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Conflict society: understanding the role of civil society in conflict

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This article analyses the relationship between civil society and conflict. It aims to provide an analytical framework to unpack this complex relationship and assess the impacts which civil society may have on conflict. In a first section, it analyses the implications of context on civil society, namely the implications that statehood, democracy, nationalism, development and international presence have on the nature of civil society. In the second section it examines more specifically the role of civil society in ethno-political conflicts, or as we rename it 'conflict society'. The final section turns to the identification of different factors determining the impact of civil society on conflicts, including political identities, frameworks of action and political opportunity structures in which civil society actors operate. Accordingly, the different combinations of these determinants lead to the formation of civil society actors and ensuing actions that can either fuel conflict, sustain the status quo, or build peace.

Keywords:

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Introduction

It is widely recognized in the literature that civil society plays a key role in fostering democratic governance in peaceful societies. Yet the political significance of civil society may be far more prominent in contexts marked by conflict. Being characterized by a higher degree of politicization and a less structured institutional setting, conflict situations may generate a more intense mobilization of civil society. Here politicization is of a qualitatively different nature, as it occurs in view of the life-or-death nature of politics. Contrary to peaceful contexts, in conflict situations the existential nature of politics and the securitizations that follow generate different societal incentives to mobilize.[1] The cross-sectional nature of existential or securitized politics thus yields a quantitatively higher degree of public action spanning across different sectors in society. The different understandings of the causes of conflict and the adequate responses to them may in turn lead to the formation of civil society actors and ensuing actions that can fuel conflict, sustain the status quo or promote peace. Within this context, the aim of this article is to identify the determinants which affect the differing impacts of civil society on conflict.

In order to tackle the interrelationship between civil society and conflict, this article is structured as follows. In the literature, civil society has been normally discussed and analysed in Western, peaceful, democratic and developed contexts. Because of this we begin by analysing the implications of context on civil society, and more precisely the implications of statehood, democracy, nationalism, development and international presence on the nature of civil society. In section two we introduce more specifically the role of civil society in conflict and define what we rename as 'conflict society'. Finally we turn to different factors determining

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1 A 'securitizing move' is a speech act which depicts the 'Other' as an existential threat to a specific group, calling for urgent and extraordinary measures to combat this threat. See Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap H. De Wilde, *Security. A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 21, 24. Analytically, securitization therefore provides a formal-discursive definition of what security is.

the impact of civil society on conflicts. In particular, we analyse the impact of their political identities, frameworks of action and political opportunity structures in which they operate. We conclude by mapping the analytical steps that might be followed when trying to understand the role of civil society in conflict.

Civil society in context

The theoretical and empirical study of civil society – from Hobbes to Habermas, up until the recent literature on global civil society – sprang from specific historical, political and socio-economic backgrounds. These contexts shaped both the views of the authors in question and the nature of the object of study: civil society. The early philosophical debates on civil society emerged from, and were grounded in Western Europe, in contexts of state formation (Hobbes, Locke, Ferguson), emerging capitalism and class struggle (Hegel and Marx), and democratization and democracy (Gramsci and Habermas). Likewise, in the 1970s and 1980s, civil society activity and literature was firmly grounded in the West, having played an active role in issues such as nuclear disarmament, environmental sustainability, as well as gender and race struggles. The more recent wave of civil society literature since the end of the Cold War is also solidly grounded in the West, this time couched in the wider framework of globalization and international relations studies.

The specific contexts in which this literature is embedded are often taken for granted. Rarely are the implications of context on the development of civil society openly acknowledged and taken into account.[2] Yet a study of the role of civil society in conflict-ridden areas lying beyond Western Europe must account for the role and implications of context. Hence, a first variable in our analysis of civil society in conflict is the context within which it operates. Several core contextual questions need to be raised and brought to the fore at the outset. Can and does civil society exist in contexts of failed states, authoritarian rule and ethnic nationalism, underdevelopment or overbearing international presence? The underlying premise of this article is that civil society can and does exist in these situations. Yet its nature as well as its role and functions are fundamentally shaped by the specific context in question. In so far as civil society is both an independent agent for change[3] and a dependent product of existing structures,[4] we are likely to encounter a wide range of civil society actors, including both 'civil' and 'uncivil' actors carrying a wide range of actions. More specifically, for the purpose of this article several general contextual categories need to be briefly discussed in order to qualify and better understand the specific contexts in which civil society in conflict operates.

The first and most basic general contextual distinction is whether civil society operates in a state or non-state context, or more widely in a failing or failed state context. The early debates viewed civil society as either synonymous or inextricably intertwined with the state (Hobbes, Locke). In more recent studies, while occupying the space between the state, the family and the market, civil society is conceptualized as interacting with the state, both influencing and being influenced by it.[5] As such, the lines separating the state from civil society in practice remain extremely blurred, complex and continuously renegotiated. Furthermore, many studies on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) argue that these are often linked more to the state

2   Marlies Glasius, David Lewis and Hakan Seckinelgin, eds., *Exploring Civil Society: Political and Cultural Contexts* (London: Routledge, 2004); David Lewis, 'Civil Society in Non-Western Contexts: Reflections on the Usefulness of a Concept' (London: Centre for Civil Society-LSE, WP13, 2001).
3   Robert David Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).
4   Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
5   Naomi Chazan, 'Africa's Democratic Challenge', *World Policy Journal* 9, no. 2 (1992).

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than to society.[6] The state thus inevitably shapes the nature and role of civil society. This is even truer in the post post-Cold War era, where often the legally recognized state is failed or failing, while a functioning state structure remains in a legal limbo of international non-recognition. When a state does not exist or when it is weak, fragmented or failing, the already blurred lines separating the state from civil society become even fuzzier. In these situations, civil society comes to occupy part of the space normally filled by the functioning state. Yet without the laws and rules governing society, civil society organizes alternative systems of self-help and tribal justice; informal forms of governance that civil and uncivil society actors alike establish and are shaped by. When states are weak or failing instead, patronage and corruption are likely to influence the nature and role of civil society. This is because civil society is induced to fill the void left by the state by providing services to the population, yet doing so by interacting with underground and illegal channels of the 'shadow state'.[7] Finally, where a recognized state exists but lacks sovereignty and independence, civil society is often disempowered and deresponibilized by the absence of a sovereign interlocutor at state level.[8]

