises of the present work are based on two alternative understandings of identity-conflicts and civil society. Both the perspective of individual identity understood as overlapping of different plural affiliations[28] and the idea of civil society as equilibrium among the three domains of culture, politics, and economy are supposed to replace both individualistic and cultural reductionisms emerged in contemporary literature on civil society' engagement in conflict transformation. The assumption that individual's identity is made up of plural identitarian affiliations introduces an idea of identity-conflict that, even accepting an individualistic-rooted understanding of violence, does not underrate the existing relation between identity-based claims and violence. Furthermore, the idea of civil society seen as equilibrium among the three domains of culture, politics, and economy allows overcoming the problems raised by the two reductionisms as well as the limits of an understanding of civil society as product of the West.

In the theoretical framework of the present work, the idea of plural affiliations plays a crucial role in defining cultural identity, which is assumed to be a key feature in both identity-conflicts and civil society. Two main approaches to cultural identity have been applied in turn to identity-conflict and civil society. I have called those approaches individualistic reductionism and cultural reductionism. The first shows a complete lack of interest about cultural identity. It looks at the individuals as fundamental subjects of any political action. Conversely, the second represents its opposite version. It looks at individuals not as separate units, but as integral part of a larger and more complex group (i.e., extended family, village, ethnic or religious community). In the light of this, individuals' actions and motivations can hardly be described without considering the significance of their shared cultural identity. Both views are extremely dangerous and, what is more relevant, do not help to explain the content of cultural identity and the significance of the quest of recognition in contemporary deeply divided societies.

The idea that individuals are independent islands is hardly arguable in real life. This assumption becomes even stronger with regard to conflicts. As Kalyvas pointed out, if there is no doubt that new civil wars have an individualistic root, based on private interests and actions; nonetheless, it seems difficult to isolate this element from the collective and ideological dimension of violence. [29]At the same time, it is extremely dangerous to maintain that individual's actions are deeply rooted in shared experiences within groups or communities. A strong emphasis on cultural differences among groups, would lead to the extreme thesis that cultural heterogeneity itself is at the root of the conflict[30].

Following Amartya Sen, it seems more plausible to argue that each individual holds a plurality of identitarian affiliations[31]. Ethnic as well as religious features represent just some

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[28] SEN A. 2006. *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny.* Op.cit.

[29] KALYVAS S.N. 2003. The Ontology of "Political Violence": Action and Identity in Civil Wars. Op.cit.

[30] HUNTINGTON S.P. 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order.* Op. cit.

[31] SEN A. 2006. *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny.* Op.cit.

