

May 2015

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David R. Andersen-Rodgers

California State University, Sacramento, david.andersen@csus.edu

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Recommended Citation

Andersen-Rodgers, David R. (2015) "Getting on the Agenda: The Influence of Local Civil Society Organizations during Pre-Negotiation," *Journal of Global Initiatives: Policy, Pedagogy, Perspective*: Vol. 9 : No. 2 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/jgi/vol9/iss2/4>

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Getting on the Agenda: Civil Society Organizations and Peace Negotiations

David R. Andersen-Rodgers

This article examines the types of strategies that different local civil society organizations use to get their issues addressed during a peace negotiation. Previous research has shown that the inclusion of civil society groups in a negotiation improves the likelihood for a durable peace. This paper argues that during conflict civil society organizations make a number of strategic choices that then affect their ability to get their societal interests placed on the agenda. These strategies are partially dictated by when and why the civil society group organized, the levels and types of advocacy that they choose to engage in during the conflict, and whether they were able to continue to advocate within the conflict zone. This framework represents a preliminary investigation for developing a deeper understanding of these processes.

Introduction

The image is not unfamiliar. Seemingly identical photos are printed in periodicals throughout the world. Smoke on the horizon, a throng of unarmed women, men, and children fleeing their homes with only what they can carry. The story these photos tell fits into the common discourse of conflict: helpless civilians bending to the will of those with guns. In the familiar telling, civilians during wartime are passive actors. They respond only to the conflict and are not counted amongst those worthy of study. Nevertheless, these nameless faces are often members of local associations, community groups, and other sectors of civil society that have important stakes in how a conflict resolves itself. These actors, therefore, have strategic interests for being included on the agenda of a peace negotiation. The question this article examines is how local civil society actors—groups that exist between the sphere of the state, market, and family—press these claims and increase the likelihood that their interests are ultimately addressed.

This research builds on the idea that the state is contested by multiple opposing actors (Kjellman & Harpviken, 2010) that use a variety of methods to press their claims. During violent conflict all actors hope to better their position at the end of the fighting, whether they are actively engaged in the violence or not. Unfortunately, research on conflict termination and negotiation is often only narrowly focused on the actions of the armed belligerents. Recently, however, there has been a growing body of research that suggests that negotiated outcomes that address issues important to civil society contributes to their long-term effectiveness and durability (Badran, 2014; Nilsson, 2012; Orjuela, 2008; Paffenholz, 2014a; Paffenholz, Kew, & Wanis-St. John, 2006; van Tongeren, Brenk, Hellema, & Verhoeven, 2005; Wanis-St. John & Kew, 2008). That said, civil society organizations face a number of hurdles when trying to get their grievances heard during a negotiation, with some groups being much more successful than others.

Within any conflict there are multiple actors making multiple claims. Measuring the impact of any one actor (let alone an entire sphere of actors) on such a complex process is methodologically difficult, particularly when the actor under observation is inherently weaker than the others. Therefore, this paper represents a first cut, so to speak, on developing a framework for thinking about these processes. It does this by, first, examining how civil society organizations constitute themselves during conflict. It then explores how, depending on their status throughout the conflict, they insert their interests into the agenda setting and resolution process. This research hopes to provide context for the variety of civil society organizations that operate during intrastate conflict and identify the key mechanisms driving these groups' behavior during the pre-negotiation phase (Tilly & Goodin, 2006).

With growing interest in the role of the local actor in conflict resolution (Lederach, 1997; Paffenholz, 2014b; Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2011), as well as international actors, including the United Nations, Western powers, and non-governmental organizations, becoming insistent that liberal principles are integrated into any negotiated peace (Clark, 2005; Richmond & Franks, 2009), a better understanding of how civil society groups behave during the period leading up to a peace negotiation becomes an important addition to the negotiation literature.