Yet even when a state exists, a second contextual condition shaping civil society in conflict is the actual nature of the state in question. In so far as civil society needs to be both permitted and protected by the state, its existence, nature and role is determined by the degree of democracy, delineating the extent of associative freedom, as well as by the existence of other basic rights and freedoms normally enshrined within democratic states. When these rights and freedoms are curtailed, then civil society is likely to develop beyond legal boundaries, often aiming to subvert the state rather than interact with it and thus problematizing further the distinction between civil and uncivil civil society actors. Even within the confines of formally democratic states, the shape of civil society is affected also by the specific nature of the democracy in question. In nationalistic, albeit democratic states, civil society is more likely to include also 'uncivil' actors pursuing racial or xenophobic agendas.[9] In democracies with a strong military presence and militarized culture, civil society is often associated with the push for democratization and the civilianization of politics.[10] In democracies founded upon a strong ideological consensus (e.g., Zionism, Kemalism), civil society acts in surveillance and critique of the state within clear albeit unspelt ideological confines, after which the 'socio-cultural reflex' contracts, and civil society – in unison with the state – acts to counter real or perceived threats to the established ideological order.[11]

A third contextual condition in conflict situations is socio-economic underdevelopment, which favours the presence of traditional over modern associational forms. Gellner argues that whereas 'modularity' characterizes civil society, 'segmentalism' marks traditional society.[12] The modular society essentially exists in the developed world, it is characterized by voluntarism and performs modern civic functions. By contrast, in a segmentalized society, often found within developing contexts, civil society is characterized by a far more prominent role of non-voluntary associations (family, tribe, ethnic or religious communities) over voluntary ones. Often the bonds, loyalties and solidarity that these associative forms engender

6   James Ferguson, *The Antipolitics Machine, Depoliticisation and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

7   Transparency International, 'Transparency International's Annual Report 2005', (2005).

8   Roberto Belloni, 'Civil Society and Peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina', *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no. 2 (2001).

9   Yael Yishai, 'Civil Society and Democracy: The Israeli Experience', *Voluntas* 13, no. 3 (2002).

10 Hakan Seckinelgin, 'Contractions of a Sociocultural Reflex: Civil Society in Turkey', in *Exploring Civil Society: Political and Cultural Contexts*, ed. Marlies Glasius, David Lewis and Hakan Seckinelgin (London: Routledge, 2004).

11 Ibid.

12 Ernest Gellner, 'The Importance of Being Modular', in *Civil Society: Theory, History and Comparison*, ed. John Hall (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995).

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are far stronger and more tenacious than those found in voluntary groupings. As such, while non-voluntary associations in these contexts may curtail gender and other rights in the private sphere, they also tend to be in a stronger position to carry out many of the 'modern' functions normally performed by civil society in developed contexts (e.g., the health and education services provided by religious charities). Excluding these groups from the analysis would entail missing much of the civil society activity in developing contexts.[13]

The nature and role of the international community constitutes a final contextual feature shaping civil society. An overall global trend is traceable, whereby states play a diminishing role as service providers both domestically and internationally, leading to the privatization of world politics. Within this trend, a new global political opportunity structure materialized in which civil society actors have flourished both locally and transnationally.[14] This has meant that many of the functions previously performed by governmental actors have been reallocated to civil society in the fields of development and security. Since the 1980s, development assistance has been increasingly channelled through NGOs.[15] Developed states and international organizations have outsourced the implementation of aid programmes to local and international NGOs, while mediating and retaining political discretion regarding its overall direction.[16] In a wide variety of cases, scholars have demonstrated that by promoting particular types of civil society (e.g., NGOs, also dubbed as 'non-grassroots organizations'), the donor community weakens civil society organizations (CSOs) that have veritable ties to society and respond to local societal needs. Donors also create a dislocated new civil society, which is technical and specialized in mandate, neoliberal in outlook, urbanized and middle class in composition, and which responds to the goals of the international community rather than of the society in question.[17] Equally, the changing international security agenda has shaped the nature and role of civil society. Since the 1990s, in view of the wave of humanitarian interventions, many peace-building functions have been transferred to the private sector and civil society.[18] Liberal humanitarian and relief organizations, politically or financially co-opted organizations, and militarily-embedded organizations have thus mushroomed. Since the new millennium, the turn in global politics with the 'War on Terror' provided a further change in the role of (some) CSOs, through their 'embeddedness' and connivance with state-waged wars. Hence,

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13　Ashutosh Varshney, 'Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society: India and Beyond', *World Politics* 53, no. 3 (2001).

14　Mario Pianta and Raffaele Marchetti, 'The Global Justice Movements: The Transnational Dimension', in *The Global Justice Movement: A Cross-National and Transnational Perspective*, ed. Donatella della Porta (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2007); Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius, and Mary Kaldor, eds., *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2001* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

15　David Sogge, ed., *Compassion and Calculation. The Business of Private Foreign Aid* (London: Pluto Press, 1996).

16　William F. Fisher, 'Doing Good?: The Politics and Antipolitics of Ngo Practices', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26 (1997); David G. Chandler, 'The Road to Military Humanitarianism: How the Human Rights NGOs Shaped a New Humanitarian Agenda', *Human Rights Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (2001).

17　Salma Shawa, 'Unfulfilled Aspirations: Civil Society in Palestine 1993–98', in *Exploring Civil Society: Political and Cultural Contexts*, ed. Marlies Glasius, David Lewis, and Hakan Seckinelgin (London: Routledge, 2004); Amaney A. Jamal, *Barriers to Democracy: The Other Side of Social Capital in Palestine and the Arab World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Fisher, 'Doing Good?'; Belloni, 'Civil Society and Peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina'; Béatrice Pouligny, 'Civil Society and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Ambiguities of Programmes Aimed at Building "New" Societies', *Security Dialogues* 36, no. 4 (2005); Benoit Challand, *Palestinian Civil Society: Foreign Donors and the Power to Promote and Exclude* (London: Routledge, 2008).

18　Oliver Richmond and Henry Carey, *Subcontracting Peace: The Challenges of NGO Peacebuilding* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Jonathan Goodhand, *Aiding Peace? The Role of NGOs in Armed Conflict* (ITDG Publishing, 2006); Fiona Terry, 'Reconstituting Whose Social Order? NGOs in Disrupted States', in *From Civil Strife to Civil Society: Civil and Military Responsibility in Disrupted States*, ed. William Maley, Charles Sampford and Tamesh Thakur (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2003); Katarina West, 'The Expansion of Humanitarian NGOs' (PhD Thesis, EUI, 2000); Francis Kofi Abiew and Tom Keating, 'Defining a Role for Civil Society. Humanitarian NGOs and Peacebuilding Operations', in *Building Sustainable Peace*, ed. Tom Keating and W. Andy Knight (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2004); Brahimi Report, 'Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations' (New York: United Nations, A/44/305, S/2000/809, 2000).

