Kode, David E. "Civil Society, Conflict Resolution and Post-conflict Reconstruction in Kosovo and Liberia." *Civil Society, Conflict and Violence: Insights from the CIVICUS Civil Society Index Project*. Ed. Wolfgang Dörner and Regina A. List. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012. 85–104. CIVICUS Global Study of Civil Society Series. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781780931036.ch-005>>.

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Civil Society, Conflict Resolution and Post-conflict Reconstruction in Kosovo and Liberia

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Introduction

The role of civil society in conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict reconstruction usually takes different forms depending on the actors involved at each stage and the context in which conflict occurs. In the different phases of conflict, civil society can be directly or indirectly involved in peace negotiations to resolve stalemates or be active in post-conflict reconstruction. Second, civil society can be productive in cases where it does not take part directly in negotiations but provides input by using its influence and talking to parties to the conflict which take part in these negotiations. There are also cases where civil society is largely inactive, indicating little or no participation in discussions or processes aimed at either preventing or resolving conflict or in the post-conflict reconstruction process. In most cases, however, civil society at a minimum provides services and aid to those affected by conflict.

In situations of intra-state conflict, international organizations and CSOs often play an ambiguous but critical role in finding lasting solutions, and contribute towards post-conflict reconstruction because governments and armed factions focus more on defeating their opponents by securing military victories and less on the provision of services, which is their responsibility in times of peace. Also, CSOs and international organizations have become significant players in conflict situations because they are generally perceived as neutral actors and therefore assume a prominent role as mediators. In most conflicts, and specifically in the cases of Kosovo and Liberia, which are the focus of this chapter, CSOs acted without the consent of government in providing much needed services to affected communities and, in the case of Liberia, in diplomatic negotiations aimed at ensuring lasting peace.

This chapter explores the participation of civil society in different types of conflict, taking into account the fact that the dynamics of conflict are very different in each context and hence that the actions of civil society are adapted to suit each role. It seeks to examine further if the roles played by civil society

during conflict affect how civil society actors operate and act, or affect the perception of civil society from both governments and citizens during the post-conflict period. This chapter focuses on the differences in the nature of the Kosovo and Liberian conflicts, even though both were intra-state, had ethnic connotations and attracted intervention from the international community.

Based on the different ways in which both conflicts evolved, civil society generally assumed the role of service delivery in the absence of viable governments during these periods, but a major difference between the two cases is that civil society's role in the case of Liberia included participation in different ways in resolving the conflict. The implications of these different roles, coupled with the dynamics of the ethnic and political configuration of the two cases, provide key clues to differences in the role, perception and potential responsibilities of civil society in the post-conflict period. These implications are captured in more detail by using data from the CSI findings in both countries, as seen later below.

The next section of the chapter looks at the role of civil society in different conflict situations more generally. This is followed by a brief description of the armed conflicts in Kosovo and Liberia, including factors and events leading to conflict and its end, and then an examination of the different roles played by Kosovo's and Liberia's civil society during the respective conflicts. After the end of the conflict, civil society appears to have assumed quite different positions and roles in the two countries, as evidenced by the CSI indicator data and other sources. Concluding remarks then highlight what these differences may tell us about what can be expected of civil society in such diverse situations.

The role of civil society in different conflict situations

The term 'civil society' received increased resonance in development discourses in the 1980s and 1990s but remains an ambiguous concept meaning different things to different people based on their perceptions and the historical, cultural and political contexts in which they find themselves. The quest to arrive at an acceptable definition by the CSI implementing partners and the national Advisory Committees in Kosovo and Liberia mirrored the difficulties in deriving a universally accepted definition or understanding of civil society. While various scholars and activists have defined civil society in different ways, the definition of civil society used in the CSI 2008–2011 phase is 'the arena outside the family, the state and the market which is created by individual and collective actions, organizations and institutions to advance shared interests' (Mati, Silva & Anderson 2010: 17).

The ambiguous nature of civil society continues to present evolving definitions of the concept, with a general consensus that collective citizen

action is an integral part of societies in established democracies, emerging democracies, and authoritarian and autocratic regimes. Another apparent point of consensus is that within civil society there are both civil and uncivil elements with different ideologies on attaining objectives and these could be through violent, passive or non-violent means (see Chapter 7 for a more detailed look at violence within civil society).

In the post-Cold War era the dynamics of conflict seem to have changed as the world witnessed more intra-state conflicts compared to those between countries. The lines between the state and armed forces have become ambiguous, and citizens are not just at the receiving end of the violence but in some cases have become victimizers as well (Van Leeuwen 2009: 30). But the thinking that prevails within the donor community is that in many conflict situations, civil society or, more specifically, NGOs can be trusted collaborators in efforts aimed at resolving conflict, more so than governments, especially those that are involved in the conflict. In cases where governments are complicit in conflict or are unable or unwilling to prevent fighting, there is the urgent need to include civil society in conflict resolution and reconstruction processes. This line of thinking has moved beyond the mere resolution of conflict to include its prevention through the establishment of frameworks aimed at promoting good governance, and this can only work if those who are perceived as being neutral in the conflict take part in peace processes (*Ibid.*: 37).