Civil Society Organizations and Violent Conflict

Even in the most violent intrastate conflicts, it is only a small percentage of the population that actually participates in the violence. The rest must seek ways to survive. One way for this to happen is through participation in parallel civil society organizations that include churches, human rights advocacy networks, community associations, and other similarly constituted organizations. In addition, there is a broad range of civil society groups whose goals are not explicitly linked with peacebuilding. During violent conflict particularly, civil society organizations may take the form of sports associations, artist and craft collectives, or religious gatherings as a way to maintain neutrality with the armed actors. While the condition of war generally diminishes these groups' abilities to mobilize and actively press their claims, many are able to continue some of their core functions.

Civil society, it should be recognized, is a contested concept with multiple definitions.¹ In fact, some (Hearn, 2001; Kasfir, 1998) even argue that its definition is too embedded in Western notions to be considered a useful analytical concept for understanding societies in the Global South, where many of these conflicts take place. Nevertheless, while the term suffers from definitional slipperiness, it remains useful for identifying those organized associations that exist separate from violent non-state actors or the state.

There is a distinction between what is referred to as civil society and civil society organizations. According to Spurk (2010), civil society can be defined as:

a sphere of voluntary action that is distinct from the state, political, private, and economic spheres, keeping in mind that in practice the boundaries between these sectors are often complex and blurred. It consists of a large and diverse set of voluntary organizations—competing with each other and oriented to specific interests—that are not purely driven by

¹ For a thorough discussion of the evolution of this concept see Spurk (2010) and Ehrenberg (1999).

private or economic interests, are autonomously organized, and interact in the public sphere. Thus, civil society is independent from the state and the political sphere, but it is oriented toward and interacts closely with them. (pp. 8-9)

During conflict, civil society organizations differentiate themselves from both political parties and armed combatants in that they are not attempting to capture the state (Diamond, 1999). They do, however, contribute to the discourse on the appropriate relationship between the state and its citizenry. An effective civil society, therefore, can help shape the norms that will inform the post conflict constitutional structure. These are the types of groups that Lederach (1997) classifies as grassroots leadership or Level 3 actors in his work on peacebuilding. They consist of local leaders, leaders of indigenous NGOs, community developers, local health officials, and refugee camp leaders.

These populations, however, are also often the most vulnerable in violent protracted conflict. Due to the violent environment in which they find themselves operating, much of the activities that civil society organizations might choose to engage in becomes secondary to the goal of simply surviving, or what Scott (1976) would call a “safety first” strategy. Thus, any action made by these groups will be filtered through a calculation determining how violent actors will respond to that activity. As a result many civil society organizations will be wary to challenge violent actors out of fear of retribution and thus limit their activities.

Past research on civil society organizations during conflict has mostly focused on those groups found within the peacebuilding sector. Paffenholz’s (2010) study on civil society and peacebuilding, for example, examines only those groups whose goals are meant to directly contribute to the creation of peace. The study evaluates several cases based on seven *peacebuilding* functions of civil society: protection, monitoring, advocacy and public communication, in-group socialization, social cohesion, intermediation and facilitation, and service delivery (Paffenholz & Spurr, 2010)—with protection, monitoring, advocacy, and facilitation being the most commonly used in the cases examined.

While this breakdown of functions provides a useful framework for systematically evaluating the peacebuilding roles of civil society groups, it is mostly limited to those groups that choose to adopt a direct advocacy role. More attention is needed in examining how civil society organizations, both inside and outside the peacebuilding sector, survive and function within the context of violent conflict. Simply put, a group that does not survive the conflict will not have much success getting its interests addressed in a negotiation. Survival, however, may require greatly limiting one’s voice. The following section, therefore, examines how civil society organizations survive during violent conflict. As conflicts end, these groups will also have grievances and demands that they will want to be met. In many of these conflicts a large proportion of the population will have only known the condition of war (Lubkemann, 2008). Consequently, many grievances will be shaped by their experience of surviving in the face of ongoing violence.