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while at times representing a rooted and counter-hegemonic force of resistance, CSOs have also acted as a dependent functional substitute within the neo-liberal paradigm.

Conflict society and political identities

Ethno-political conflicts have been defined as a struggle between peoples, self-defined in ethnic terms, who articulate their respective needs and wants in mutually incompatible ways.[19] As opposed to peace, conflict, i.e., the incompatibility of subject positions, can either not be manifested publicly at all (i.e., in conditions of latent structural violence) or it can be manifested through violence or non-violent means (e.g., political activism). The source of the incompatibility is inextricably tied to the very definition of the group, that is, in an ethnic definition which is primordial, non-voluntary and exclusive in nature and which defines itself in contrast to an external 'other'. Ethno-political conflicts are in fact characterized by a public discord either between the state and significant parts of society or the wider public, or between different parts of the population. The discord and division are claimed on the grounds of identity defined through ethnicity, i.e., a multiple concept that refers to a myth of collective ancestry. Central to this concept is the notion of ascription and the related notion of affinity. Ethnic identification is thus often based on the prioritization of birth over territory. The process of public recognition that leads to the perception of 'incompatibility of subject positions' (i.e., identities and interests) is crucial in the dynamic of conflict.

Turning to the role of civil society in ethno-political conflict, a second key variable in our study after the above-mentioned contextual conditions is the identity of the relevant civil society actors. Here, the literature is largely embryonic. There has been considerable attention devoted to global civil society and trans-national social movements,[20] and more specifically to their role in preventing and resolving war.[21] Yet insufficient attention has been devoted in this literature to the role of local civil society in conflict creation as well as in prevention or resolution. When local civil society is taken into account in the literature on nationalism, civil actors are often characterized as negative agents in fundamentalist or nationalistic struggles, rather than as potential agents for peaceful transformation.[22] In transition studies instead, local civil society is often studied as a player in democratization, diplomacy and economic modernization,[23] that is in a liberal 'peacebuilding' and 'peace-consolidating' mode.[24] Yet the role of local civil society during conflict periods themselves is often overlooked. In development studies, recently coupled with security studies, civil society in conflict is often exclusively taken to mean western-style international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and local western-funded liberal NGOs,[25] thus ignoring the wider civil society space beyond NGOs. In

19 Emily Pia and Thomas Diez, 'Conflict and Human Rights: A Theoretical Framework' (SHUR wp1/07, 2007).
20 Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement. Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
21 Mary Kaldor, 'A Decade of Humanitarian Intervention: The Role of Global Civil Society', in *Global Civil Society 2001*, ed. Helmut K. Anheier, Mary Kaldor and Marlies Glausius (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999); Reiner Forster and Mark Mattner, 'Civil Society and Peacebuilding. Potential, Limitations and Critical Factors' (Washington, DC: World Bank, Social Development Dept., Sustainable Development Network, 2006); Nynke Douma and Bart Klem, 'Civil War and Civil Peace. A Literature Review of the Dynamics and Dilemmas of Peacebuilding through Civil Society' (Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingedael', 2004).   Q13
22 Mary Kaldor and Diego Muro-Ruiz, 'Religious and Nationalist Militant Groups', in *Global Civil Society 2003*, ed. Helmut K. Anheier, Mary Kaldor and Marlies Glausius (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).   Q14
23 Anja Weiss, 'Insider NGOs as a Key to Developing Peace Constituencies in the New Eastern Democracies', *Peace and Security* XXXIX (1997).   Q15
24 Oliver Richmond, *The Transformation of Peace* (Aldershot: Palgrave, 2005).
25 Goodhand, *Aiding Peace?*; Chandler, 'The Road to Military Humanitarianism'; George A. Lopez, 'Globalizing Human Rights: The Work of Transnational Human Rights NGOs in the 1990s', *Human Rights Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (1998); Terry, 'Reconstituting Whose Social Order?'.   Q16

what follows, we examine the specificity of local and international civil society in identity-based ethno-political conflicts.

The term 'civil society' encompasses a wide variety of actors, ranging from local to international, independent and quasi-governmental players. Conflict tends to shape the identity and actions of CSOs. In what follows we focus on these groups, defining them as 'conflict society'. Conflict society comprises all local civic organizations within conflict contexts as well as those third country, international and transnational civic organizations involved in the conflict in question. By coining the term 'conflict society' rather than simply relying on the looser definition of 'civil society in conflict', we wish to convey the normative understanding that particularly in structural conflict contexts civil society encompasses both 'civil' and 'uncivil' groups. This is connected to two principal considerations. First, using the definitions 'civil' and 'uncivil' society would have conveyed the false understanding that the two types of actors are easily separable. Second, focusing on one normative category only (e.g., civil/good organizations) would have neglected the reality that in conflict context, more so than in other situations, both normative types exist. This does not entail that conflict society actors are uniform. They rather include a diversity of different organizations. Adapting the multi-track diplomacy model originally elaborated by Diamond and McDonald,[26] we can formulate a provisional list of the main Conflict Society Organizations (CoSOs) (see table 1). CoSOs are both local and international groups that take an active part in the conflict. They include conflict specialists, business, private citizens, research and education, activism, religion-based groups, foundations and the media. Despite a likely membership overlap between different categories, these eight groupings are sufficiently delineated to allow for a precise identification of the different civil society actors in conflict. This listing of who CoSOs comprise allows us to delimit the space of the actors under scrutiny.

Turning back to the impact of conflict society, and having discussed above its contextual conditions, a second key determinant is the identity of CoSOs. In this regard, one fundamental variable is the degree of inclusiveness of membership and of the targeted public. Roughly speaking, the two extremes consist in an inclusive and universalistic approach and in an exclusive and particularistic one. Either a group is open to accept as members or as receiving agents all those involved in conflict, or it focuses only on a limited section of the population demarcated by ethnic boundaries. An inclusive outlook entails the promotion either of a single cultural identity or the creation of a civic or multi-tiered hybrid identity. An exclusive outlook bases its approach on the existence of primordial and unchanging identities. Another fundamental variable characterizing CoSO identities is their egalitarian or non-egalitarian nature. An egalitarian CoSOs accepts as equal all actors across the conflict divide, while a non-egalitarian approach would attempt to assert the primacy of one group over another. If we combine these two variables, we can identify four main stylized CoSO identities determining their overall normative outlook on the conflict. Needless to say, these identities are stylized and in reality most CoSOs will display different combinations, changing over time. Yet marking such distinctions provides a necessary frame of reference to understand the identities of the actors in question.