attributions of individual identity. An individual recognizes himself in terms of age, gender, profession, level of education, political ideology, religious beliefs, nationality, race, caste, and ethnic affiliation. Accordingly, each individual is the result of a complex set of different identitarian affiliations. Without considering the emotional side of their shared identities, it would be impossible to explain the human experiences of such people as Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa or Gandhi. [32] At the same time, focusing the attention on one affiliation – for instance the religious one- is not enough in order to explain the complexity of such human experiences.
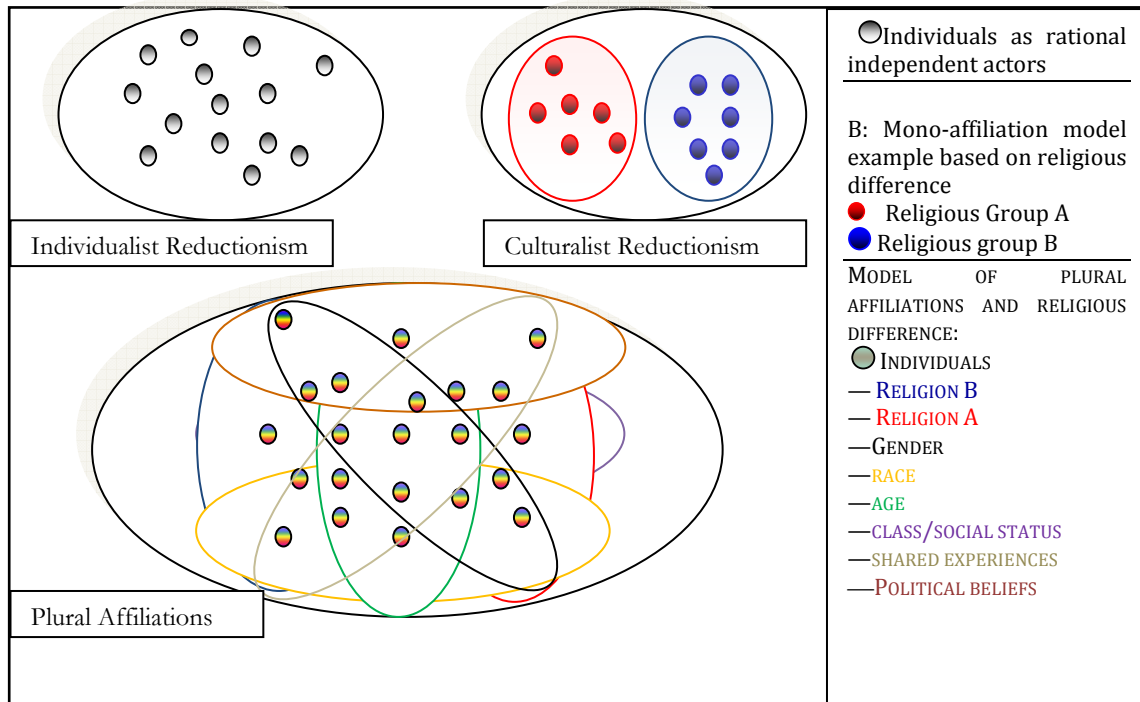
As such, the idea of plural affiliations does not say anything about the link between identity and violence. Therefore, if it is true that each individual identity is due to the overlapping of plural affiliations, it becomes important to understand how and why in several internal conflicts some cultural features- as for instance ethnicity, race or religion- are likely to overcome the other attributions fuelling violence. I seek to explain this phenomenon in the light of three distinct arguments: the cultural rooted idea of nation, the spread condition of capability-deprivation within society, the role of cultural-war entrepreneurs in fuelling sectarian violence.

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[32] In order to clarify this point, I use to make the example of Mother Teresa. It is difficult to describe her decision to become a missionary in rational terms, at the same time, it is clear that her religious attribution, Christianity, is not enough for understanding her human experience. She used to define herself as a woman ("I am a woman), as Albanian ("by blood, I am Albanian") but also Indian by adoption ("by citizenship, an Indian"), as catholic ("By faith, I am a catholic nun") and, what is more important, as part of the human community ("As to my calling, I belong to the world."). Mother Teresa's experience can be hardly understood without considering that it was the result of the peculiar combination of all those attributions. The idea of plural identitarian affiliations does not deny an individualistic account, indeed, such an understanding is meant to grasp all the different attributions that make each individual unique and unrepeatable.

(1) The first issue entails an historical explanation of the link between territory and cultural features. Before deepening the content of any identity-conflict, it is necessary to make clear that if the issue of recognition of some specific affiliations- namely ethnic, religious, or linguistic affiliations- affects the territory and, therefore, any kind of conflict over its boundaries; this is due to a specific historical development of the idea of nation over the centuries. In order to clarify this point, it can be useful to make an example. One person can be Italian citizen, French-speaking and residing in the USA without any contradiction. Nevertheless, within Italian boundaries that person might be considered as part of a minority group, because in the alleged definition of Italian nationality the language represents a factor of strong cultural identification. [33] In everyday life, one might discover a boundless variety of combinations of different affiliations. However, within national boundaries such affiliations are likely to become more relevant. This is because, in the last two centuries, the idea of Nation has increasingly overlapped with a notion of territorially based political unity combined with a greater or lesser degree of cultural unity. Since its Latin usage, the word natio, which derived from the verb "nascor," was actually related to an idea of 'birth'[34] . Then, when the word came back into use in the end 18h Century, the first supporters of the idea of Nation - such as Rousseau, Herder, Fichte, and Mazzini - recovered from the ancient tradition such an idea of birth. Suddenly, the idea Nation started to indicate the association of cultural and historical developments of societies with the territory where those societies used to live.