Advocacy and Survival during Violent Conflict

The following section examines three categories that could affect the ability of civil society organizations to get their grievances heard during a negotiation. First, when was the civil society group formed? Did the organization form prior to the onset of hostilities or was its formation a response to the violence? Second, how much does a civil society group decide to advocate for its cause and what type of advocacy does it engage in? Third, is the civil society organization able to remain in the conflict zone?

The answers to these questions, of course, are also contingent on the form that the political regime and the insurgency take. Democracies presumably will be more open to civil society engagement than authoritarian regimes. Insurgents will also have different incentives to either positively engage civilians or oppress them (Weinstein, 2007). These categories are also interactive with each other—advocacy by a civil society organization can lead to retaliation by violent actors that in turn forces it to flee, while being forced to flee may later lead to greater advocacy. The sequence of that interaction, and the status of this interaction at the time the conflict enters into the negotiation phase, could affect how the organization pursues its strategy for getting its issues addressed during the negotiation.

Formation

There is a difference between those civil society groups that formed before and those that formed after the initiation of the conflict. Groups that form after a conflict starts will more likely be focused on issue areas that are directly related to the conflict. These groups will be more likely to focus on such issues as human rights, rights of return, and post-conflict justice and reconciliation. For example, Peace People and Families Against Intimidation and Terror in Northern Ireland were organizations that were formed to address specific issues linked to the conflict (Dixon, 1997a, 1997b).

Civil society organizations that exist prior to the onset of the conflict will have to decide how to respond to the new structural conditions brought about by the violence. Often, religious organizations, with their long history and respected place within their communities, will take the lead in condemning violence. The Catholic Church in El Salvador, for instance, was one of the strongest critics of government policies during its civil war (Romero, 1985).

Some groups that existed at the outbreak of a conflict, however, will simply disintegrate. Fissures created by the violence might undermine the group or otherwise transform members' goals and relationships with each other. Although, these organizations may reconstitute themselves when the conflict terminates.

When a group formed will have an impact on how they are viewed by the negotiating parties. A group that existed prior to the conflict, for instance, may be regarded as an important promoter of traditional cultural values that could help restore pre-conflict normalcy. A group that formed following the outbreak of hostilities, on the other hand, may be better at articulating solutions to the incompatibilities that triggered the violence in the first place.

Level of Advocacy

The first choice a civil society organization must make during violent conflict is whether or how to advocate for its interests. A group that advocates is calling for specific societal changes—political, legal, or cultural—that are markedly different from the current status quo—although they may be calling for a return to the pre-conflict status quo.

The decision to engage in advocacy involves a number of potential risks. Any issue being advocated could be seen as contradictory to the goals of the violent groups and trigger a retaliation. For example, a group that chooses to advocate against human rights abuses being carried out by the state may be labeled as a guerrilla or terrorist sympathizer, as has been the case for many human rights organizations in Colombia. Similar accusations against civil society organizations have occurred in Egypt, Uzbekistan, and Malaysia (Clements, 2005, p. 72). However, a group that does not engage in advocacy is not necessarily inactive during the conflict. Instead, they may, for example, be providing security or service deliveries to populations in need (Reimann & Ropers, 2005, p. 34).

The type of advocacy that a civil society organization pursues during conflict is classified into three different categories: no advocacy, self-interested advocacy, and universal advocacy. Advocacy is a deliberate act, so even though an organization may desire certain changes they must be engaged in a visible action for it to be counted as advocacy. Thus, many civil society organizations will choose to not advocate during violent conflict. For these groups the risks of open advocacy are too high and instead they choose to go silent. These groups instead may focus on other functions, such as protection for its members, albeit passive protection, as well as in-group socialization and social cohesion.