Over the last two decades, civil society played a multitude of roles in situations of conflict and these roles have been made possible by perceptions that third parties, especially those without an interest or stake in the conflict, complement diplomatic efforts and those of international organizations, humanitarian bodies and regional groups which participate in efforts aimed at preventing conflict and resolving it, and towards post-conflict reconstruction. The effectiveness of early warning systems, and the prevention and resolution of conflicts, usually involves diverse processes and actors. As a result, in conflict situations international agencies and other bilateral donors now provide support to build capacity and financial resources to civil society to assist in resolving conflict and in post-conflict reconstruction processes.

The rest of this section therefore looks at the different roles civil society has been observed or hypothesized to play at different stages of conflict. Firstly, civil society, it has been argued, can be active in advocating for political reforms and an end to the abuse of human rights, as was the case during periods of intense political instability in Lesotho (Mohasi & Shale 2010). In Liberia for example, apart from the role civil society played in the actual resolution of the conflict, NGOs and advocacy groups demonstrated against the war and rejected certain provisions in peace agreements that sought to appease rebel groups by providing a certain quota for their representatives in transition governments.

Secondly, CSOs can also take part in negotiation processes aimed at resolving conflict because of their perceived neutrality and specifically because a great proportion of those affected by conflict are civilians and it is germane for them to have some form of representation in peace processes (Wanis-St. John & Kew 2008). CSOs are not only perceived as 'independent actors' in the conflict resolution processes but in most cases represent some local voices who have first-hand information on the intricacies of the conflict and the parties involved. With peace deals, it is quite essential that agreements move from signatures appended to peace agreements and other documents to include all actors and not just the main protagonists in the implementation of these agreements (Wanis-St. John & Kew 2008: 18).

Thirdly, civil society works to ensure that belligerents seek ways of liaising with each other and, in cases of extreme violence orchestrated by different factions, another role civil society can play is to use its influence over communities for restorative justice. Some scholars have focused on the vital role civil society plays in resolving conflicts that have ethnic variations where any form of peace depends to a certain extent on reconciliation of different ethnic formations involved in the conflict. Foley (2010) argues that there is a tendency for conflict to persist if divisions continue to exist between groups in a community demarcated by ethnicity, creed or affiliations to politics, unless such groups (together with other aspects of civil society and other actors) perceive that they can only co-exist peacefully if they strive for a community that tolerates and respects these differences.

In post-conflict reconstruction processes when peace and reconciliation commissions are viewed as a conduit for healing communities and individuals affected by the conflict, CSOs can serve as the repository for evidence gathered when working with communities during the conflict and through contacts established during conflict (Bloomfield, Barnes & Huyse 2005).

It is not only that civil society takes on different roles in different stages of conflict. Indeed, the roles it can play depend on the nature of the conflict. Roughly, in a war of liberation or defence from outside attack, civil society is rather limited to a role in service delivery and to some extent protection of human rights. Involvement in peace efforts might be construed as betrayal of the national cause or might be significantly more dangerous. On the other hand, in an intra-state or internal conflict, there might be greater opportunity for civil society also to be involved in peacemaking and reconciliation.

It can further be argued that the roles played by civil society and perceptions of its impact during the post-conflict period differ according to the role it was able to play during the conflict. Thus, if CSOs were constructively involved in the peacemaking process, the profile and impact of civil society will likely be more positively perceived. On the other hand, when civil society was involved primarily in service provision, its impact and profile may not be as strong.

To explore this proposition further, this chapter takes the cases of Kosovo and Liberia as illustrations of countries having emerged from two different types of conflict (conflicts of independence and civil war, respectively) and with civil societies with very different profiles. Of course, there are significant differences in a number of other respects (such as ethnic diversity, governance and regional location) but understanding this particular part of the context might better help in understanding what might be expected of civil society, and what might not. Thus, the next two sections focus on factors leading up to armed conflict in the two countries and the role civil society is observed to have played during the conflicts.

Two armed conflicts

An assessment of the contexts within which the conflicts in Kosovo and Liberia evolved shows some interesting dynamics. For Kosovo, it was an armed insurrection against a repressive Serbian state, a struggle to prevent an ethnic cleansing campaign and a quest for self determination and independence. The Kosovo war can better be understood by looking at the ethno-political crisis that engulfed Yugoslavia with Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Bosnia Herzegovina emerging as republics and Vojvodina and Kosovo which had autonomy within the Serbian republic (Independent International Commission on Kosovo 2000: 34). It has been concluded that the nature of the Kosovo conflict and the calls for intervention from the international community was in essence a call to prevent an ethnic cleansing campaign or genocide.