Conversely, contemporary scholars tend to make a distinction between civic nations, based on the idea of political community – i.e. France or the United States- and cultural nations, based on a certain degree of cultural unity – i.e. Iran or Israel. Even if suggestive, this kind of distinction is based on the false assumption that some contemporary examples of nationalism are concerned with political principles rather than cultural features. [35]In truth, the role of cultural features, as for instance the language, in the alleged civic nations cannot be dismissed as mere administrative convenience or method of unifying communication across society. If we look at the French case, which is often employed as typical example of civic nation, it is relevant to note that at least one cultural feature, namely the common language, was brutally imposed on Basques, Bretons and other linguistic minorities with the clear purpose of creating a "common French identity."[36] Thus, French nationalism, as many other cases of alleged civic nationalism, has been rooted not only in political principles, such as equality and freedom, but also in a shared French culture, based on the linguistic homogeneity. That is, nationalism is always concerned with culture; the only thing that is possible to add to this assumption is that such cultural features are likely to become even more relevant in absence of a strong democratic system. Actually, in a liberal

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[33] With reference to this, Hobsbawm emphasized, "for Germans and Italians, their national language was not merely an administrative convenience, or a means of unifying state-wide communication […] It was even more the vehicle of a distinguished literature and of universal intellectual expression. It was the *only* thing that made them Germans or Italians […]".Hobsbawm , E., *The Rise of Ethno-Linguistic Nationalisms,* p. 177 HUTCHINSON J., & SMITH, A. 1994b. *Nationalism.* Oxford University Press, Oxford.

[34] The Romans employed this word to indicate barbarian or people belonging to distant territories.

[35] KYMLICKA W. 2001. *Politics in the Vernacular.* Op. cit.

[36] *Ibid.*

democratic country, the special link between some specific cultural features and the idea of nation is mitigated by the democratic principles themselves. Conversely, in contexts of failing-failed states - mostly post-colonial countries or former multinational states – where the balance between democratic principles and cultural features is still weak or totally absent cultural attributions strongly influence the idea of nation, and the conflicts over its boundaries.

(2) Since the idea of nation embodies the link between cultural community and territory, this can explain why several cases of conflict over the territory, either intrastate or inter-state conflicts, are fought with strong cultural motivations.[37] Furthermore, although nationalism necessarily entails cultural features, there is a significant inverse relation between the relevance of those cultural affiliations and democracy. In a democratic state, the guarantee of civil and political rights and freedoms that enable people to lead the lives they value offers a "detailed and more satisfying substitute" [38] for identitarian violence.[39]In addition to this, an elected government is less likely to create situations of social grievances and inequalities, because it would lose the support of citizens [40].

Conversely, in absence of democratic rules or in contexts in which democracy is still weak and the level of inequality is high, the weight of cultural features becomes more significant; very often, the line of inequality overlaps with the cultural fault lines, and the issue of recognition becomes dramatically important. However, in the perspective of the plural affiliations, the problem of recognition has to be understood in a peculiar way. The condition of spread inequalities and lack of substantive freedoms affects individual's freedom and ability to choose about the relative weight to confer to the different affiliations, leading individuals to deny the existence of a plurality of affiliations for themselves and the others. Societies are therefore redesigned into rigid schemes of incompatible mono-affiliations.

Therefore, it is possible to readapt Azar's argument on basic needs deprivation assuming that the condition of capability-deprivation, [41]understood as lack of basic political rights and freedoms, economic opportunities and cultural recognition and free expression, is the actual root of identitarian violence. Again, in contrast to the supporters of the economic approach to "greed versus grievance," grievances and frustrations within society represent the preconditions for violent identity-conflicts. This kind of readaptation of Azar's arguments is meant to introduce the argument of freedom and the rise of violence deriving from freedom-deprivation. In this perspective, the role of the 'state', understood as super-partes authority, is still crucial: the presence of democratic rules able to support individuals'

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[37] At this stage, it does not matter whether those motivations are constructed or not, what matters here is that those motivations find their origins in that *imagining link* between cultural unity and territory, suggested by the idea of nation.

[38] BARNETT J. 2008. Peace and Development: Towards a New Synthesis. Op. cit.: 82.

[39] *Ibid.*

[40] With regard to this, see the argument about the role of democracy in preventing famine, Famine and Other Crises, in SEN A. 1999. *Development As Freedom.* Op.cit.