A self-interested advocate is one that advocates for a change that is beneficial only to that organization's specified interests. For example, an ethnic group advocating for greater access for their group to specific government services would be considered self-interested advocacy. Universal advocacy consists of those groups that advocate for a universal principal—such as human rights or transitional justice—that would apply to anyone regardless of their affiliation. The distinction between self-interested and universal advocacy can, at times, be blurred. For instance, an ethnic group that was displaced during the fighting may advocate for their right of return, which is also a universal principal if it extends to other types of displaced populations. For classification purposes a group is determined to be self-interested when it uses its advocacy time to push for the application of the universal principal solely for its own group. A universal advocate group dedicates its advocacy time to the application of the principal to a group other than its own.

Different civil society organizations will make their choice to advocate based on their determination on how violent actors will respond. A civil society organization that possesses sufficient moral authority, such that it can retain its voice as an advocate throughout the course of a conflict even in the face of violent threats, may have more freedom of movement than other types of civil society organizations. These groups are often connected with transnational advocacy networks, which lend them protection (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Others may make their calculation based on the likelihood that the use of non-violent contentious acts will garner global media attention that then improves their chance for success (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011).

An organization that chooses to advocate will also have to choose how that advocacy takes shape. These choices will be partly driven by the political opportunity structures in the country. For example, in a country like Colombia, which despite decades of civil war maintains functioning democratic institutions, civil society organizations have a wider range of actions that they have been able to perform, from petitioning their government to mass protests in Plaza Bolivar. In more repressive states, the advocacy tactics of civil society organizations may be more subtle.

At the time a conflict transitions into the pre-negotiation phase, the type of advocacy that an organization has been engaged in will help determine its effectiveness at being heard by the negotiating parties. This will be further discussed below, after a discussion of the second choice: whether to stay or go.

“Should I Stay or Should I Go”²

The second choice that civil society organizations face is whether to stay or flee a combat zone.³ Of course, most would not consider this a “choice” per se, as most often these organizations are forced to flee as a result of the violence. Decisions to stay or go are also linked to the level of advocacy that the group chooses to engage in. A group that chooses to not advocate may feel they are protected from the violence. Of course, this can have disastrous results, as was the case for the citizens of El Mozote in El Salvador in December 1981. When government forces moved into the village, those that had stayed were evangelical Protestants and did not consider themselves affiliated with the guerrilla FMLN or their supporters. This did not matter to the Atlacatl Battalion, who slaughtered more than 800 civilians (Danner, 1994).

These groups are classified within three broad categories: stay, internally displaced, and refugee. Many civil society organizations are strongly motivated by their desire to both stay in their present location and remain intact after hostilities have ended. Their interactions with violent actors will therefore be driven by their interest in continuing to exist within the combat zone. Consequently, they are more likely to remain neutral or be deferential to the belligerents that control the specific territory within which they are based. Because these groups maintain some level of functionality during the conflict they are likely to have had multiple interactions with various armed actors, thus giving them the advantage of familiarity as a conflict transitions toward a negotiation. Some may even play an important role at getting the armed actors to the table (McCartney, 1999).

The second category of civil society organizations (CSOs) during conflict is made up of those that choose to flee the violence. In these cases, civil society organizations and their leaders determine that their lives are too at risk to remain in the conflict zone. In such a case they flee to a safer place—this may either be across a border into another country (refugees) or into a safer area of their own country (internally displaced) (Mooney, 2005). For CSOs that flee, they may retain some organizational structure while in exile, but also

² With apologies to the Clash.

³ “Combat Zone” is a relative term. In many intrastate conflicts the violence is limited to certain geographical areas. This means that a civil society organization can effectively leave the combat zone without leaving the country. In other cases, the violence extends throughout the geographic territory. In these cases a group remains within the combat zone if it stays anywhere in the country.

risk seeing their leadership become diffused over time. The decision to flee is the ultimate survival strategy in that it comes with the knowledge that one is potentially abandoning claims to land and property in place of one's own life (Smit, 2012).