A civic or post-national identity emerges from CoSOs with an inclusive and egalitarian outlook. Contrary to other categories, this is the only identity that places primary emphasis on the individual. It thus promotes either a liberal civic (as opposed to ethnic) identity or it accepts and fosters multiple identities freely chosen by each individual.[27] These groups may thus include INGOs with a liberal civic outlook such as Human Rights Watch, Médecins

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26   Louise Diamond and John McDonald, *Multi-Track Diplomacy. A System Approach to Peace* (Hartfort, CT: Kumarian Press, 1996).

27   Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence. The Illusion of Destiny* (New York: W.W. Norten and Co., 2006); Jürgen Habermas, *The Post-National Constellation: Political Essays* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998; reprinted 2001).

Table 1. CoSOs typology

	Type of track diplomacy	Actors
1.	*Professional*	Technical experts consultants
2.	*Business*	Businessmen
		Trade unions
		Professional associations
		Organized crime networks
3.	*Private Citizens*	Individual citizens
		Diaspora groups
		Families and clans
4.	*Research, Training, and Education*	Special interest research centres
		Think Tanks
		Universities
5.	*Activism*	NGOs
		Lobby groups
		Grassroots social movements
		Local communities
		Combatant groups
6.	*Religion*	Spiritual communities
		Charities
		Religious movements
7.	*Funding*	Foundations
		Individual philanthropists
8.	*Communication*	Media operators

Sans Frontières (MSF) or Amnesty International; or local bi-communal groups such as Women in Black in Israel-Palestine or the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) – Cyprus Centre in Nicosia. While these groups are normally associated with peacemaking functions, they may also contribute, at times necessarily, to escalate conflicts through their securitizing moves, by voicing, monitoring and denouncing previously silenced and repressed facts.

A multi-culturalist CoSO is one which, while accepting the right of all actors to an equal footing, recognizes and values their different cultural identities, rather than attempting to transcend them.[28] These may include inter-cultural movements or organizations (e.g., the Tres Culturas Foundation in Sevilla) or inter-religious gatherings (such as the Day of the Prayer in Assisi, interfaith dialogues for Middle East peace, the Dialogue of Civilizations promoted by former Iranian president Khatami). Especially when inter-religious groups at international levels highlight and denounce the non-egalitarian treatment of specific communities within conflict contexts, they may raise, again at times necessary awareness and induce the counter-mobilization of discriminated communities. These movements can be either elitist or grassroots.

An assimilationist CoSO is one which accepts the ideal of promoting an undivided society, yet does so in a non-egalitarian fashion by promoting a homogenous society in which the dominant ethnic group asserts its own identity over the others. These may include militant groups such as the Grey Wolves in Turkey, which while highlighting the importance of Turkishness over and above other identities, are prepared to accept and encourage the assimilation of other groups into the Turkish nation. If others comply they are accorded equal treatment within the state. While different in terms of strategies and actions, other assimilationist groups or practices include Born-Again Christians in the United States, Islamist fundamentalists, as well as the practice of ethnic rape in war.

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28 Will Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Fred Dallmayr, *Dialogue among Civilizations: Some Exemplary Voices* (London: Palgrave, 2003).

Table 2. CoSOs identities

	Inclusive	Exclusive
Egalitarian	*Civic/Post-national*	*Multi-culturalist*
Non-egalitarian	*Assimilationist*	*Ethnicist/Racist*

Finally, the racist/ethnicist CoSO is exclusive and non-egalitarian in outlook, believing in the primacy of a single and primordially given and thus non-assimilable identity. It advocates either ethnic cleansing or an effective apartheid system with permanent second-class citizenship. Examples include far-right Israeli transfer movements (i.e. Amihai) calling for the expulsion of the Palestinians to neighbouring Arab countries, the Ku Klux Klan in the United States, or the Australian Holocaust-denying Adelaide Institute.

Conflict society and frameworks of action

A third variable in our study of civil society impact on conflict is the framework of action within which CoSOs operate. Here we refer first to theories of ethno-political conflicts and then to the principal theoretical approaches used in conflict and peace studies. In doing so, we analyse CoSO involvement in conflict escalation, conflict management, resolution and transformation. We also examine the specific forms of actions they may be involved in and hypothesize the impacts they may have.

Conflict escalation

We have defined ethno-political conflicts as situations in which groups, self-defined in ethnic terms, articulate their subject positions in mutually incompatible ways. Once such incompatibility is publicly affirmed, ethnic affiliations begin permeating unrelated sectors, organizations, and activities, thus raising starkly the stakes of ethnic politics in society. As Horowitz puts it:

> In divided societies, ethnic conflict is at the center of politics. Ethnic divisions pose challenges to the cohesion of states and sometimes to peaceful relations among states. Ethnic conflict strains the bonds that sustain civility and is often at the root of violence that results in looting, death, homelessness, and the fight of large numbers of people. In divided societies, ethnic affiliations are powerful, permeative, passionate, and pervasive.[29]

The above-mentioned progressive spread of ethnic-based subject positions can result in ethnically divided societies which are conventionally divided in ranked and unranked systems.[30] The distinction rests in the possible overlap between social class and ethnic origin. As opposed to unranked systems, in ranked systems ethnicity is strictly related to social class or caste structures. Linked to this, a hierarchical ordering (associated with ranked systems) as opposed to a parallel ordering (associated to unranked systems) of society also profoundly affects the development of conflict. Furthermore, the ethnic group may be internally ranked according to relations of power, in which women and sexual minorities are likely to be subordinated. For instance, in ethnically ranked systems, when a single ethnic group dominates a powerful public institution, the risk of that institution being used for ethnic purposes and discrimination is high. Where ethnically divided societies are marked by ranked systems, the tension between greed and grievance increases on the inside, and the scope for legal and

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29   Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985).
30   Ibid.

institutionally negotiated accommodation falls, often leading to the counter-mobilization of the discriminated group beyond legal and institutional boundaries. In these situations, the discriminated group may engage in underground non-violent action or violent action, shifting the conflict from its latent to active stage. Within this stage of conflict escalation the external dimension is also significant. Local CoSOs may appeal to transnational norms in their quest to gain power and legitimacy, often in coordination with third party, international and transnational CoSOs.[31] In so far as the victims are often denied access to local normative and political resources, they are induced to appeal to external resources as the only means to influence the local balance of power ('boomerang effect').[32] This entails that conflicts often manifest themselves locally through high intensity intra-border ethnic tensions and violence and internationally by appealing to laws and rights, which may be strategically used and at times manipulated to escalate conflict.[33]

In these situations local, international and transnational CoSOs can thus play a crucial role in the successive phases of conflict eruption and escalation.[34] They can discursively contribute to the securitization of conflict by raising awareness of conditions of latent conflict. They can do so through mass demonstrations, media diffusion, public assemblies and monitoring and denouncing activities. They can also ignite conflict in its violent stages by organizing and activating combatant groups and guerrillas. At the international level instead, they can call for indirect international support through funds and arms, or they can lobby for the direct involvement of the international community in the conflict (e.g., through mediation or war).