[41] SEN A. 1999. *Development As Freedom.* Op.cit.

free expression and self-determination is actually an important condition for peace. At the same time, this approach is meant to emphasize the role of individuals with their plural affiliations as main subject of the analysis, rather than 'identity groups' as such. When in a society, the level of inequalities is high, in terms of poverty, unfair access to political institutions and denial of political and civil rights, high and unequally distributed levels of illiteracy, and high levels of exclusion and identitarian segregation, an identity conflict is more likely to happen. Contrarily to the thesis of greed proposed by political economy school, the notion of capability– deprivation considers poverty in terms of lack of substantive freedoms. In this sense, the idea of incapability involves a series of factors, such as inequalities or deprivation of political and civil rights, which were neglected in both versions of individualist reductionism.

(3) However, as stated by constructivist scholars, the underlying causes of an identity conflict can hardly be understood without reference to those private forms of violence that emerge and find space in contexts of deeply divided societies. Very often, the master cleavages, based on ethno-religious arguments, are employed by private – sometimes criminal - individuals or associations, which I call cultural-war-entrepreneurs, in order to create a certain level of support to their violent actions[42]. Frequently, those actors take advantage of the spread condition of capability deprivation within society, fuelling the outbreak of sectarian violence. Thus, the impact of such actors in conflict can be explained as an odd combination of two distinct ideas of war: a Hobbesian perspective of private war – homo homini lupus- and a Rousseauian conception of *public interest*[43]. Accordingly, private interests overcome and manipulate collective claims.[44] In the long-period, such actors create new local powers based on what Foucault called "bio-power", based on race/ethno- or religious supremacy, able to protract the condition of war in situations of "presumed peace".[45] This perspective reverses the Clausewitzean understanding of war, since it introduces Foucault's idea that in such deeply divided societies the so-called "peace" is a "continuation of war by other means." The case of Bosnia is illustrative of how such a process of "continuation of war by other means" works in a transitional society. [46]

Similarly, the idea of plural affiliations translates into the notion of civil society. Contemporary literature on civil society' engagement in post conflict transition is deeply influenced by both reductionisms. Supporters of cultural reductionism emphasize the corporative character of civil society; while, those who maintain an individualist position offer, in turn, two interpretations of civil society, as a counterweight to state authority and as an independent sphere of individual autonomy and liberal values. Conversely, the assumption of the plural affiliations reverses the problem: if each individual identity is unique since it is the sum of a complex set of plural affiliations - in terms of race, age,

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[42] BRUBAKER R..2004. *Ethnicity without Groups*. Op. cit.. Op.cit.

[43] On this point, see also KALYVAS S.N. 2003. The Ontology of "Political Violence": Action and Identity in Civil Wars.Op. cit.

[44] *Ibid.*

[45] FOUCAULT M. 2003. *Society Must Be Defended*. Op.cit.

[46] See the role of nationalist parties in Bosnia, in the next chapter, *Bosnia Case study*.

gender, ethnicity, religion, experiences, class and so on; nonetheless, each individual shares some of those affiliations[47] with others. Individuals can hardly be understood as rational automata, neither it is possible to assume the existence within society of well-defined identitarian groups where individuals share all the same affiliations. This line of thought entails a more complex understanding of society; neither a perspective based on the idea of individuals, understood as rational and independent actors, nor cultural reductionism, as such, are able to explain the complex variety of links and affiliations that each individual holds. With reference to idea of civil society, this standpoint allows overcoming the dualism suggested by the two reductionisms. Civil society is, thus, not only a kind of 'anticipation' of the more extensive experience of the state, but also a constraint to state authority; it is both the sphere of individual autonomy and that of shared and conflicting values and interests.

In order to understand the actual content of civil society, it is necessary to dismiss both collectivist and individualist assumptions, prioritizing an idea of society in which individuals are connected to each other through a plurality of affiliations. In general, the idea of civil society has been associated to the three spheres of culture, economy, and politics. Each of these domains has been considered by the respective supporters as the actual domain of it. But, speaking in terms of plural affiliations, each of those perspectives gives priority to only one set of affiliations over the others, respectively economic affiliations, socio-political affiliations, or cultural affiliations. Therefore, in order to guarantee the condition of the plural affiliations civil society has to be understood as a complex 'equilibrium' among the all three domains. In this perspective, civil society is that sphere operating among the state, the family, and the market comprising each one of those dimensions. It is supposed to produce two relevant outcomes. First, the tension among those forces guarantees the realization of freedom, and, therefore, the separation between civil society and state. Second, the balance between individualistic presuppositions and collectivistic nature of the affiliations guarantees that individuals in civil society are actually experiencing a kind of anticipation of the more extensive practice of pluralistic integration of the state.