On the other hand, the act of fleeing may also create a new identity for these groups and generate new civil society organizations that are organized around that new identity, including group protection and rights of return. These organizations may be based on the local structure of the group as it existed prior to the conflict or it may spur new organizational structures, often opening up leadership opportunities to women and young people. For instance, in 1987 refugees in Guatemala organized the Permanent Commission of Guatemalan Refugees (CCPP) to press for a just, collective, and organized return (Bradley, 2013, p. 104).

The distinction between refugees and internally displaced persons also has important implications. A refugee has legal status under the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, whereas no such legally binding international instrument exists for IDPs. Under the UN refugee convention a refugee has the right to not be returned to a country or territory where their safety is in question and to receive assistance in the country of settlement. Because IDPs remain in their own country they remain under the often dubious protection of their government (Phuong, 2004). However, a number of international efforts have recently been made to articulate the rights of internally displaced populations, including the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the Pinheiro Principles, and the Kampala Convention on Internally Displaced Persons, giving IDPs a set of recognized norms from which to articulate their claims.

Where these groups flee to also matters in terms of resources available to them. A group that is internally displaced may have greater access to making direct demands to the violent actors while a group that is displaced across a political border may be cut off from influencing any of the relevant parties. A group with resources may have more influence on transnational actors that are trying to resolve the conflict. For instance, during the failed Geneva talks, a number of Syrian civil society organizations were able to lobby, albeit unsuccessfully, mediators and international NGOs for their inclusion.

From this typology I now explore the strategies available to each of these categories of civil society groups during the period leading up to a negotiation—the pre-negotiation phase. As previously mentioned, these categories are interactive and also dependent on the form that violent conflict takes. Regardless of the sequence in which these events occur (i.e., displacement leading to advocacy or vice versa), when the conflict enters the pre-negotiation phase the specific status of the civil society organization will be an important factor on whether its interests will be integrated into the negotiation's agenda.

Getting on the Agenda

Pre-negotiation is the period in which conflict actors take part in information seeking to determine whether there is a possibility for a negotiated solution. According to Stein (1989, p. 479) the most important catalysts to pre-negotiation are either a crisis or anticipated crisis or a mutual perception between parties of either threat or opportunity—what Zartman and Berman (1982) refer to as a mutually hurting stalemate. A mutually hurting stalemate exists when “the parties find themselves locked in a conflict from which they cannot escalate to victory and this deadlock is painful to both of them” (Zartman, 2000, p. 228).

When this condition exists, the conflict becomes ripe and the parties will increase their likelihood for seeking a negotiated solution.

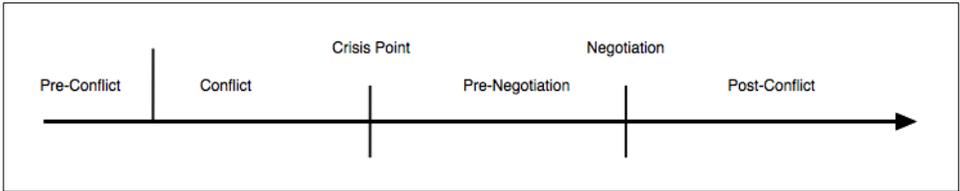


Figure 1. Conflict and Negotiation Continuum. Adapted from Stein 1989.

The violent parties, however, are not the only ones that recognize when a mutually hurting stalemate has occurred. The pre-negotiation period can create a shift in the political opportunity structure (Tarrow, 1998) in which civil society organizations can adjust their strategies away from “safety-first” and toward engagement. Thus, during conflict these groups will be on the lookout for events that might signal a movement toward pre-negotiation. Rarely are civil society organizations brought into the formal negotiating process. Therefore, it is during the pre-negotiation phase in which it becomes imperative for these groups to convince the conflicting parties and/or mediators to integrate civil society concerns into their bargaining strategy.