For Liberia, the conflict started as an attempt to redress decades of autocratic governance, nepotism, a breakdown of the social contract and the need to change the system. The evolution of the conflict saw a pattern in which rebel groups that started the fighting at different stages as ‘united groups’ split into different factions, in most cases along ethnic lines, predominantly because leaders of most of these groups each wanted a substantial share of the spoils of war. The effect of this was that fourteen years of Liberia’s history was wasted in conflict. Indeed, the war was protracted as several attempts at negotiating peace agreements were unsuccessful because it was difficult for the different factions to accept concessions put forward in proposals aimed at ending the war.

The conflict in Kosovo (1998–1999)

The conflict in Kosovo, which lasted from 1998 to 1999, erupted after a period of neither war nor peace between ethnic Albanians and the Serb leaders of the Yugoslav federation after the autonomy of Kosovo within the federation was

rescinded in 1989, which was followed by years of repression by the Belgrade regime. The movements that emerged in Kosovo in response to this repression, with the Democratic League of Kosovo (DLK) featuring prominently, adopted for the most part a non-aggressive means of dealing with threats from Belgrade and created a parallel system to serve the needs of Albanian Kosovars. The Serbian nationalist project which was run from Belgrade was driven by a policy aimed at subjecting ethnic Albanians forcefully under Serbian authority in a system akin to apartheid. While the repression of ethnic Albanians by the Serbs displayed clear signs that outright conflict was inevitable for much of the 1990s, the non-violent approach adopted by most Kosovan movements is credited to have forestalled the outbreak of overt war until 1998.

The war in Kosovo was eventually triggered by two main factors. First, the Dayton Peace Agreement of November 1995, which brought the conflict in neighbouring Bosnia to an end, failed to sufficiently address the Kosovo question and reduced any hopes nursed by Kosovo movements for a diplomatic solution. Second, by 1997 more radicalized elements within the Albanian communities in Kosovo perceived that the non-violent approach used in their quest for self-determination had not yielded any tangible dividends and thus compelled the militarized Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) to start using violence as a means to achieve their goals and to attract the attention of the international community. The KLA subsequently used guerrilla tactics, attacking selective areas occupied by Serbian security forces. The response from Slobodan Milosevic, leader of the Serbian regime at the time, was to authorize a gradual 'cleansing' of large sections of the ethnic Albanian populations, setting villages alight in an effort to bring an end to the crisis once and for all (Maliqi 2001).

The Kosovo conflict can be seen as an armed insurrection by the KLA against a Belgrade-backed army and paramilitary forces which adopted a dual strategy of targeting KLA operations and using ethnic cleansing to expel Albanians out of Kosovo. The Serbian army committed huge atrocities, carrying out summary executions and burning the homes of Kosovo Albanians, in the process swelling the number of Albanian refugees who fled to neighbouring countries.

Reports from advocacy groups also indicate that the KLA was guilty as well of perpetrating violence, carrying out arbitrary abductions in Serb communities, and at times against ethnic Romas, prompting large numbers of Serbs to flee Kosovo. In the early part of 1998, the war was fought between the KLA and the Serb-dominated army and police of what was left of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and in March 1999 NATO started its bombing campaign to prevent ethnic cleansing and genocide. The result of the conflict was that about 800,000 Kosovars, mostly of Albanian origin, fled their homes to other countries in the region and beyond, approximately 500,000 were displaced internally and around 10,000 were killed or unaccounted for (La Cava *et al.* 2000: 2). The destruction of Serbian infrastructure, the economic and political costs of the conflict and intense diplomatic negotiations which called for the

UN to take over responsibilities in Kosovo, prompted Milosevic to withdraw Serbian troops from Kosovo. This led to an end in the fighting but left ethnic, social and economic challenges in its aftermath. Until Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008, the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Provisional Institutions of Self Government (PISG), which were installed in 1999, shared responsibility for decisionmaking, creating a dual system of government.

The conflict in Liberia (1989–1996 and 1999–2003)

Nearly a decade before the outbreak of the civil war, Samuel Doe came to power through a coup in 1980, as the first Liberian president not to come from the country's Americo-Liberian oligarchy. Although Doe's rise to the presidency was initially greeted with enthusiasm in large sections of Liberia, his authoritarian style soon brought increased discontent and led to an attempted coup in 1985 in an effort to unseat him. Doe became increasingly paranoid after 1985 and used brutal means to suppress dissent and any form of opposition.

The Liberian civil war began when Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front for Liberia (NPFL) launched an attack on Nimba County on 24 December 1989 with the objective of ousting sitting president Doe. When war broke out, the original fighters who quickly heeded Taylor's call were from the Gio and Mano ethnic groups, who had been particular victims of Doe's dictatorial rule, but they were later joined by Liberians from different ethnic groups. Doe, however, continued to receive support from members of his Krahn ethnic group. The civil war that ensued was 'characterised by such violent brutality that the state collapsed and social structures were distorted beyond recognition' (Lyons 1998: 177). The atrocities committed during the conflict by the NPFL and the government's Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) compelled the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to intervene, initially using diplomatic means and later through its military arm, ECOMOG.