Beyond the study of conflict and its escalation and thus the impact that CoSOs may have in this respect, different approaches, linked to different schools of thought, may be applied in order to de-escalate the conflict and induce reconciliation. In the sections that follow we give an overview of these different approaches and the potential role thereby played by CoSOs.

Conflict management

Realist and neorealist approaches to conflict studies have traditionally emphasized the notion of management and settlement.[35] Given the endemic nature of conflict, its management or settlement is the only realistic aspiration. This can be achieved through bargaining and negotiation

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31 Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp and Kathryn Sikkink, eds., *The Power of Human Rights. International Norms and Domestic Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

32 Charles Tilly, 'Mechanisms in Political Processes', *Annual Review of Political Science* 4 (2001); Donatella della Porta and Sidney Tarrow, eds., *Transnational Protest and Global Activism* (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 2005); Sidney Tarrow, 'Transnational Politics: Contention and Institutions in International Politics', *Annual Review of Political Science* 4 (2001); Thomas Risse-Kappen, ed., *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In: Non-State Actors, Domestic Structure and International Institutions* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995). **Q17**

33 Emanuele Arielli and Giovanni Scotto, *I Conflitti. Introduzione a Una Teoria Generale* (Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 1998); Steven C. Roach, *Cultural Autonomy, Minority Rights, and Globalization* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005); Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*.

34 Jörg Calliess and Christine M. Merkel, eds., *Peaceful Settlement of Conflicts – A Task for Civil Society* (Rehburg-Loccum: Loccumer Protokolle 9/94, 1994); Cynthia Cockburn, 'The Women's Movement: Boundary-Crossing on Terrains of Conflicts', in *Global Social Movements*, ed. Robin Cohen and Shirin Rai (London: Athlone Press, 2000); Thomas George Weiss, *Military-Civilian Interactions: Intervening in Humanitarian Crisis* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield., 1999); Giulio Marcon and Mario Pianta, 'New Wars, New Peace Movements', *Soundings: A Journal of Politics and Culture* 17 (2001); John Davies and Edy Kaufman, *Second Track/Citizens' Diplomacy. Concepts and Techniques for Conflict Transformation* (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 2002); Martina Fischer, 'Civil Society in Conflict Transformation: Ambivalence, Potentials and Challenge' (Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2006). **Q18**

35 Jacob Bercovitch and Jeffrey Z. Rubin, eds., *Mediation in International Relations – Multiple Approaches to Conflict Management* (London: Macmillan, 1992); Kenneth Kressel and Dean G. Pruitt, eds., *Mediation Research, the Process and Effectiveness of Third Party Intervention* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1989); Louis Kriesberg and Stuart J. Thorson, eds., *Timing the De-Escalation of International Conflicts* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1991).

between conflict parties, incentivized by external actors preferably engaged in principal mediation through the use of sticks and carrots. Within this tradition, states or state-like actors, either in the form of conflict parties or third parties are the principal players in the conflict settlement game. The value of CoSOs is either secondary, marginal or non-existent. This is particularly true with regards to gender, whereby in the conflict management tradition not only are CoSOs treated as a 'black box', but relations of power along gender and racial lines are generally accepted or ignored. The second Iraq war is a blatant example of this, where the drafting of the Iraqi constitution involved the bargaining between political parties representing different ethnic and religious constituencies, yet ignored women's groupings and interests.

At best, CoSOs tend to play secondary roles in conflict management. Only rarely do conflict parties turn to and accept the official mediation by a CoSO rather than by third states or international organizations. As such, CoSOs are often not directly involved in peace-making activities, intended in this school of thought primarily as the process leading to a peace agreement. Notable exceptions to this were Sant'Egidio's successful mediation of the conflict in Mozambique between 1990 and 1992, and the back-channel contacts facilitated by Norwegian non-state actors in the run-up to the 1993 Oslo Accords between Israelis and Palestinians. Yet normally, CoSOs simply provide support to first-track negotiations. These include unofficial 'track-two' negotiations which prepare the ground when time is ripe for the official track-one level to take over and sign a deal.[36] An example of this is precisely the way in which the back-channel contacts in the late 1980s and early 1990s among Israelis and Palestinians in Norway became appropriated by the State of Israel and the PLO under US auspices, giving rise to the Oslo process in 1993. Secondary roles in conflict management can also be played by think tanks, research centres or lobby groups, which facilitate track-two diplomacy, and provide the necessary information and suggest political direction to the official institutions with which they interact. Examples include the mediation activities of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), or the analysis and information provision of research centres such as the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies (BESA), or the plethora of private consultancy firms providing counselling on conflict management in all domains. At times these activities can contribute to the management and settlement of conflicts. Yet on other occasions they may constrain the scope for government manoeuvring, reducing the prospects for compromise. The lobbying efforts of the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) as a third party (i.e., US) CoSO on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or the Armenian Diaspora in France and the US regarding Turkish-Armenian relations are notable cases in point.

Ripe conditions for the management and settlement of conflict may also emerge due to a contextual change. There may be a change in the domestic environment within a principal party, such as a change in leadership or a deterioration in the economy, inducing leaders to raise their popularity through a foreign policy success.[37] Ripeness can also emerge from changes in the international environment, such as changing international alliances with ensuing consequences on the conflict configuration. Ripeness, however, is not necessarily the product of coincidental contextual changes. It can also be cultivated. This idea is particularly relevant in cases when conflicts are protracted because principal parties develop vested interests in the status quo. In these cases, CoSOs can shape the context within which the conflict unfolds, thus contributing to peacemaking by altering the incentive structure underlying conflicts. Business groups, for example, intent in cultivating a business and investment friendly environment can lobby governments so as to normalize the situation on the ground. An example of how economic actors influence the political domain in conflict contexts is the Turkish businessman

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36   William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution, Conflict and Intervention in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).
37   Stephen J. Stedman, *Peacemaking in Civil War: International Mediation in Zimbabwe 1974–1980* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1991).

association (TÜSIAD) in Turkey's Kurdish question. Particularly since the late 1990s, TÜSIAD has been extremely vocal on democratization issues, including the Kurdish question, intent in promoting Turkey's reform process and the accompanying EU accession process for business-related reasons. Conversely, CoSOs may influence conflicts by operating on its economic incentive structure. Hence, for example, the grassroots boycott campaigns against South African goods in the 1980s or Israeli goods following the eruption of the second *intifada*. Likewise, the media may shape public opinion in a manner conducive to conflict settlement, by inducing the public to pressurize their respective governments into signing peace agreements, as was the case in northern Cyprus in the run-up to the 2004 referendum on the UN-sponsored Annan Plan.