The first obstacle civil society groups face is recognizing the existence of a true mutually hurting stalemate. If the civil society organization has had regular contact with one or more of the combatants, they may be well situated to recognize the shift or have even contributed to the conflict’s changing dynamic (Haspeslagh, 2013). Civil society organizations always face risks when mobilizing; therefore miscalculating such an opening could present potentially devastating consequences. During the conditions of a mutually hurting stalemate, however, these risks will decrease. This happens for two reasons. First, because the negotiation will be focused on post-conflict governance, armed groups will try to demonstrate their capacity to govern. Their relationships with civil society groups and other noncombatants could serve as a signal to mediators that they are acceptable to a wider population. Second, the emergence of punishment mechanisms regarding the norms on the treatment of civilians during warfare puts a constraint on combatants when the conflict is terminating.

The second obstacle for civil society organizations is determining how to vocalize their grievances in an effective manner during the pre-negotiation period. While this is difficult, it is not impossible. Violent actors themselves have an incentive to listen to civil society groups’ demands as they attempt to present themselves as worthy to take on post-conflict governance duties. This, of course, presents another potential dilemma for civil society organizations, as those that did use violence appropriate their grievances. For instance, in the ongoing negotiations taking place between the government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia a number of agenda items are issues that were central concerns for many non-violent actors (e.g., land reform, rights of the victims).

The pre-negotiation period, therefore, is critical for setting the agenda for the future negotiation and other core structuring activities (Stein, 1989). How successful different civil society organizations are at getting their demands heard and included into an agenda

will be partly determined by the level and type of advocacy the CSO was able to engage in during the conflict and whether it experienced any form of displacement. The following section discusses how these factors help determine whether and how a CSO's interests get placed on the agenda. This is a preliminary investigation meant to generate a framework for future research.

Making Claims during the Pre-Negotiation Period

How a civil society organization makes claims during the pre-negotiation period is partly contingent on how it survived through the violent stage of the conflict. Before proceeding, however, it is important to recognize one important intervening variable—the role of outside actors in the negotiation process. These outside actors, whether they are states, intergovernmental organizations, or non-governmental organizations have biases toward which types of civil society organizations and issues should be paid attention to. Their conceptions of what constitutes an appropriate “grievance” will compound the difficulties for some civil society organizations of being heard. Because of the influence of these powerful outside actors, some civil society organizations may modify the way they articulate their particular set of grievances in an effort to gain support.

With this problem in mind, this section examines how the factors discussed in the previous sections (formation, advocacy, and displacement) help determine which civil society organizations will be more successful at being heard during the pre-negotiation phase. The purpose of this analysis, therefore, is not to generate testable hypotheses per se, but to provide a “first cut” for thinking about these dynamics more broadly in order to spur ideas for future research.

The first factor effecting how civil society organizations influence negotiation is their status as an organized group prior to the outbreak of the conflict. The negotiating parties may see an organization that formed prior to the conflict, and maintained a semblance of neutrality, as a vehicle for helping restore traditional societal structures during the post-conflict phase. These civil society organizations, often based in religious and other traditional institutions, may have deeper roots within the society and also possess a moral standing that more newly formed groups or armed combatants lack. However, unless the conflict directly targeted them or violated principals that they had already established themselves as having a moral voice on, they may be unable have much influence on the negotiating parties.

Groups that formed during the conflict, on the other hand, are likely to have done so as a direct response to the violence. Because of this, their grievances will more likely be aligned with the types of issues that are addressed during a negotiation (i.e., reparations, human rights abuses, rights of return, etc.). Thus, we should expect to see groups that formed after the initiation of a conflict, in general, have more success in getting their grievances placed on the agenda than those groups that were formed prior to the outbreak of hostilities. However, determining whether those items were placed on the agenda because of the advocacy efforts of local civil society actors or because outside powers or armed actors also saw these issues as important components of the conflict resolution process will require further investigation.