In the first phase of the conflict that lasted from 1989 to 1996, close to fourteen major peace agreements were signed by the different factions in an effort to bring a lasting solution to the conflict. However, these agreements hardly materialized for a number of reasons. Firstly the main rebel group – the NPLF led by Charles Taylor – was very reluctant to make any concessions because Taylor believed he could achieve military victory if he pressed on since his fighters had taken large sections of the country. Secondly, though the initial key players involved in the conflict were the NPLF and the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), and later on ECOMOG, as the conflict progressed different factions emerged from the embryo of the major rebel groups – the Independent National Patriotic Front for Liberia (INPLF) from the NPLF, and ULIMO-K and ULIMO-J from the United Liberation Movement of

Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO). These factions evolved mostly along ethnic lines, were supported by neighbouring countries and increased the number of stakeholders and, by extension, key requests and assurances during peace talks.

Following the Abuja Peace Agreement signed in August 1996, elections were held in July 1997 which were won by Taylor's National Patriotic Party (NPP). Taylor at the time presided over approximately ninety per cent of the country (Agbu 2006: 25). The democratic project envisaged by Liberians and the international community did, however, not materialize following the elections as Taylor sought to consolidate his power by eliminating potential and real opponents. By the year 1999 two new rebel factions – the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) – plunged the country into a further abyss by launching attacks from different regions of the country and moving towards the capital Monrovia.

The brutal nature the war once again assumed compelled regional and continental powers to intervene, eventually finding a diplomatic solution in 2003 when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in Accra, Ghana by the three main belligerents and approximately eighteen political parties (James-Allen, Weah & Goodfriend 2010: 5). The signing of the CPA was preceded by an agreement which saw Taylor exiled to Nigeria to make way for a peaceful transition. This was followed by the creation of the National Transitional Government, which ruled Liberia until elections were held in 2005. By the time the war ended hundreds of thousands of Liberians had been killed and around 750,000 had fled as refugees (Backer & Carroll 2001: 6).

Comparing the conflicts

As shown by these brief summaries, although both conflicts were marked by episodes of extreme violence, significant loss of life, population displacement and destruction, the conflicts in Kosovo and Liberia exhibit quite different characteristics. A few relevant key differences can be highlighted. While the Kosovo war could be characterized as a war of liberation of an ethnic majority repressed by a small minority in power, the Liberian conflicts are more akin to civil war with arms taken up by many parties, albeit also divided largely by ethnic identity, seeking to maintain or gain control of resources and power. In the Kosovo case, there existed a relatively clear demarcation among the fighting parties and the population in general between friend and foe; whereas in the Liberian case, the lines of division did not seem to be so clear-cut.

As posited in this chapter, these distinctions – among other factors – created different challenges and opportunities for civil society action during and after the armed conflict in the two countries.

Civil society and conflict in Kosovo and Liberia

As Dörner and List point out in Chapter 1 and as other authors in this volume have discussed, civil society has been observed or theorized to play a variety of roles in situations of armed conflict, regardless of the type of conflict being discussed. In this section, some of these roles are explored in the specific cases of Kosovo and Liberia.

Civil society and the defence of human rights

In both Kosovo and Liberia, CSOs took an active role in protecting individuals and defending human rights, especially during the armed conflicts. In Kosovo, for example, prominent institutions such as the non-governmental Council for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms worked extensively in highlighting instances where citizens were targeted and abused by the Serbian regime and collaborated with key international institutions such as the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in collecting evidence on human rights abuses and crimes against humanity (Kosovar Civil Society Foundation [KCSF] 2011: 20; Maliqi 2001: 222). In addition, CSOs played an important role in documenting massacres in Drenica, which saw the mass executions of Albanians by Serbian Special Forces, and brought these atrocities to the attention of like-minded organizations in other countries to generate mobilization and solidarity and calls for change.

In Liberia, the Liberian Women Initiative (LWI) played an active role in highlighting the difficulties faced particularly by women and children, the abuse of women and the use of children as child soldiers during the war. Other Liberian organizations focusing on human rights issues, such as the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC) and the Centre for Law and Human Rights Education (CLHRE), carried out extensive work in identifying and chronicling the massive abuses meted out to citizens by the belligerents (Backer & Carroll 2001: 8).

Following Taylor's election as Liberia's president in 1997, most groups working on human rights made attempts to take advantage of the democratic space that seemed to have opened up with the overthrow of the autocratic Doe regime, but soon found themselves at loggerheads with the government (*Ibid.*: 6–7). Despite growing restrictions under Taylor's reign, civil society groups working on human rights were instrumental in educating citizens about human rights and providing much needed assistance to those who suffered from abuse during the conflict (*Ibid.*: 8).