Yet CoSOs can also spoil a conflict context by contributing to renewed periods of deterioration and re-escalation. More often than not, the media focuses on short-term and sensational incidents and events, which far from fostering reconciliation can radicalize and entrench public opinions reducing the scope for official compromise.[38] Moreover, the media can play a key role in securitizing conflict environments by re-producing hegemonic masculinity/femininity stereotypes. In other situations, humanitarian, relief and service-providing NGOs in war contexts may prolong the status quo by alleviating the costs of conflict. Rather than being viewed in a positive light, the conflict management approach may interpret these actions as the cultivation of 'unripe' conditions for a settlement. Hence, for example, in the aftermath of the Oslo accords, the growing presence of internationally-funded NGOs in the occupied territories reduced the costs of Israel's occupation and fostered a disconnect between the Palestinian public and the nascent Palestinian Authority.[39] Both factors contributed to the postponement of a final peace agreement by deresponsibilizing the conflict parties with respect to their populations.[40]

Other CoSO actions such as grassroots activism, people-to-people contacts, or inter-cultural and religious dialogue are essentially viewed as marginal to the main area of conflict management and settlement. The potential role of these activities is only considered relevant to the extent that it directly impacts upon official positions and actions. In order to account for the relevance of these and other CoSO activities we need to turn to the remaining two schools of thought.

Conflict resolution

Rather than endemic to human nature, the liberal school of conflict resolution argues that conflict emerges when basic human needs are denied.[41] Peace is thus achieved when the basic human needs of all people are respected. In and of itself, this is feasible. Yet conflict emerges because the means through which particular groups seek to fulfil their needs (i.e., through 'satisfiers') may mean the negation of those very needs to others. Conflict resolution thus entails the re-articulation of adopted satisfiers, through a changed understanding of a group's identity and interests, in a manner conducive to the fulfilment of basic human needs for all, i.e., choosing mutually compatible satisfiers. Three principal features characterize the approaches through which this is sought. First, rather than power mediation featuring prominently in conflict management approaches, the preferred conflict resolution means are non-coercive and based on dialogue, persuasion and problem-solving. Second, while appreciating the importance of official track-one diplomacy, the emphasis in conflict resolution is placed on the involvement

38 Johan Galtung, 'Peace Journalism – a Challenge', in *Journalism and the New World Order, Vol. Ii: Studying War and the Media*, ed. Wilhelm Kempf and Heikki Luostarinen (Gothenburg: Nordicom, 2002); Gadi Wolfsfeld, *Media and the Path to Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

39 Jamal, *Barriers to Democracy*.

40 Neve Gordon and Dani Filc, 'Hamas and the Destruction of Risk Society', *Constellations* 12, no. 4 (2005); Anne Le More, *International Assistance to the Palestinians after Oslo: Political Guilt, Wasted Money* (London: Routledge, 2008).

41 John W. Burton, ed., *Conflict: Human Needs Theory* (London: Macmillan, 1990).

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of non-elites and the wider society. This is viewed as necessary for veritable conflict resolution, which goes beyond the mere signing of a peace accord. Third, peace initiatives under this school of thought are normally long-term, unfolding both in stages of violent conflict and of post-settlement reconciliation.

555   CoSOs play a far more prominent role in conflict resolution than conflict management approaches. Rather than secondary actors in peacemaking, CoSOs represent indispensable actors allowing the shift from mere top-down management and settlement to bottom-up social reconciliation and pacification. Given the focus on activities involving wide sectors of society, conflict resolution emphasizes the roles of some CoSOs more than others. Rather than professional,
560   business and specialized research and training centres concentrating on elite levels, conflict resolution approaches privilege actors engaged in activities targeting wider sectors of society.

These CoSOs play different roles in different stages of conflict. In periods of violence, CoSOs prepare the ground and create the critical mass necessary for a ceasefire and ultimately a peace agreement to be signed. In secessionist conflicts, in view of the fears of official recog-
565   nition of the secessionist entities, the first contacts between groups in conflict are unofficial people-to-people contacts and problem-solving workshops organized by local or international NGOs, such as International Alert, PRIO or Conciliation Resources. Private citizen initiatives may solve basic problems related to crime or the environment within mixed neighbourhoods in conflict zones. These may work more effectively than official levels, which, deadlocked in
570   conflict, are often unable to tackle problems which are not directly related to the conflict itself. Schools or universities may instead engage in peace education projects, involving both warring parties and the wider societies, and thus building peace constituencies to reconsider the means through which conflict parties pursue their basic needs. Other CoSOs develop capacity-building and training programmes in order to cultivate social entrepreneurs, who mul-
575   tiply and magnify the impact of peace education. In conflict periods, CoSOs may also contribute to resolution through service provision. Religious charities and NGOs, for example, may provide basic services that meet the minimum threshold of basic human needs, such as health and education. They may do so in periods of acute violence and destruction when states and at times the international community, enmeshed in conflict, fail to deliver.
580   Following the signature of a peace accord, CoSOs work at societal level to encourage contact and reconciliation between conflict parties. Activists such as Oxfam and Fair Trade Network encourage joint business initiatives between conflict parties. NGOs and foundations, as well as alternative media groups (e.g., Indymedia), encourage peace journalism by local and international journalists in conflict countries, diffusing alternative information and rearticulat-
585   ing conflict narratives. Beyond official truth and reconciliation commissions (in South Africa, or the Balkans), private citizens or religious organizations can also contribute to establishing trust through social reconciliation initiatives (e.g., the Quakers). More generally, activists can re-shape the membership base of their activities, encouraging inclusive bi-partisan constituencies and audiences, which, in periods of violence, were difficult if not impossible
590   to establish.

Conflict transformation and peace-building

Conflict transformation approaches rooted in critical thinking, while equally concerned with the
595   fulfilment of basic human needs, argue that the re-articulation of identities and perceived interests through psychological, educative and discursive change is insufficient.[42] Conflict, while

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42   Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (London: SAGE, 1996); John Paul Lederach, *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation across Cultures* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse
600   University Press, 1995).

manifested through the frustration of basic needs, often arises because the existing structural configuration of specific contexts prevents the fulfilment of all needs by all parties. Hence, the challenge goes beyond seeking a discursive re-articulation of chosen satisfiers, but requires active change in the structural determinants, which give rise to latent or violent conflict. This is related to what Galtung defines as structural violence, that is, conditions of social injustice, unequal development and discrimination, which generate the structural precepts of conflict, which may then emerge or not at specific points in time.[43] While theoretically distinct, this relates to what Richmond conceptually and more broadly defines as third generation 'peace-building approaches'.[44] Peacebuilding is concerned with issues that go beyond narrowly defined conflict issues (such as territorial readjustments, refugee return, property rights, security guarantees, etc.), but cover the wider economic, political and social make-up of countries before, during and after the end of violent conflict.