(1)Again, the idea of plural affiliations introduces an understanding of civil society as the realm where individual interests compete with collective aspirations; in this context, the mediation between groups and individuals is guaranteed by the presence of the three spheres of politics, culture, and economy. (2) Furthermore, the fact that civil society is the product of specific historical development of a given society – made up of cultural, political, and economic features- implies that it is possible to begin the democratic path with those features of "civility" already existing in a given society that can deeply vary with regard to different contexts. (3) Finally, the condition of equilibrium in civil society entails an idea of "common culture of civility", which represent an intermediate step between a private 'background culture' and a public 'political culture', able to sustain the process of pluralistic integration within society.

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[47] With greater or lesser emphasis.

Civil society and democratic transition: a 'common culture of civility'

The idea of equilibrium, rooted in an understanding of individual identity based on plural affiliations, entails a conception of civil society complex and historically rooted. If it is true that civil society represents a precise step in the development of the state, therefore an approach to conflict transition based on the idea of civil society is supposed to take into consideration all those associational mechanisms and market organizational modalities already existing within society.

This line of thought gives priority to a comprehensive understanding of civil society that involves all those associational mechanisms existing between state and family. Thus, the alleged role of 'civil society', as bearer of liberal and non-sectarian values, can work in practice only if those organizations are actually embedded in the social reality of the context of intervention. In the same way, the ability of those organizations to represent an actual counterweight to the state crucially depends on their actual capacity to represent the people. Thus, the idea of equilibrium entails an approach to civil society primarily aimed at strengthening those forms of civility and pluralism already existing at the local level.

Therefore, the effectiveness of civil society involvement in post conflict transition crucially depends on how much it actually represents the specificity of the country of intervention and the people living that country. However, although such an idea entails much of the Hegelian assumptions, it would be misleading to think that it denies any possibility for a synthesis between the specificity of historical traditions and the universality of values such as tolerance, and freedom.[48] As in Hegel's frame the individualistic assumption of the 'system of needs' mediates the sense of place, of local, of religion and identity embodied by the idea of 'corporation' [49], here the balance among cultural, political and economic domains guarantees a mediation between individualism and cultural identifications and, therefore, between universalism of values and particularism of shared experiences and traditions.

The approach to conflict transition based on civil society has thus to take into consideration those aspects of 'civility' compatible with an autonomous democratic development of the country, especially with those universal values, such as freedom, tolerance, and protection of human dignity, understood by people as necessary in order to overcome the boundaries emerged during the conflict.

In this perspective, the notion of equilibrium entails an understanding of civil society where it is possible to recognize some aspects of a 'common culture of civility' that represent the basis for an autonomous democratic development. I consider this kind of 'culture' as an intermediate step between what Rawls have called 'public political culture' and 'background culture'[50]. However, while Rawls places those two kinds of culture at the public level in the

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[48] For a further reading on such a liberal understanding of Hegel's civil society see RAWLS J. 2000. *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy*. Op. cit..

[49] See *2.5.1 From Hegel' bourgeois society to the idea of equilibrium*.

[50]"[…] The third feature of a political conception of justice is that its content is expressed in terms of certain fundamental ideas seen as implicit in the public political culture of a democratic society. This public culture

first case and at the private level in the second one, here such 'common tradition of civility' is supposed to function as ground for mutual recognition that is in between those levels.

In my understanding, such a tradition of civility is made up of all those shared values, such as tolerance, common sense of justice, non-violence but also traditional behaviors and customs of a society, which constitute the basis of the democratic practice of public reasoning. As said, this culture is not yet 'political' or still 'private'. Nevertheless, it represents that ground, where specific traditions shape those universal values, which constitute the basis for an autonomous democratic development of the society.

Thus, a last crucial feature concerns the link existing between the idea of equilibrium and democracy. It is necessary to clarify that 'civil society' cannot replace 'democracy'. In contemporary pluralistic societies, democracy requires an 'overlapping consensus' over a fundamental political conception. Furthermore, such a consensus is meant to include all the major democratic institutions, namely the basic structure of the society. Of course, the idea of 'common culture of civility' is not supposed to replace that overlapping consensus required to democracy. It is rather that "dialogic part of the common human inheritance,"[51] on which it is possible to build an autonomous path toward democracy.