Civil society and service delivery during conflict

Again, in both Kosovo and Liberia, CSOs stepped up to provide necessary services to the population during the period of armed conflict. In this instance,

however, Kosovo is a special case because civil society – at least the ethnic Albanian part – stepped in to fill the vacuum ten years before the armed conflict began. After Kosovo's autonomy was revoked in 1989, large sections of the Kosovo Albanian population either boycotted or were prohibited from using public services, and abstained from the governance processes undertaken by the Serbian regime. CSOs therefore took on the responsibility of providing basic services to the population. During the 1990s, a prominent NGO, the Mother Theresa Society (MTS), operated health clinics, engaged thousands of volunteers and provided much needed food and other aid to hundreds of thousands of Kosovars. Many international organizations and networks channelled resources through local NGOs to provide medical assistance, food and clothing to citizens affected by the conflict.

During the period, however, a majority of the NGOs in Kosovo were established along ethnic lines and in most cases limited services to the spheres in which they operated. In general civil society created a parallel system of service provision, with many civil society activities biased towards ethnic Albanian sections of the population.

In Liberia, prior to the armed conflict, participation in civic activities in communities was exceptionally low. However, civic participation blossomed during the conflict with the creation of the NGO Special Emergency Life Food Programme (SELF), which developed activities that encouraged citizens to participate in electing leaders for their communities. SELF was instrumental in channelling much needed aid to those affected by the conflict. As a result of the breakdown in social and economic infrastructures for the most part and the absence of a viable government during the conflict, civil society took on the normal role of the state in providing services to communities. According to the CSI Analytical Country Report for Liberia (AGENDA 2010: 30), during the conflict 'local CSOs were managing entire displaced populations of over 100,000 people and were responsible for distributing food and providing schooling and other vital functions', putting in place structures to achieve these objectives which are still in place in the post-conflict period.

Civil society and peacebuilding

Where the two cases differ significantly in terms of the roles played by civil society is in the involvement of civil society in the resolution of conflict. In Kosovo, once the non-violent civil society efforts to prevent armed conflict were overtaken by violent factions, CSOs do not seem to have played any significant role in moving toward peace – except to the extent that they sought to defend human rights. Furthermore, it does not appear that Kosovo's civil

society was allowed a place at the table or consulted by the belligerent parties or the NATO/UN peacekeeping and administrative bodies.

In Liberia, by contrast, civil society was a leading force in promoting the peace process. Indeed, one could say that the outbreak of conflict in a way opened up new spaces for civil society to evolve. For example, at the outset of efforts aimed at finding a lasting solution to the conflict, the Interfaith Mediation Committee (IFMC), a combination of the Liberian Council of Churches (LCC) and the National Muslim Council of Liberia (NMCL), led attempts to bring the various warring factions together, took the lead in discussions by local, national and regional actors aimed at finding lasting solutions to end the conflict, and provided the guiding framework for some of the peace negotiations (Toure 2002: 10). The religious community, under the tutelage of the LCC and the NMCL, had to realign their responsibilities to encompass the provision of assistance and ensure that citizens in their respective areas were safe (Jusu-Sheriff 2004: 270). The IFMC played a central role in serving as the contact point between the different parties involved in the conflict. Even though the first peace talks faltered because of disagreements between the different factions and the crisis persisted, the key proposals put forward by the IFMC were used as a blueprint by ECOWAS in its subsequent peace negotiations.

The proposals put on the negotiating table by CSOs were preceded and supported by a series of community-led demonstrations held in rural areas with demonstrators calling on factions to end the war, start the process of disarming fighters and hold elections. These demonstrations later coalesced into a movement known as the Civic Disarmament Campaign which persistently called for an end to the fighting and disarming of combatants and for citizens to be involved in governance processes in the country (AGENDA 2010: 15). The IFMC also contributed to conflict resolution by pushing for the disarmament of tens of thousands of combatants and organizing boycotts to protest against what it considered shortcomings with some peace agreements, especially those with provisions which allowed for members of some rebel factions to join the government (Toure 2002: 10).

Other organizations contributed to the peace process in diverse ways at different points in the Liberian conflict. For example, the above-mentioned Liberian Women Initiative (LWI) ensured that female representatives participated at the Accra Clarification Conference, a key peace negotiating forum held in 1994, in spite of initial resistance to the presence of women by warring factions who assumed that women were not directly involved in the conflict. By insisting that women were represented at the conference, the LWI encouraged a degree of consciousness among the belligerents that the aspirations of all parties should be considered and not just those of the warring factions (Jusu-Sheriff 2004: 270).

Civil society and post-conflict reconstruction in Kosovo and Liberia

As we have seen above, the nature of the two conflicts shaped the roles CSOs played during the conflicts and leading up to peace. In a similar way, these factors – among others – have influenced civil society's opportunities and challenges in the post-conflict period.