In phases of latent violence, CoSOs may locally counter-mobilize discriminated groups in order to protest against identified violations. For example, social movements may promote campaigns reformulating a previously neglected issue or discrimination as problematic, urgent and solvable.[45] When an issue is portrayed as existential beyond being merely problematic, the mobilization acquires the features of a securitizing move.

In stages of either active or frozen conflict, CoSOs can help reconfigure the conflict through discursive acts such as norm-framing and norm-changing. Examples include lawyers associations, which attempt to alter the structural underpinnings of conflict either by raising the (political and financial) costs of persisting violations (through court cases) or by calling for the establishment of new legal frameworks to entrench the respect of violated individuals or groups. Greek Cypriot lawyers pressing Cyprus property cases in the European Court of Human Rights is an example of the former, whereas NGOs pushing for the establishment of ad hoc international criminal courts in former Yugoslavia or Rwanda are examples of the latter. Grass-roots activism and NGOs may also raise awareness in order to pressurize and constrain specific governmental actions. Hence, the monitoring, denouncing, shaming and awareness-raising activities of both single-issue campaigns (e.g., Al-Awda Palestinian refugee return campaign; Maschom Watch, Israeli women monitoring abuses at checkpoints; Stop the war campaign against the war in Iraq) as well as or cross-issue campaigns (e.g., Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International). During active violence, CoSOs such as Emergency and MSF may provide humanitarian services (e.g. refugee assistance, relief work). They may also engage in solidarity work (funding campaigns, human shields, human protection and witnessing). These groups include the International Solidarity Movement in Palestine, the Peace Brigades in Colombia or the Zapatista transnational solidarity movement. Yet unlike organizations working in a conflict management mode, these conflict transformation actions also attempt to restructure the phase of violent (or frozen) conflict, not only by providing services (and thus alleviating the costs of conflict), but also acting to empower discriminated groups in order to structurally alter the conflict configuration.

Finally, in post-violence situations, CoSOs may be involved in capacity-building, reconstruction and rehabilitation. This is done both through local and international organizations directly as well as through international groups concentrating on building local civil society capacity. CoSOs in post-war contexts can also engage in discursive initiatives, such as presenting alternative knowledge in a manner conducive to the long-term transformation of conflict. Examples include both the presentation of hitherto concealed information through alternative media as well as groups engaged in the re-articulation of historical narratives in a manner

43 Johan Galtung, 'Violence, Peace and Peace Research', *Journal of Peace Research* 3 (1969).
44 Oliver Richmond, 'Patterns of Peace', *Global Society* 20, no. 4 (2006).
45 Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*.

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conducive to the redressing of past injustices (such as the activities of the Israeli women group *Zochrot*, established in 2002 to promote awareness and knowledge of the Palestinian *Nakba* among the Jewish population of Israel).

Conflict society and political opportunity structure

Beyond the original context in which CoSOs operate, their identities and their frameworks of action, a fourth variable shaping their impact on conflicts is the political opportunity structure (POS) in which they operate. Rather than acting as a factor in and of itself, the POS acts as the filter during the successive phases of conflict which shape the impact of CoSOs actions. While clearly related to the conflict context categories analysed above, the POS factors remain distinct from them in terms of their role rather than nature. They deal with domestic institutions (linked to the existence and nature of a state, the degree and type of democracy), with domestic development (linked to the level of socio-economic development) and with external actors (linked to the international presence). Yet the key distinguishing feature of POS, as opposed to the original contextual categories, is that of timing. This is because time, as opposed to the original conflict situation, impinges dynamically on the impact of CoSOs on conflicts.

A first structural feature determining the POS is timing. In phases of violent and escalating conflict, in which subject positions are polarized, the conflict fuelling impact of assimilationist and racist/ethnicist CoSOs is likely to be more effective than the attempt by civic or multi-culturalist CoSOs to rearticulate conflict identities and objectives. This relates back to Keashley and Fisher's contingency model for third party interventions, which argued that in different stages of conflict, different approaches may be more appropriate.[46] In other words, there is not necessarily a particular approach or action which by definition has a more effective impact upon a conflict, but a fitting coincidence of right action and right timing. Effectiveness of impact is thus conditioned upon the precise moment in which the action is carried out. The case of Turkey is emblematic in this respect. In 1999 the contextual shift generated by the August–September earthquakes created a momentum for the establishment of civic CoSO networks and their greater acceptance by the state. By contrast, another shift in the POS, the outbreak of the 2003 war in Iraq and the end of the PKK ceasefire in Turkey generated an upsurge in Turkish nationalism since 2004–5. This created a more conducive atmosphere for nationalist/assimilationist CoSOs to operate while reducing the space for manoeuvre of civic or multi-culturalist organizations viewed as a 'threat' to the country's territorial integrity. Within the context of heightened Turkish nationalism, the assassination of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink in January 2007 generated, once again, a push for the counter-mobilization of civic and multi-culturalist CoSOs.

Two further structural features are linked to the domestic context. One is the existence and nature of the domestic institutional system in the conflict context. This includes both the design of the constitutional and legal setting as well as the set of public institutions (governmental and quasi-governmental) and the actors operating within them (e.g., political parties). For example, the presence of constitutionally entrenched and legally protected associational freedom or the supportive attitude of the authorities in power shape the nature and actions of a CoSO, and its ensuing impact upon an evolving conflict. The cases of Georgia and Russia illustrate the two sides of the same coin. In Georgia, in the early post Rose Revolution period in 2004, a set of reforms were passed to ease civil society activity (e.g., facilitating registration procedures and

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46 Loraleigh Keashley and Ronald Fisher, 'A Contingency Perspective on Conflict Interventions: Theoretical and Practical Considerations', in *Resolving International Conflicts. The Theory and Practice of Mediation*, ed. Jacob Bercovitch (Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner, 1996).

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reducing tax burdens), although the tight relationship between the Saakashvili regime and civil society reduced the independence and thus the popular appeal of the latter. By contrast, in Russia, the 2006 Law on NGOs setting bureaucratically tight and financially onerous requirements for the registration of NGOs and the harassment by nationalist groups sponsored by the Kremlin (e.g., Nashi) have seriously curtailed the space for civic and multicultural civil society activism in the country.