What we need in post-conflict transition is to emphasize the 'common tradition of civility' already existing in the society. Accordingly, the argument proposed in this work is that an effective approach to democratic transition has to start from below and has to take into account the cultural specificity and the common sense of justice emerging from those people who are actually involved in the democratization process. In those contexts, an ideal and universal value of democracy emerges as deeply linked to the preservation of human dignity and the restoration of a pluralistic dialog based on public reasoning and tolerance.

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comprises the political institutions of a constitutional regime and the public traditions of their interpretations (including those of the judiciary) as well as historic texts and document that are common knowledge. Comprehensive doctrines of all kinds belong to what we may call the 'background culture' of civil society. This is the culture of the social, not of the political. It is the culture of daily life, of its many associations: churches and universities, learned and scientific societies, clubs and teams […]. In a democratic society there is a tradition of democratic thought, the content of which is at least familiar and intelligible to the educated common sense of citizens generally. Society's main institutions, and their accepted forms of interpretation, are seen as fund of implicitly shared ideas and principles." RAWLS J. 2005. *Political Liberalism*. Op. cit.:13-14.

[51] SEN A. March 2006. Democracy isn't "Western". Op. cit.

5. BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA CASE STUDY

In the last chapter, I outlined four major challenges to Bosnian democratic transition: the 'institutional hybridism'; the power of nationalist parties in the political realm due to both the 'institutionalization of ethnicity' and the international interventionism; the condition of deep dependency of Bosnian politics and economy from international community; and the deficit of justice in the process of reconciliation. The institution of the two entities and the relevance of nationalist parties in the political realm are strongly undermining the pluralistic integration of Bosnian citizens; while the external interventionism and the deficit of a justice not only are increasingly alienating people from 'official politics', but these are questioning the development of people's sense of justice and democracy.

In this context, the alleged constructive role of civil society crucially depends on its capacity to represent the sphere where individuals are able to recognize and deal with those problems by appealing to Bosnian shared tradition of civility and by developing that sense of justice required for the democratic development of the country. The approach to civil society I have suggested is not aimed at emphasizing those features of democracy already present at the societal level. The assumption that civil society, as such, is the expression of democratic and universalistic values is questionable. Furthermore, it would be misleading to believe that civil society, understood as expression of democratic values, can substitute actual and fair democratic institutions. However, in this work, I have referred to an idea of civil society that can represent the specificity of Bosnian tradition of 'civility', where some of those universal values that should constitute the 'public political culture' of a liberal democracy are emerging in the form of a 'Bosnian common culture of civility'. This culture is understood as ground on which an autonomous Bosnian democratic development may emerge.

With reference to the case of the Associations of Victims and Relatives of Missing Persons, I have shown how this approach is likely to display the relevance of those actors in Bosnian context. They actually represent Bosnian social reality since they are independent from external aids both economically and politically. However, most of them still relatively depend on nationalist parties moreover in financial terms; nationalist parties have been inclined to ensure the favour and the support of those associations by funding campaigns of exhumation of the bodies and events and sepulchral monuments to the memory of the victims. Nevertheless, the common pursuit of justice and truth that holds together those associations in their struggle against impunity and for the recognition of the human dignity of all victims is weakening those links between them and their respective nationalist parties. Surprisingly, those actors are progressively articulating a common strategy in the direction of truth and justice for the victims of the war and for Bosnian society, as such. Rather than a judicial issue, such a struggle is becoming a fundamental warning to Bosnian citizens; it is supposed to signify 'never again'. New affiliations and shared experiences, such as 'motherhood' or 'being victim', are becoming meaningful in this struggle.

In this sense, the constructive potential of those associations for Bosnian democratic development is threefold.

1. First, they are effectively addressing a crucial issue for Bosnian democracy, which is linked to a substantial reform of the system of justice aimed at emphasizing the value of human dignity of all human beings.

2. Second, such a common struggle for justice is displaying new possibilities for the actual cooperation among human beings who, even belonging to different religious groups, share many other affiliations and, moreover, a common tradition of Bosnian 'civility'.
3. Third, through their efforts in addressing values such as human dignity and justice they are translating those issues from the private level of their own experiences to the public level of the experience of all those potentially and actually threatened and victimized by the inhumanity of the ethnic violence. In doing so, those values are becoming part of the "common tradition of civility" of Bosnian society.

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