Reconstruction in Kosovo

The NATO intervention that ended the armed conflict in 1999 was considered to be a turning point for the development of civil society in Kosovo (KCSF 2011: 20). The immediate priority in the post-conflict era in Kosovo was the resettlement and provision of services to approximately 880,000 returning refugees and the rebuilding of economic and social infrastructure destroyed by the war. The post-conflict situation also brought structural challenges because, in addition to the returning Albanian refugees who needed assistance, Serbs who stayed in the province became victims of revenge attacks from sections of the Albanian population. The huge humanitarian and infrastructural needs and the necessity for reconciliation saw a rise in the number of both local and international NGOs to meet these needs.

The increase in the number of local NGOs in particular was made possible with assistance from international donors. Often NGOs were established in response to funding incentives available, with the result that their objectives and activities did not necessarily tally with the needs of local communities. This meant that many initiatives were short-lived. More important still, some donors when providing aid sought to avoid the parallel civil society structures that had existed in the 1990s during the period of repression from the Serbs because they felt that these structures had strong ethnic foundations and some were perceived to have connections with the KLA. In any case MTs continued to provide services to communities, and the Centre for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedom assisted those in need and provided counselling to some suffering from the effects of war (AGENDA 2010). Furthermore, the international NGOs especially made use of the Kosovo Enforcement Force (KFOR) to deliver aid in communities that needed assistance the most.

The CSI Analytical Country Report for Kosovo tells us that although Kosovo's civil society is experiencing many positive developments, huge challenges remain (KCSF 2011). Many parts of civil society continue to depend on international funding for their existence. As new sources of funds emerge, especially from the European Union, the divide grows between large CSOs that have the capacity to handle large grants and smaller CSOs. Connections with local constituencies remain weak, contributing to a continuing low level of public understanding of civil society. Nevertheless, especially with Kosovo's

newly declared independence, CSOs are moving into new areas, e.g. concerning the rule of law and ‘watchdog’ activities, that portend a promising future.

Reconstruction in Liberia

The period following the end of the conflict in Liberia has been called the ‘golden era’ in the history of its civil society development (AGENDA 2010: 15). Its beginning was marked by the inclusion of representatives of civil society in the transitional government, as called for in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) – a major outcome of the Accra peace process – which prepared the country for elections held in 2005. The inclusion of representatives from civil society in the transitional government meant that civil society representatives (though fewer in number than those from the government and political parties) played a role in the formulation and implementation of policy. This meant that civil society was recognized as a viable player, which enhanced the space for civil society to tussle for positions with political formations.

During the transition period, CSOs continued to provide some services to communities which were beyond the reach of government. In addition, prior to the long anticipated post-conflict elections in 2005, civil society urged the different parties to exercise restraint after campaign pictures of members of several parties were vandalized, and the New African Research and Development Agency (NARDA) worked to ensure that approximately 12,000 people were registered and therefore made eligible to exercise their democratic rights in several regions in Liberia (AGENDA 2010: 27).

Civil society also provided input in the drafting of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act, which led to the national assembly’s creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission mandated to promote and facilitate reconciliation and healing. To enforce this, a coalition of CSOs put together the Transitional Justice Working Group (TJWG) (Atuobi 2010: 14). The TJWG and other civil society groups highlighted proceedings, shortcomings and decisions taken by the commission and made this information available to citizens.

The relationship between civil society and governments fostered during the transition period now manifests itself in the role civil society plays in the reconstruction of Liberia. For example, CSOs were represented in a task force created to identify areas where the United Nations Peace Building Fund, worth about US\$15 million, was disbursed to work on initiatives aimed at reducing poverty and contributing to the reconstruction process (Atuobi 2010: 14). Unlike in the past, the current government in Liberia has made provisions for the legal and regulatory protection of civil society and opened up the space for partnerships and dialogue between government and civil society. In spite of these efforts CSOs still find it difficult to access key government documents and face challenges and uncertainties on their funding since a majority of them depend on external donors for funding.

Post-conflict civil society

As shown in this brief summary, the situation of civil society in the two countries once conflict ended shows some similarities, but also significant differences. While civil society in both countries continued to play an active role in providing needed services to communities and rebuilding social infrastructure, with the assistance of international donors, its roles in peacebuilding and especially in engaging with government differ markedly. While civil society in Kosovo remains primarily on the sidelines, Liberia's civil society has often taken or been given seats at the decisionmaking table. In the case of Kosovo, this situation could be attributed at least in part to the lack of opportunity available for civil society to engage with the UN agencies overseeing Kosovo's administration. The declaration of independence in 2008 could well change these circumstances and allow Kosovo's civil society to engage with the now independent government structures. Nevertheless, it is argued here that Liberian civil society's involvement in the peace process is the key factor in its ability to participate more extensively in the governance process.