Another domestic feature is the level of overall domestic development, including in the economic, political, social and cultural spheres. Hence, for example, the degree to which public opinion culture is open to non-governmental political action and protest can significantly influence the wider diffusion and consolidation effects of CoSOs. On the positive side, southern Cyprus in the post-1974 period experienced a sustained economic boom which led to the development and transformation of the civil society sector. On the negative side, the progressive de-development of the Palestinian occupied territories during the Oslo period, but particularly since the outbreak of the second *intifada*, reduced the scope for a flourishing independent civil society sector. This, despite or perhaps more so in view of the significant inflow of Western funds to the occupied territories, which weakened the indigenous civil society domain while cultivating a co-opted yet ineffective and unrooted NGO sector.[47]

A final structural feature constituting the political opportunity structure is the role of the international system and of the actors operating within it. Hence, in a situation in which the international community converges upon a consensus for war, pacifist CoSOs may find themselves marginalized, while combatant groups may gain the necessary political and material support for their actions to be effective. The conflict in Kosovo is an evident case in point, whereby nationalist Kosovar CoSOs have been legitimised by the Western support for Kosovo against Serbia, culminating in the recognition of Kosovo's independence in 2008. On the contrary, pacifist CoSOs may have a significant impact in mobilizing people and influencing governments when allying with strong forces within the international system opposing a war, repression or discrimination.[48] For example, several Diaspora Tibetan groups effectively mobilized the international community in the wake of the summer 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing to support the Tibetan cause and exert pressure on China. Yet often the inter-relationship between international involvement and CoSOs works in the opposite direction, whereby rather than CoSOs being strengthened by an international alliance, their search for international support alters their very raison d'être. Beyond the case of Palestine mentioned above, another notable example is Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the strong international and EU presence post-Dayton accords profoundly affected the nature, actions and mode of operation of local civil society actors wishing to win the political and financial support of international actors.

Conclusion

The cumulative interaction between context, identity, frameworks of action and political opportunity structures determines CoSOs' impact on conflict. Impact is taken to mean both the direct results of a particular action (e.g., providing refugee relief), as well as the influence upon the wider context underlying a particular manifestation of conflict (e.g., strengthening the international legal framework that ensures the protection of refugee rights and their right of return). CoSOs direct and contextual impact is determined by the wider conflict context; by the identities of CoSOs; by their actions within the four main frameworks of action; and by the political opportunity structure within which they operate. The identities and

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47 Jamal, *Barriers to Democracy*; Le More, *International Assistance to the Palestinians after Oslo*; Challand, *Palestinian Civil Society*.

48 April Carter, *Peace Movements. International Protest and World Politics since 1945* (London: Longmann, 1992).
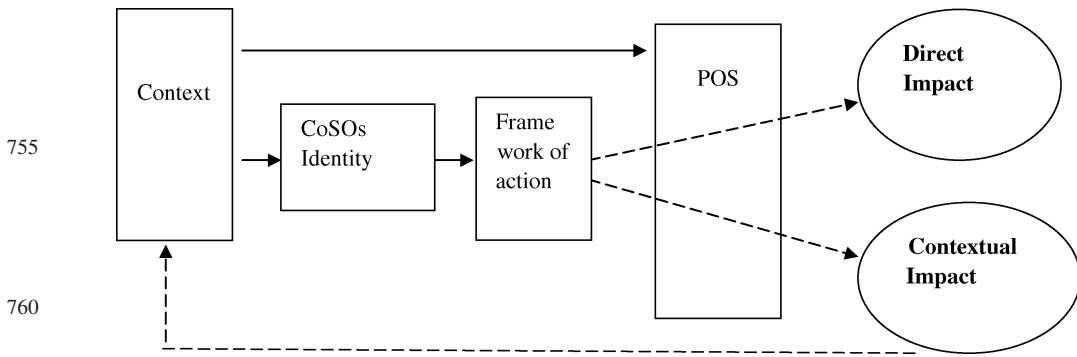
Figure 1. Determinants of CoSOs impact

actions of CoSOs are influenced by, while at the same time influencing, the economic, political, social, cultural and legal context within which they operate. A spiral causal chain can thus be stylized as follows. Context shapes the identities of CoSOs. These identities determine their goals and frameworks of actions. In turn, the ability of CoSOs to navigate the political opportunity structure of conflicts – critically shaped by the original conflict context – determines their overall direct and contextual impact, the latter of which feeds back into the original conflict context.

By way of conclusion, we can outline three main macro-impacts of civil society in conflict: fuelling conflict, holding and peacemaking impacts. *Fuelling* conflict includes all those impacts that exacerbate the causes of conflict, thus worsening the incompatibility of subject positions. This is done by contributing to the securitization of conflict. As discussed above, this can be done either through discursive actions or through activities which alter the context of conflict and thereby fuel its securitization (e.g., through securitizing moves such as violence). *Holding* conflict are all those impacts which neither augment nor diffuse the underlying incompatibility of subject positions in the short-term. They do so by non-securitizing the conflict environment, that is neither securitizing nor contributing to its desecuritization.[49] At a minimum and most visible level, they operate upon the most acute symptoms of conflict such as extreme violence, poverty, health or destruction, by providing immediate relief. By doing so, they may help desecuritizing the conflict environment, thus creating a more fertile ground for an ensuing tackling of its root causes in the long-term. In other instances however, holding actions in the short-term may provide the breathing space for a renewed round of securitizations in future (e.g., operations aimed at securing a ceasefire, which may be instrumental for a new round of fighting). Furthermore, widespread, low intensity violence may occur during conflict holding periods, as the growing levels of domestic violence and violence against women in these situations have shown. In other words, short-term conflict holding impacts do not have a neutral effect on conflicts over time. Holding can either prepare the ground for peace or set the conditions for a relapse into escalation. Beyond conflict fuelling and conflict holding actions, a third general macro-impact is that of peacemaking. *Peacemaking* involves all those CoSO impacts which contribute to reconciling the incompatibility of subject positions by desecuritizing the conflict environment, however, these incompatibilities may be conceptualized differently by the primary schools of thought in conflict and peace studies. It is in this light that we define 'peacemaking' as a theoretically neutral, all encompassing term, which

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49 Thorsten Gromes and Thorsten Bonacker, 'The Concept of Securitisation as a Tool for Analysing the Role of Human Rights Related Civil Society in Ethno-Political Conflicts' (SHUR wp3/07, 2007).

includes the different interpretations of peace as provided by the realist, liberal and critical theory schools of thought (conflict management, resolution, transformation).

Acknowledgements

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