Mitigating this, of course, is the amount and type of advocacy that a civil society organization engaged in, as well as the level of displacement they experienced, during the

conflict. As discussed above each civil society organization has to make two choices on how it reacts to the violence: the type of advocacy it will engage in and whether to remain in or leave the combat zone. As mentioned, these are interactive terms with one decision often being highly contingent on the other.

The two groups that will have the greatest difficulty being heard are those that chose to not advocate during the conflict and those that were displaced outside of the country. There are, of course, exceptions. Exile communities can sometimes lobby more powerful governments, IGOs, and NGOs to put pressure on the negotiating parties to include their grievances into the agenda. Even groups that chose not to advocate during the conflict may see their voices being heard as they start to articulate their grievances during the pre-negotiation period, but they will be at a disadvantage in comparison to other better situated civil society organizations.

Unless their interests are closely aligned with one of the violent actors or are able to connect their grievances with a universal principal, self-interested advocates will also find it more difficult for their issues to be placed on the agenda. These groups, particularly if they have not been displaced, can often be isolated from the agenda setting process. Because of the self-interested nature of their grievances, the main actors involved in the negotiation may be more likely to see their demands as ancillary to the negotiation process. These are the civil society organizations that meet and march and advocate, but are often ignored by the more powerful actors, including “mainstream” civil society. However, when these self-interested organizations represent groups that have been displaced, their ability to get on the agenda increases as the issues that accompany displacement (social services, poverty and malnutrition, education) are exacerbated when a large displaced community continues to exist.

Civil society organizations that have managed to remain within a conflict zone, while also advocating for universal principals, will be the most successful at getting their issues placed on a negotiation’s agenda. These groups will often either possess power through their own moral authority or have the backing of a sufficiently powerful actor to have been protected throughout the conflict. In addition, because universal advocacy is linked to a set of global norms the language these organizations use to advocate their interests will fit into the discourse that accompanies the issues likely to be placed on a negotiation’s agenda.

Three examples stand out as times when civil society organizations that are advocating for a universal norm were able to put their issues on the agenda. Each of the three cases involved women, which have often been able to use their noncombatant status as leverage in their activism. In Guatemala, women organized the National Women’s Forum, which called for gender equality and were successful at getting gender issues on the agenda. The final accords including numerous provisions regarding women’s rights, including greater political participation for women, the rights of indigenous women, and greater access to education, training, and health services (Nakaya, 2003; Peace Accord Matrix, 2014). Similarly in Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Women Coalition carried out a number of advocacy activities, including the proposal for the creation of the Civic Forum to be incorporated into the Northern Ireland Assembly, which became part of the peace deal (Belloni, 2010, p. 124). Third, Save Somali Women and Children worked closely with clans and local populations in Somalia throughout the conflict (Nakaya, 2003). The 2004 peace negotiation included representatives from Save Somali Women and Children and the final agreement included the signature of one of its leaders, Asha Haji Elmi.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to develop a framework for future research on the role of local civil society organizations in the negotiation process at the end of violent conflict. By examining how individual organizations constitute themselves during conflict, this research begins to develop a better understanding of the microdynamics that drive these processes. Using this framework to generate and test possible hypotheses faces a number of methodological difficulties that are important to address, but are not insurmountable.

This article proposes three factors that are potentially important for determining the impact that a civil society organization may have on the negotiation process: the timing of the group's formation, the amount and type of advocacy the organization engages in, and where the organization is geographically located during the conflict. Each of these factors contributes to both the group's legitimacy in the eyes of the negotiating parties as well as the level to which a civil society organization's interests become saturated into society's collective consciousness of what would constitute a fair and just resolution.

Ultimately there are a number of factors that affect what gets included in an agenda with civil society organizations likely being some of the least influential groups. However, there are notable cases, such as in Liberia, Guatemala, and Northern Ireland, in which civil society has played an important role in the peace process. Understanding which organizations within those countries were ultimately most successful in getting their voices heard and why they were more heard over others would be an important addition to both our understanding of conflict processes as well as negotiation.

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