An assessment of the state of civil society in Kosovo and Liberia using data from CSI indicators

The following section examines the extent to which the two different types of conflict and the diverse roles played by civil society in these situations correspond to selected features of civil society in the post-conflict period. This comparison is based on several indicators and sub-dimensions found in the CSI International Indicator Database for the 2008–2011 phase. In particular, the focus here is on the sub-dimensions and indicators that reflect the impact of civil society as perceived by CSO representatives and external stakeholders and recorded by the respective surveys (see Chapter 2 for more details of the survey methodology). The assumptions here are that the diverse conflict scenarios shaped the roles civil society was able to play during and after the conflict and that this in turn has influenced the impact of civil society actors in the post-conflict period, as perceived by internal and external stakeholders.

Civil society responsiveness: Internal and external perceptions

When looking at the scores for civil society's responsiveness to society's most important social concerns, i.e. whether its priorities and positions mirror those of the population, one can see quite clearly a difference in perceived impact between Kosovo and Liberia. In terms of overall responsiveness, civil society representatives in Kosovo gave civil society a 'significantly low' rating of 26.8 (KCSF 2011: 35), whereas Liberian civil society representatives gave

a comparatively strong rating of 62.7. Only 21.2 per cent of Kosovo's civil society representatives considered civil society to have had some or high impact on its top social concern, economic development, in order to rebuild the nation and reduce poverty, though somewhat more (32.3 per cent) perceived impact on the second social concern, rule of law. By contrast, 67.4 per cent of Liberia's civil society representatives felt that civil society as a whole had some or high impact on developments surrounding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), while somewhat fewer (58.0 per cent) reported influence on the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) designed to alleviate poverty.

In the case of Kosovo, external perceptions roughly mirror those of civil society representatives, with an overall rating of 23.8, and similarly low percentages of external stakeholders perceiving some or high impact in economic development (25.0 per cent) and rule of law (22.5 per cent). By contrast again, external perceptions of civil society responsiveness in Liberia are significantly lower than those of actors within civil society, with an overall rating of 37.7 and with only 38.3 per cent impressed with civil society's influence on the TRC and 37 per cent with its involvement in the PRS. The low ratings from external stakeholders can be ascribed to the fact that the actual results from key policy proposals were not reflective of the population's 'expectations', indicating either that more effort from civil society would have improved the results or that, in spite of the attempts by civil society, the results remained minimal (AGENDA 2010: 29). Despite the disparity in internal and external perceptions, the perceived responsiveness of Liberia's civil society in the post-conflict period is rated as significantly stronger than that of Kosovo's civil society.

Social impact: Internal and external perceptions

With regard to social impact, i.e. civil society's perceived impact on society as a whole and in selected social welfare fields, the difference between Kosovo and Liberia is again wide. In Kosovo 43.8 per cent of the civil society representatives felt that civil society as a whole has had at least some impact, especially in education and supporting the poor, compared to 72.9 per cent of Liberian civil society representatives who thought so.

Interestingly, 51.6 per cent of CSOs in Kosovo and 64.0 per cent in Liberia believe that their own organizations have some or high impact on one of the social welfare fields. While the percentage in Liberia is still higher, it should be noted that the Kosovo CSOs believe more strongly in the impact of their own organizations than that of the civil society sector as a whole; the situation is the reverse in Liberia. The reason for the disparity may be because, as highlighted in the Kosovo CSI report, 'when asked about civil society in general, the surveyed CSOs have in mind all of civil society including passive and semi-passive CSOs, while surveyed CSOs, when asked to think about themselves,

were only the active ones' (KCSF 2011: 37). This brings to light the complex dynamics of civil society in the post-conflict era in Kosovo where many CSOs became inactive or were forced to close as funds from donors dwindled. For Liberia, by contrast, the lower score for the impact of individual organizations could point to the potential for higher impact if CSOs were to collaborate more in their activities (AGENDA 2010: 29).

Results from external stakeholders surveyed on this same indicator show that 42.5 per cent in Kosovo (slightly higher than the rating from CSO representatives themselves) believe that civil society has some impact on the social context, while for Liberia the score is 64.7 per cent (somewhat lower than the views of CSO representatives, though still substantial). The high perceptions of impact from external actors in Liberia can be attributed to the fact that prior to the conflict the term civil society was not really ingrained in Liberian society, its effects were barely recognizable and the prevalence of the abuse of human rights then was seen as part of the 'norm' in society by government and citizens alike (AGENDA 2010: 29). Furthermore, civil society during the more than decade-long conflict played a central role in the provision of much needed social services, taking responsibility over the ever growing numbers of refugees and creating structures which have been maintained in the post-conflict era. The impact of civil society in providing services during the conflict, in making contributions aimed at resolving the conflict and in advocating for the exit of then-President Taylor after 1997 can be said to have left an indelible mark on the Liberian social and political spheres. The recognition of the potential role of civil society in Liberia is evidenced in the fact that according to the Liberian CSI report, 'the public believes that once civil society is part of a process, the public interest will be protected and defended [and that] civil society inclusion is sometimes requested from government itself' (AGENDA 2010: 30).

Policy impact

For this indicator, 21.2 per cent of CSOs in Kosovo and 54.4 per cent in Liberia perceive that civil society as a whole has some or high impact on policymaking in the country. In the case of Kosovo, evidence from the CSI Analytical Country Report and selected case studies suggests that the complexity of public policymaking highly limits civil society's participation in the process (KCSF 2011: 36). By contrast, Liberian civil society has been working actively in several sectors, e.g. fighting corruption, developing a national youth policy and promoting female participation, in addition to involvement with the TRC and PRS as mentioned above, and with different actors in the policy community (AGENDA 2010: 29–30).

Remarkably, in the case of both Kosovo and Liberia, external stakeholders perceive civil society's impact on policymaking as a whole more favourably than the CSO representatives do themselves. In Kosovo, 32.5 per cent of

external actors considered civil society to have had some or high impact on policy in general (vs. 21.2 per cent of CSO representatives) and in Liberia 68.6 per cent (vs. 54.4 per cent of CSO representatives) did. In Kosovo, it could be that observers outside civil society simply see civil society's policy efforts in a slightly more positive light, although still quite limited. For Liberia, the perception of high impact by external actors can be attributed to the active presence of civil society across different spectrums of policy and decisionmaking, as noted above.

Conclusion

From the outset, this chapter posited that the nature of a conflict shapes the opportunities available for civil society to play certain types of roles during the period of armed conflict. Furthermore, the roles civil society was able to play during conflict significantly influence its standing and perceived impact during the post-conflict period.

The chapter illustrated this observation by focusing on the cases of Kosovo and Liberia, both of which faced brutal conflict within an approximately five to ten year period prior to the collection of data for the CSI project. As such, both fall within the 'immediate' post-conflict period in which armed battles have died down and rebuilding has begun.

A look at the types of conflict the two countries were engaged in, the roles their respective civil society played during and after conflict and the perceptions of civil society impact during the post-conflict period provides evidence that the observation holds, at least in these two cases. While both were types of intra-state conflict or civil war, the war in Kosovo could also be considered a battle for independence, with lines of demarcation rather clearly drawn between the 'oppressed' Albanian Kosovars and the 'oppressing' Serbs. Even before the outbreak of armed conflict, but also during the brief war, Kosovo's civil society played a strong role in defending human rights, especially of Albanian Kosovars, and in providing services to communities. In the reconstruction period, Kosovo's civil society continued in the service-providing and rebuilding role and has gradually taken on other activities, including promotion of the rule of law. Nevertheless, it is perceived to have quite limited impact on society and policy, which is due in part also to the weakness of sovereign state structures.

Turning to Liberia, the lines of demarcation among the general populace and civil society were not so clearly drawn, and there were multiple factions engaged in the conflict. During the conflict, civil society does not seem to have been forced to choose sides to the extent it was in Kosovo. Instead, while Liberia's CSOs provided necessary basic services to the population and defended human rights as Kosovo's did, they also engaged in promoting peace and proposing solutions to end the fighting. As a result of this constructive

engagement, so it is argued here, civil society in Liberia sees itself and is seen in a more positive light than in Kosovo. Liberia's civil society is perceived to have significantly higher levels of responsiveness to critical social needs and of social and policy impact.

What these initial observations indicate is that the context, in this case the nature of the conflict, in which civil society operates shapes what CSOs can be expected to do. In the context of a war of independence or against repression, it can hardly be expected that CSOs rise above the 'us vs. them' dilemma to encourage warring parties to come to the negotiating table. Conversely, in a situation in which diverse factions are in battle, the likelihood that civil society coalitions such as those in Liberia could come together and promote negotiations appears to be higher.

Furthermore, when civil society has been able to play such a prominent role in bringing about peace, as it did in Liberia, it can rightly be expected to be perceived as having greater policy and social impact in the period after the war. However, when circumstances do not allow such a role and also when state structures and channels are underdeveloped as in Kosovo, expectations of civil society impact in the aftermath of armed conflict cannot be so high.

Here it has to be pointed out that Liberia's civil society is not necessarily 'stronger' than Kosovo's. In fact, along certain CSI dimensions, e.g. the level of organization, Kosovo's civil society scores higher than Liberia's, highlighting the various strengths and weaknesses of the two countries' civil society. Nevertheless, the point here is that expectations of civil society impact following armed conflict need to be set based on an understanding of the nature of the conflict and the roles civil society has been able to play during the conflict.

Finally, it also has to be said that these observations are based on two illustrative cases within the CSI 2008–2011 set of countries. The analysis would certainly be strengthened through examination of civil society in other countries that have recently emerged from armed conflict. In addition, a second look at Kosovo and Liberia in three to five years would help in determining whether the effects in terms of perceived impact change as memories of the conflict become more distant. In any event, the conclusions reached here are intended mainly to offer ideas for inspiring further exploration and especially to urge thoughtful consideration of what can realistically be expected of civil society and its organizations.

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